A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF ASSERTIVENESS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Theology in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1983

Title: A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF ASSERTIVENESS
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Degree: Master of Theology
Date: May, 1983
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People often have difficulty knowing how to respond
in emotional or threatening situations. Some repress their
emotions in an unhealthy way while others go to the opposite
extreme and aggressively vent their emotions on those around
them. Secular psychologists have been using a technique
known as assertiveness training to help people respond in
ways that are more socially acceptable and healthy. Some
Christians, however, have been unsure whether this way of
relating to others is biblical.

Assertiveness, as defined by many psychologists,
involves expressing one's emotions openly in ways that do not
deny the rights of others, but in ways that allow one to be
honest about his own wants, needs, and emotions. Aggressive-
ness, on the other hand, is the act of expressing emotions
in ways that disregard the needs and rights of others. Non-
assertiveness occurs when people feel intimidated by those
around them and do not openly or honestly express their emo-
tions. The purpose of assertiveness training is to help
aggressive people become more sensitive to the rights of
others and act assertively and for those who are non-assertive
to learn the skills involved in being assertive.

Believers can be assured that assertiveness, in at
least some forms, is biblical because the Old and New Testa-
ments are full of examples of Christ and others being asser-
tive. Many of the conversations of Christ in the Gospel of
Mark are good examples of biblical assertiveness. The condi-
tions that determine whether a given assertive comment is
biblical have to do with the motivation behind the comment.
All comments should be motivated by love, the attitude of
servanthood, the desire to edify or build up the person, a
recognition of the importance of the Body of Christ, and a
motivation of ministry, not manipulation. The effect of the
comment is not the judge of the appropriateness of the com-
ment; the motivation behind it is most important.

There are many assessment inventories available to
help the biblical counselor determine who may benefit by
guidance in assertiveness. These are lists of various situ-
ations to which the person is asked to decide how he would
react. These lists may be helpful for the biblical therapist,
but he must be aware that they have not been designed from a
Christian perspective.

Assertiveness training can be used in a local church
in many ways, both formally and informally. The motivation
principles may be shared very informally with anyone. Some
of the formal applications may include Sunday School classes,
home Bible studies, preaching and group or individual coun-
seling. Guidance in skills training and biblical principles
can profitably occur to the benefit of the Body of Christ.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
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Master of Theology

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christians respond in many ways to emotional situations. Some hold in their emotions to such an extent that outwardly nothing seems to bother them very much. They rarely confront anybody about anything, but bow before the wishes and demands of others. Some Christians respond the opposite way. They get visibly bothered by many things, verbally complaining about being mistreated, and lashing out at those who try to impose their wishes on them. Others, however, are able to confront the issues at hand and resolve them as best as possible without experiencing great emotional distress.

How are believers to respond in those situations in which they find themselves getting angry at someone else? Where does "turn the other cheek" come into situations in which anger is present? Is there a way to "speak your piece" and yet do it in love?

Secular psychologists have been using a therapy technique since about 1949 known as assertiveness training for those people who felt greatly intimidated in social relationships. The desire of the psychologists was to help people become more assertive in their dealings with others, which would help them feel better about themselves.

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Some Christians do not readily accept this form of treatment as a way of promoting biblical maturity. To them it suggests the idea of aggressiveness or of trying to take advantage of someone else.[1] The problem of what to do in those countless situations in which they wanted to say something but did not know whether they should respond and if so, what to say, remained.

Recently, there seems to have been a growing interest on the part of Christian therapists and counselors (David Augsburger and John Faul, to name two) in the usefulness of assertiveness training techniques taught from a Christian perspective. They have declared that assertiveness is not categorically unbiblical, though it can be used in ways that are unbiblical. In the literature on the subject which is written from a Christian perspective, however, there are few concrete guidelines for deciding when assertiveness, if ever, is biblical.

The following is an attempt to analyze the subjects of assertiveness and assertiveness training principles using the Bible as the grid by which they are evaluated. The thesis of the project is that assertiveness is a part of emotional and spiritual maturity for all believers. For assertiveness to be biblical it must be motivated by love

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[1]Of the approximately twenty people that this author has spoken to about this subject about two-thirds have had the pre-conceived notion that assertiveness meant aggressiveness and was a violation of scriptural principles.

and ministry so that the needs of the other person are the
focus, not one's own needs. People with problems of
assertiveness, namely aggressiveness or non-assertiveness,
can be guided into greater spiritual and emotional maturity
by using some of the methods developed by secular psycholo-
gists as long as they are taught in conjunction with the
biblical principles involved.

The proposition will be set forth and supported in
the following manner. First, the theory of assertiveness
will be examined so that there will be no confusion over the
meaning of the term as it will be used throughout the study.
Most of the authors referred to in this section will be from
the secular viewpoint. The purpose and rationale of asser-
tiveness will also be included in this section. Second,
the biblical principles involved will be discussed, which
lays the framework for the third section which is on assess-
ment procedures. These assessment questionnaires are useful
in determining who may benefit from guidance in assertive-
ness. The fourth section will be a model of how a local
church could use assertiveness training to aid in the emo-
tional and spiritual growth of its members.

Throughout this paper when reference is made to the
Christian counselor the same will apply to the pastor or
anyone else involved in the spiritual growth and training
of others.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF ASSERTIVENESS

The Definition of Assertiveness

In the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary one finds
this definition for the verb "to assert": "to state or
declare positively and often forcefully or aggressively."[1]
Most of the writers in the field have expanded this defini-
tion to such an extent that it is barely recognizable.
Therefore, it is important for this study to determine what
will be the definition used. Joseph Wolpe, one of the foun-
ders of modern assertiveness training therapies, defines
assertiveness as "the proper expression of any emotion other
than anxiety towards another person."[2] Arnold Lazarus does
not agree with such a broad definition. He defines it as
"an open and direct, honest and appropriate expression of
what a person feels and thinks."[3] He limits the definition
of assertiveness in another of his books:

> Many people associate "assertive training" with one-
> upmanship and other deceptive games and ploys which
> Wolpe includes under his heading and which have no place

[1] Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA:
G. & C. Merriam Company, 1977), p. 67.

[2] Joseph Wolpe, The Practice of Behavior Therapy
(New York: Pergamon Press, Inc., 1973), p. 81.

[3] Arnold A. Lazarus, Clinical Behavior Therapy (New
York: Brunner/Mazel, 1972), p. 34.

in the forthright and honest expression of one's basic feelings. Besides, the word "assertive" cannot convey all the nuances of "emotional freedom" which would include the subtleties of love and affection, empathy and compassion, admiration and appreciation, curiosity and interest, as well as anger, pain, remorse, skepticism, fear, and sadness. Training in emotional freedom implies the recognition and appropriate expression of each and every affective state. Throughout this book, the term "assertive behavior" will denote only that aspect of emotional freedom that concerns standing up for one's rights.[1]

One more definition will help to show the middle position between the definition given by Wolpe and the one given by Lazarus. Merna and John Galassi define assertive behavior as:

That complex of behaviors emitted by a person in an interpersonal context which express that person's feelings, attitudes, wishes, opinions, or rights directly, firmly, and honestly, while respecting the feelings, attitudes, wishes, opinions, and rights of the other person(s). Such behavior may include the expression of such emotions as anger, fear, caring, hope, joy, despair, indignation, or embarrassment, but in any event is expressed in a manner which does not violate the rights of others.[2]

This definition is not quite as broad as Wolpe's or as limited as the one given by Lazarus and represents a reasonable summary of many authors and will serve as the definition of assertiveness used in this study.

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[1] Arnold A. Lazarus, Behavior Therapy and Beyond (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971), p. 116.

[2] Merna Dee Galassi and John P. Galassi, Assert Yourself! How To Be Your Own Person (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1977), p. 233.

The Elements of Assertiveness

After clarifying to some extent the definition of what it means to be assertive, one still needs to know what elements comprise that type of behavior. In 1949 Andrew Salter proposed six modes of behavior which served to define more clearly what he meant by assertive behavior and what types of behaviors he was able to teach to others. These are: "feeling talk" (the deliberate use of spontaneously felt emotions), "facial talk" (the display of emotion in the face or any other non-verbal movements), "contradict and attack" (used when the person disagrees with another; he is not to pretend to agree, but to contradict him with feeling), the use of "I" (the person uses "I" as much as possible to involve himself in his statements), to express agreement when you are praised (the acceptance of praise from others and oneself), and to improvise (making spontaneous responses to immediate stimuli).[1] For Salter one could tell if he were being assertive if he were engaging in these types of interactions.

Arnold Lazarus sets forth four types of assertive behavior: the ability to say "no" to unreasonable requests or demands, the ability to make requests or to ask help from others, the ability to express both positive and negative

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[1]Andrew Salter, <u>Conditioned Reflex Therapy</u> (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, n.d.), pp. 97-100.

feelings, and the ability to initiate, continue, and terminate general conversations.[1]

Both Salter and Lazarus help the biblical counselor or therapist to understand what is involved in being assertive and what is lacking in non-assertive people. This is important because there seems to be a preconceived idea imbedded in the minds of many believers that assertiveness is simply how to express negative feelings in such a way that they are not as mad as they were before. They do not see assertiveness as being a vital aspect of maturity. This preconceived idea is inaccurate, and could keep many from growing in maturity through a type of assertiveness training.

Alberti and Emmons' list of ten characteristics of assertive behavior aptly summarize this section. Assertiveness is: (1) self-expressive, (2) honest, (3) direct, (4) self-enhancing, (5) not hurtful, (6) partially composed of the content of the message (feelings, rights, facts, opinions, requests, limits), (7) partially composed of the non-verbal style of the message (eye contact, voice, posture, facial expression, gestures, distance, timing, fluency, and listening), (8) appropriate for the person and the situation, rather than universal, (9) socially

[1] Arnold A. Lazarus, "On Assertive Behavior: A Brief Note," Behavior Therapy 4:697-99.

responsible, and (1) a combination of learned skills, not an inborn trait.[1]

Classifications of Behaviors

There are three general classifications of responses in interpersonal relationships: assertive, non-assertive, and aggressive. Because the first has been defined extensively already, this section will discuss the other two and show how all three compare to one another.

Non-assertive responses are those in which the speaker does not convey his thoughts directly or fails to express them at all. Many times he will express them indirectly leaving it up to other people to guess what emotions he is feeling. A person who is acting non-assertively will not stand up for his rights and will not confront others about troubling issues. He allows others to make the decisions about situations that affect him personally. There may be verbal non-assertiveness and non-verbal assertiveness in the same social exchange. Non-verbal indicators of non-assertiveness include: lack of eye contact, hesitancy in speech patterns, low voice levels, tense body posture, and nervous or inappropriate body movements.[2]

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[1]Robert E. Alberti and Michael L. Emmons, Your Perfect Right, A Guide to Assertive Behavior (San Luis Obispo: Impact Publishers, 1978), pp. 36-37.

[2]Galassi, Assert Yourself, p. 14.

Another type of non-assertive response is the absorbing response in which one person is totally absorbed in the needs, wishes, and concerns of the other person to such an extent that he loses sight of his own desires. A typical response of this type might be: "I care only about you. I live to make you happy. I want only the best for you."[1] This sounds like a good mindset for the believer except that the motives of the absorbing person are manipulative. Though it appears that he is trying to meet the needs of the other, he is really using his absorbing pattern of interacting to get his own needs met (for a more complete discussion of this see the discussion of ministry versus manipulation in Chapter III).

Aggressive responses are those in which the speaker tries to induce guilt, ignores legitimate objections, and puts down the other person.[2] Aggression, verbal or non-verbal, is also characterized by the person seeking to have his own needs met at the expense of the other people around him. Aggressive comments infringe on the rights of others. They evidence no regard for the feelings, opinions, needs, or wishes of others, but rather, they are punishing, threatening, assaultive, demanding, or hostile.[3] Aggressive

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[1]David Augsburger and John Faul, Beyond Assertiveness (Waco: Calibre Books, 1980), p. 47.

[2]Patricia Jakubowski and Arthur J. Lange, The Assertive Option (Champaign, IL: Research Press Company, 1978), p. 233.

[3]Galassi, Assert Yourself, p. 15.

comments are the most obviously manipulative types of comments, though manipulation may occur in all three types of comments.

Many writers on assertiveness have compared and contrasted the three classifications of behavior in chart form. Figures 1 and 2 are two such efforts. These are presented in order to further clarify the differences in the three types of behaviors.

Figure 1[1]

Styles of Interpersonal Behavior

Attitude Toward Self

Attitude toward others		Assertive	Passive
	Positive	Assertive	Passive
	Negative	Aggressive	Indirect, passive aggressive

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[1]John P. Foreyt and Diana B. Rathjen, eds., Cognitive Behavior Therapy (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), p. 64.

Figure 2[1]

Comparison of Behavior Classifications

High Assertiveness (Aggression)	Competition	Collaboration
Concern for Self	Compromise	
Low Assertiveness (Non-assertiveness)	Avoidance	Accommodation

Concern for Others

Low Cooperation   High Cooperation

In general, the behavior pattern which is encouraged and taught by secular therapists is assertiveness. "Assertive" serves as the midpoint between the extremes of "non-assertive" and "aggressive."

Rights

A foundational element of the theory of assertiveness is the concept of personal rights. The contention of many therapists is that people are to be assertive because they have rights which should be defended when violated. Emotional maturity is seen as the ability to stand up for one's rights without denying the rights of others.[2]

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[1]Joyce Hocker Frost and William W. Wilmot, Interpersonal Conflict (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Co. Pub., 1978), p. 28.

[2]Augsburger and Faul, Beyond Assertiveness, p. 47.

Many writers have developed their own lists of the rights which are to be enjoyed and upheld by all. These vary from legal rights to consumer rights to social rights. Dr. Manuel Smith gives one of the most comprehensive of such lists. His ten assertive rights are: (1) You have the right to judge your own behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon yourself, (2) You have the right to offer no reasons or excuses for justifying your behavior, (3) You have the right to judge if you are responsible for finding solutions to other people's problems, (4) You have the right to change your mind, (5) You have the right to make mistakes-- and be responsible for them, (6) You have the right to say "I don't know," (7) You have the right to be independent of the goodwill of others before coping with them, (8) You have the right to be illogical in making decisions, (9) You have the right to say "I don't understand," (10) You have the right to say "I don't care."[1] Alberti and Emmons present in their Appendix A the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights"[2] which is another sample of the types of rights being referred to by those who are training in assertiveness.

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[1] Manuel J. Smith, When I Say No, I Feel Guilty (New York: The Dial Press, 1975), pp. xiii-xiv.

[2] Alberti and Emmons, Your Perfect Right, pp. 184-87.

The rationale behind the issue of rights is that every person has been created equal and so must treat every other person as an equal. In social situations no one has exclusive privileges.[1] For the secular therapist, if there were no such thing as personal rights, then assertiveness would not be necessary. That is why "rights" is such a key concept in the theory of assertiveness. The importance of this concept is also seen in the techniques used in assertiveness training. For example, often one whole session of the training period is taken up with convincing people that they do have rights and that they should stand up for them.[2]

The Purpose of Assertiveness Training

For people whose problems originated in a lack of proper assertiveness, the therapy known as assertiveness training was developed. This therapy was designed to help such people overcome whatever had caused them to be unassertive (non-assertive or aggressive).

In order to facilitate the comparison of the three classifications of behavior with respect to the purpose of assertiveness training, the model of personality developed by Lawrence Crabb, Jr. will be used. The following summary

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[1]Sharon Anthony Bower and Gordon H. Bower, Asserting Yourself, A Practical Guide for Positive Change (Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1976), p. 6.

[2]Jakubowski and Lange, The Assertive Option, pp. 91-97.

of this model is taken from the counseling manual of the Institute of Biblical Counseling.[1]

The Structure of Personality

There are four basic elements of the personality, which correspond to qualities in God. People are personal, rational, volitional, and emotional beings.

Personally

As a personal being everyone has needs which must be satisfied if he is to function optimally as a person. These needs are for "significance" and "security." Significance is "a realization of personal adequacy for a job which is truly important, a job whose results will not evaporate with time but will last through eternity, a job which fundamentally involves having a meaningful impact on another person."[2] Security is "a convinced awareness of being unconditionally and totally loved without needing to change in order to win love, loved by a love which is freely given, which cannot be earned and therefore cannot be lost."[3] These needs can only be completely and genuinely met through a proper relationship with Jesus Christ.

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[1]Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., "Institute of Biblical Counseling" (Counseling Manual, 1978), pp. 17-54.

[2]Ibid., p. 20.

[3]Ibid.

Most people, including Christians, do not subjectively experience that these needs are met. This becomes the core for all personal problems, since the basic motivation in their life becomes one of trying to experience the gratification of these needs. Their plans, however, do not include God at the center.

Rationally

All healthy people are capable of thinking. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve always had accurate thoughts regarding their relationship to God and each other. After the Fall, however, their thinking processes became filled with error. Man was no longer accurate in his thinking, though his capacity for accurate thinking had not changed. Experiencing unmet personal needs, he began to make plans to find ways to satisfy those needs. As said before, these plans did not include God as the ultimate source for the meeting of those needs. These plans reflected his foolish thinking. Man's problems, then, are compounded by foolish thinking.

Volitionally

As a volitional being man is responsible for what he does. He always chooses to do whatever he does. Before the Fall, man always chose to do what was proper and he recognized that he was consciously choosing to obey God. After the Fall, man began to choose to disobey God and to do whatever he thought was desirable. As a result of his unmet

personal needs and foolish thinking he pursued the wrong activities and often denied responsibility for those sinful activities.

Emotionally

Man is also an emotional being. He is capable of experiencing many types of feelings. Before the Fall, man always acknowledged the emotions that he was experiencing at the moment, because he would have had no reason to deny them. After the Fall, however, man began to deny his emotions because now they were often painful and negative (guilt, hate, anxiety, and anger). These negative emotions were the result of sinful choices of behavior and sinful motivations, which were the result of foolish thinking about how to get his needs met. By examining emotions one is able to get a clue as to what the sinful choices and thinking were that led to the negative emotions. Emotional maturity is not so much the kind of emotion experienced as it is the willingness to acknowledge whatever emotions are being experienced, and to express them in appropriate ways. The expression, though, may or may not be done outwardly.

The Non-Assertive Personality

The following is an evaluation of non-assertiveness from a secular viewpoint in light of the model just outlined.

As a personal being the non-assertive person usually feels inferior, unimportant, inadequate, and weak. He feels

intimidated by those around him to such an extent that he experiences low self-esteem.[1]

A non-assertive person who is capable of thinking has filled his mind with inhibiting thoughts, which in turn lead him to act non-assertively. This person believes that "dire and irreparable consequences will occur"[2] if he acts assertively. Lazarus calls this type of belief "catastrophic in nature."[3] This belief is also inaccurate and foolish. Because of his deep needs for love and acceptance the person does not want to take any chances of losing what love he is presently experiencing. He is, therefore, unwilling to take the risk of being assertive for fear of rejection. Some think that anything but non-assertiveness is aggressiveness and will invite the rejection of others.

Albert Ellis has compiled a list of the most common wrong beliefs that non-assertive people harbor and act on. They are: (1) "You must--yes, must--have sincere love and approval almost all the time from all the people you find significant; (2) You must prove yourself thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving, or you must at least have real competence or talent at something important; (3) You

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[1]David C. Rimm and John C. Masters, Behavior Therapy, Techniques and Empirical Findings (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 63.

[2]Galassi, Assert Yourself!, p. 35.

[3]Lazarus, Clinical Behavior Therapy, p. 201.

have to view life as awful, terrible, horrible, or catastrophic when things do not go the way you would like them to go."[1] These are the types of beliefs that make acting assertively too threatening.

As volitional beings, many non-assertive people do not realize that they have any other options available to them in given situations. They may have been taught that acting non-assertively is the best or the only way to act. They may not realize that by acting assertively they may change the way situations turn out, rather than passively allowing life to control them. Non-assertive people choose to act that way because of their wrong beliefs and unmet needs.

People who act non-assertively usually find themselves unable to express the emotions they feel. In anger provoking situations they find no way to release this anger without hurting another person. Although many acknowledge the emotions they are experiencing, some have been hurt so often that they have learned to protect themselves by denying their emotions. As a result, they do not have to face their emotions and the situations that provoked them. Non-assertive people are not seen to be emotionally mature.

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[1]Jakubowski and Lange, The Assertive Option, pp. 152-53.

The Aggressive Personality

Assertiveness training is also used with aggressive people. Following is a description of the four elements of the personality of an aggressive person as seen by many secular therapists.

Aggression is often the method of behaving when a person feels threatened, vulnerable, or unsafe and powerless in a situation. Aggression is an over-reaction to the situation in order to protect himself and to get rid of the threatening stimulus.[1] The person feels unloved by the threatening stimulus and not adequate to handle it apart from attacking it.

The aggressive person is also acting on foolish beliefs. Some of these are: the belief that one must win in order to be O.K., the belief that if one does not come on strong then he will not be listened to, and that the world is hostile and he must be aggressive in order to survive. He also believes that to compromise is to lose, that he must make an impact, that he must get his own way, that aggression is the only way to get to some people, that he must prove that he is right and they are wrong, and that the world must be fair for it is intolerable when people mistreat him.[2] These beliefs so dominate his thinking that he

[1]Ibid., p. 67.

[2]Ibid., pp. 69-70.

acts on them almost instinctively. Many times a person who is convinced of these wrong beliefs will feel threatened even when there is no threat present at the time. He sees everyone as out to get him and is afraid to let them have any advantage lest they should be able to destroy him, physically or personally.

Many of the people who act aggressively do so knowingly. They actively pursue safety by having a good, strong offense. They may not have the abilities to act in other ways, given the threatening situation. Others do not realize that they are being aggressive. They may think that they are being assertive, but may lack the ability to distinguish between aggression and assertion.

Emotionally the aggressive person usually acknowledges his anger or fear, though he may not fully understand why he is angry or afraid. He will usually say that his emotion is what caused him to be aggressive.

The passive-aggressive type of person is one who tries to deny his emotions, or at least, tries not to express them outwardly in an obvious way. His aggressiveness is still as valid as the other, more obvious, way of being aggressive. It is done in a more socially acceptable and safe way. There is less risk of being punished for his aggressiveness. This is the form of aggressiveness many "church" people revert to. They try to deny their feelings

of anger and hatred toward others, but still want to retaliate in some way for wrongs done to them.

The aggressive person may feel good about himself because of his ability to get things done in his way and to defend his self-respect, yet his anger shows that he feels threatened personally and emotionally. Most authors surveyed did not see the aggressive person as emotionally healthy.

The Assertive Personality

The purpose of assertiveness training is to take the negative out of the non-assertive and aggressive behavior patterns and to teach people how to be assertive instead. The mature person is the assertive person.[1] People who are aggressive can learn to be merely assertive and non-assertive people can learn to be assertive.

Personally, the person would feel good about himself, that is, he would have a healthy self-love and self-respect. He would not be made to feel unimportant by those around him. He would feel adequate to handle life and the interpersonal situations that he found himself in. He would be able to handle threatening situations without feeling personally destroyed if they did not go his way. He would still be able to see himself as important and worthwhile.

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[1]Galassi, _Assert Yourself!_, p. 4.

The assertive person would have learned how to tune into the "inner dialogues"[1] that he experiences throughout the day and monitor his irrational and foolish thinking. He would have re-taught himself a rational and assertive belief system.[2] He would be rid of catastrophic thinking and be less dependent on the reactions of others in determining his sense of self-worth. He would see that it is not imperative for him to have to win all of the time in ways that make others losers. He would be able to see that assertive behavior is to his best interest.

In the volitional element of the human personality, assertiveness training is to provide the person with the ability to express himself in socially appropriate ways. This involves social skills training. The main goal of training is that the person would be able to decide in each situation how he should respond. He must realize that he is making the decision concerning his actions and is not being forced to do anything.[3] If the person knows that he is able to act assertively in a given situation and then chooses not to do it he is still volitionally healthy.[4] The maturely

[1]Ibid., pp. 117-23.

[2]Arthur J. Lange and Patricia Jakubowski, Responsible Assertive Behavior (Champaign: Research Press, 1976), pp. 55-68.

[3]Ibid., p. 220.

[4]Alberti and Emmons, Your Perfect Right, p. 100.

assertive person chooses how he will respond to situations on other criteria than emotional pressure or fear.

Emotionally, the assertive person acknowledges all of his emotions because he does not have to be afraid of them. He is able to deal with the emotions as he honestly expresses them.[1] Emotions are not to be carried around with the person for long periods of time but are to be dealt with as soon as possible.[2]

Generally, then, the assertive person can establish close interpersonal relationships, can protect himself from being taken advantage of by others, can experience more of his needs being met and can avoid the anxiety of repressed emotions.[3]

The History of Assertiveness Training

The theory of assertiveness began with Ivan Pavlov, according to Herbert Fensterheim and Jean Baer, for it was he who put forth the concepts of excitation and inhibition as they relate to the human nervous system.[4] Excitation is the brain process which causes increases in activity.

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[1] Galassi, Assert Yourself!, p. 153.

[2] Sherwin B. Cotler and Julio J. Guerra, Assertion Training (Champaign: Research Press, 1976), p. 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Herbert Fensterheim and Jean Baer, Don't Say Yes When You Want To Say No (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), p. 22.

Inhibition is a dampening process, which decreases activity and new learning.[1] In 1949 Andrew Salter used these terms and concepts and developed a type of assertiveness training technique. For people who were characteristically inhibited, Salter directed them to deliberately act in an excitory manner. He hoped to teach the person the proper balance between excitation and inhibition.

Salter, however, did not distinguish very carefully between assertive and aggressive behavior. Joseph Wolpe, on the other hand, was very concerned with the social implications of assertive actions. Wolpe coupled assertiveness training with reciprocal inhibition or relaxation therapy in order to teach his clients how to respond to situations in ways other than with anxiety or aggression.

A third theoretician who was foundational in assertiveness training is Arnold Lazarus. Lazarus is an advocate of developing emotional freedom in his clients, by which he means that emotional maturity is more than just knowing what emotions are being experienced, but that the person must also act them out. In acting them out he is to acknowledge the rights of others. A large part of assertiveness training, then, was teaching people their rights and helping them to express all of their emotions in appropriate ways.

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[1]Ibid., p. 23.

Generally, though, from the time of Pavlov to Lazarus, Lange, Jakubowski, Alberti, Emmons, Ellis, Moreno, and the Galassi's, assertiveness training has grown from a roughly defined therapy in which many types of behaviors were acceptable, whether aggressive or not, to a much better defined method of helping people become responsibly assertive in their interpersonal relationships.

CHAPTER III

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF ASSERTIVENESS

The question that arises for the Christian is whether assertiveness, as defined for this project, is proper for believers in their interactions with others. Verses which speak of turning the other cheek seem to indicate that being assertive is not proper, but is that what they really mean? The position taken in this study is that assertiveness can be biblical behavior, and in fact is a characteristic of mature believers, but that all assertiveness is not biblical. This will be shown by examining the evidences in the Bible for assertiveness, the biblical guidelines for assertiveness, and two warnings concerning assertiveness.

The Biblical Evidences for Assertiveness

For the Christian, the example of Christ is sufficient evidence in support of this issue. If Christ were shown to be assertive, then it would be a type of divine approval on assertiveness in some forms at least.

Edward McAllister has set forth examples from the life of Christ that indicate that He was assertive.[1]

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[1] Edward W. McAllister, "Assertive Training and the Christian Therapist," Journal of Psychology and Theology (Winter 1975):21-22.

McAllister used the elements of assertiveness given by
Salter in 1949 which have been cited previously (p. 6).
Some of the valid examples of "feeling talk" are found in
Mark 9:17-19 and Mark 10:13-15, in which Christ was angry
and frustrated with those around Him. He expressed to them
His feelings of the moment. An example of "contradict and
attack" is found in Mark 2:23-27 in which Christ contradicted
the teaching of the Pharisees and presented the proper under-
standing of Old Testament passages. Another of Salter's
categories is the "I" statement. Christ used "I" in refer-
ring to Himself throughout His ministry, see Mark 3:13-15
and Mark 14:60-62. It may be said that Christ used "impro-
vise" when He answered the Pharisees and members of Herod's
party that came out to question Him. They were asking Him
about the payment of taxes and He answered them in Mark
12:15-17. The reason that this may be called improvision
is that Christ did not seem to have a pre-planned answer,
but was just responding to the question and situation of the
moment. As can be seen, all of McAllister's examples came
from the Gospel of Mark, but according to McAllister the
same could be done with any of the other Gospels.

John Stoudenmire applied Lazarus' four components
of assertiveness to the life of Christ and found that He was

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[1]Ibid., p. 22.

assertive in all four areas.[1] Jesus refused unreasonable
requests when He refused to give in to the temptations of
the Devil and when He refused to listen to the disciples
when they wanted Him to turn away from the multitudes in
Matthew 14:17. Jesus was able to make positive requests and
did so when He asked the woman at the well for a drink of
water in John 4:7. He also asked the disciples to go after
a donkey when He was about to ride into Jerusalem (Matt
21:2-3). The ability to express positive and negative feel-
ings can also be seen in the Life of Jesus. He expressed
compassion in Matthew 9:36-38; anger in Mark 11:15-17; sorrow
in Matthew 26:38; wonder in Matthew 8:10; and recognized
others' fears in Mark 4:39. The last type of assertiveness
involves being able to initiate, continue, and terminate con-
versations. Christ did this throughout the Gospels--one
example being with the woman at the well. The Bible is
clear that Jesus had no problem beginning or terminating
conversations. In fact, He was at the center of all the con-
versations reported.[2] He was hardly ever a bystander for
long.

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[1]John Stoudenmire, "Jesus and Assertiveness,"
Journal of Religion and Health, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1978),
p. 78.

[2]Ibid.

Another who has tried to show that Jesus was asser-
tive is Arthur Moy.[1] He used the categories proposed by
Lange and Jakubowski for assertive behavior. According to
Moy, Christ used basic assertion when He made statements
referring to Himself as in John 6. He used "empathic asser-
tion" in His dealing with Peter in John 13:7. He recognized
Peter's feelings before making His assertion. Christ used
"confrontive assertion" in His conversations with the Scribes
and Pharisees. Moy also used Paul as an example of "I--
language assertion" in his response to Agrippa in Acts 26:2-
23.[2]

The conclusion which can be drawn from these examples
is that Christ did act in assertive ways in many different
situations and with many people. Assertiveness, then, can-
not be automatically ruled out as a viable option of behavior
for believers, followers of Christ.

The Biblical Guidelines for Assertiveness

The New Testament contains many principles which
guide one's use of assertive comments. Although the New Tes-
tament was written after Christ's earthly life, His asser-
tions adhered to the principles given in the New Testament.
These principles are presented next.

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[1]Arthur C. Moy, "Assertive Behavior in a New Testa-
ment Perspective," Journal of Psychology and Theology 8 (4)
(Winter 1980):288-90.

[2]Ibid., p. 290.

The Mature Personality

Earlier in this study a four element model of personality structure as developed by Lawrence Crabb, Jr. was presented. This was used to compare the personality characteristics of the non-assertive, aggressive, and assertive persons as seen from the secular viewpoint and with secular presuppositions. This same model can be used to present what the mature Christian's personality characteristics should be.

Personally

As a mature believer, a Christian is to have a "firm commitment to entrust our (his) needs of significance and security to the Lord."[1] Namely, he does not feel inferior, unimportant, inadequate, or weak, as the non-assertive person does. He knows that no person can affect his personal worth because God is the One who has determined the personal worth of humanity. He has come to realize that he can act toward people in ways that are not governed by a desire to have his own needs met by those people. The immature person exhibits non-assertive methods of reacting in order to protect his delicate sense of being loved by others. The mature person does not have to react in aggressive ways to prove to himself and others that he is adequate to handle threatening situations. As a personal being, a mature

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[1] Crabb, Counseling Manual, p. 24.

believer is convinced of who he is in Christ, a totally sig-
nificant and secure person.

Rationally

A mature believer is able to understand and act upon
truth, the truth about who he is personally and the truth
about all that God has provided. The non-assertive person
wrongly believes that he must have the approval of others or
that he must prove himself competent in order for him to view
himself as significant and secure. The aggressive person
believes that he must be strong because of the evil in the
world or that he must get his own way. The assertive person,
however, knows that he does not need any of those things in
order to be worthwhile as a person. Non-assertive and
aggressive people act upon wrong, foolish beliefs in that
they do not understand that God is the ultimate source for
the fulfillment of their needs. Even the assertive person
in the secular model is being motivated by wrong thinking.
Ridding himself of catastrophic thinking and depending less
on the reactions from others does not mean that he has come
to an understanding of where his real needs are met. He is
still governed by wrong thoughts, just less socially harmful
ones. The sufficiency of Christ to meet needs is still not
a part of the secularist's belief system. That is the dif-
ference between the assertive unbeliever and the assertive,

mature believer. The believer is acting on truth; the unbeliever is not.

Volitionally

As a volitional being the believer is able to make choices of behavior based on truth that he knows. He does not have to be governed in his behavior by outside influences which would try to compel him to act in various ways. Most of all he is able to act in ways that please God, the One to whom he is responsible for his behavior. The believer is able to decide whether he is going to be assertive in any given situation based on conditions other than external or internal pressure. He is able to consciously choose his course of action to follow the mandates of Scripture. Assertiveness, as taught by secularists, is just a means of making a person more free and skillful in following his wrong beliefs about where his needs are met and how to be a successful person. Both the Christian and the secular therapist desire that the person make his own choices in situations, but the difference is in the motivation and the direction of the will involved in the decision. The believer can be assertive or non-assertive in a given situation based upon principles of truth, not error. These principles are yet to follow.

Emotionally

Emotions are just as real for the believer as they are for the unbeliever, yet the means of expressing them is different, and the types of emotions experienced can be different.

There are no emotions that need to be denied or ignored by a believer. The non-assertive person may, at times, deny his emotions. For example, he may deny that he is angry even though he is angry. Often, though, both non-assertive and aggressive people realize when they are feeling various emotions.

The emotionally mature believer acknowledges whatever emotions he is feeling. The negative emotions of anger and frustration do not have to exist to the extent and degree of intensity for the believer. Ideally, the believer who could always think correct thoughts about how his needs are met, and always act properly based on that truth, would not experience the negative type of anger. Positive anger is the type of anger experienced by Christ in the presence of sin, which can be experienced by believers. Negative emotions are clues to how a person thinks because "in every instance, the wrong negative emotion can be traced to a wrong assumption about how personal needs can be met."[1] The mature believer who is living properly in all four areas of

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[1]Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., Effective Biblical Counseling (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 105.

his personality will deal effectively with any feeling which is "mutually exclusive with compassion"[1] or else it will involve sin.[2]

It can be seen, then, that the personality characteristics of the unbeliever (and often of a believer) who is aggressive, non-assertive, or even assertive are not ones that reflect a mature biblical personality. Furthermore, a believer can be assertive for the wrong reasons and from wrong motivations because of unbiblical personality characteristics.

This has implications for the Christian counselor who is trying to help Christians develop into biblically mature believers. He will not want them to be assertive for the wrong reasons, so his purpose in assertiveness training will not be to develop people with a secular assertive mentality. The ideal assertive person, according to the secular definition, is not the goal or desire of biblical discipleship. Rather, the helper should desire to lead the people he is working with into developing a truly biblical personality, namely, maturity. This has been explained as the commitment to Christ for the meeting of his needs; thinking which is based on the truth of the sufficiency of Christ to meet those needs; biblical behavior in which the person consciously chooses to follow God; and the ability to acknowledge and biblically control expression of all his emotions. Anything short of this is wrong motivation for assertiveness training.

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[1]Ibid., p. 103.   [2]Ibid.

Assertiveness training should not be used as the primary means of developing maturity. Rather, the Christian therapist will use assertiveness training only after he has worked on all four areas of the personality. Enabling one to be more assertive without the other changes in personality will only make the person more conformed to the secular definition of the ideal person, which has been shown to be unbiblical. Biblical assertiveness can flow naturally out of the total context of Christian discipleship with the biblical personality presented earlier as the ideal. Understanding the truths of this model of personality is essential to biblical assertiveness and biblical assertiveness training. A further discussion of the place of assertiveness training will be found in chapter 5.

<div align="center">Love</div>

Throughout the Scriptures believers are commanded and encouraged to love one another. Therefore, every action that a believer does to another believer is to be motivated by love for that person. Assertiveness is no different. In order for assertiveness to be biblical it must be motivated by love.

Love, however, is an abstract concept and has been misunderstood by many. It is not within the scope of this study to give a full exposition on the biblical concept of love, but a general summary of the topic will be sufficient.

Of the Greek words for love, only one--ἀγαπή--has the greatest importance in this study of assertiveness. Because of that, when love is referred to in this paper, it will always refer to the ἀγαπή type of love.

Briefly defined, love is a decision on the part of one to always do what is the best for the other. It does not convey the thought of actions based solely on emotions, but on an intellectual decision to treat each person as he should be treated as a person created in the image of God. Love of this kind finds its expression in many modes of behavior, some of which will be amplified in the remainder of this section of the study. Love is the guiding principle of which the following principles are mere manifestations of that type of love in action.

The decision, then, to be assertive or not in any given situation will depend on what is the most loving thing that could be done. Assertiveness not motivated by love is not biblical assertiveness. Loving deeds, however, are not always perceived as being pleasant by the person experiencing them. Love, at times, involves confrontation, admonition, and rebuke (notice the way that Christ responded to Peter in Matt 16:23; this was the loving response to Peter's rebuke, though it was not perceived as being pleasant by Peter at the time). Loving actions cannot be judged by the responses that they generate, but by the motivation which caused them to be made. Many times the words may be exactly the same in

biblical and unbiblical assertiveness. It is the motivation
which is the key. Assertiveness may or may not be motivated
by love, however, biblical assertiveness is always motivated
by sacrificial love.

Servanthood

Christ was a servant. Matthew 20:28 and Luke 22:27
make it very plain that Christ's life was spent in service
to those around Him. He set the example that all of His fol-
lowers are to uphold in their own lives. Paul understood
it that way as can be seen in Galatians 5:13 where he com-
manded the Galatian believers not to use their salvation as
an opportunity to serve themselves but to "through love serve
one another."

Two Greek words are used to convey the meaning of
this principle as it relates to assertiveness: δοῦλος
(slave), and διάκονος (servant).

A δοῦλος is one who "belonged by nature not to him-
self, but to someone else."[1] His was the life of total obe-
dience to his master, which made it impossible for him to
have two masters (see Matt 6:24). Whatever the master
desired him to do it was his obligation to do it.

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[1] R. Tuente, "Slave," in The New International Dic-
tionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3, ed. Colin Brown
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 592.

A διάκονος, on the other hand, is one who does work for another either under compulsion or voluntarily.[1] The one who benefits most directly is the one to whom the service was given. This word for service implies service toward others in meeting their personal needs as opposed to service in the political community, or to the service of worship.[2]

The difference between slavery and servanthood is important for this study. Hess summarized the distinctions in this way: "Doulos stresses almost exclusively the Christian's complete subjection to the Lord; diakonos is concerned with his service for the church, his brothers and fellowmen, for the fellowship, whether this is done by serving at table, with the word, or in some other way."[3] He continued by saying: "The diakonos is always one who serves on Christ's behalf and continues Christ's service for the outer and inner man; he is concerned with the salvation of men."[4]

Everyone who calls himself a follower of Christ ought to be a slave to Him, which involves being a servant to his fellow-man. A believer can render service both to other believers and to unbelievers. Assertiveness can be used as a means of serving both of these groups of people.

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[1]K. Hess, "Serve," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 544.

[2]Ibid.   [3]Ibid., p. 548.   [4]Ibid.

One way that believers can serve others is to help them see and understand the moral order of the universe as God has established it. God has set up a moral law in which there are consequences to the one who sins. People, however, are not always mindful of the existence of this moral structure. Christ gave believers the opportunity to share in the ministry of teaching people about this order. Assertiveness can be used to help accomplish this. Assertiveness becomes an act of service when the assertive person is not just trying to change the circumstances to make life easier or to protect himself and get his own needs met, but when he is trying to meet the needs of the other by teaching him God's view of sin.

This does not mean that the assertive person is to deliver the consequences of that sin himself, for the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 10:30 that "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," in quoting the Lord's words in Deuteronomy 32:34. The assertive person has not been given the right by God to punish people for sin. He is an agent to teach others that sin will be punished. A mature believer does not have to remain quiet when others sin against him if he is able to use the experience as an opportunity to instruct the one who sinned.

Assertive servanthood, then, is when the person actively seeks to teach another about God and sin through his assertiveness. He is not concerned about his own needs

or hurts, but is willing to put out the effort necessary to help the other person.

Assertiveness is not an act of serving when the goal of the assertive behavior is to get one's own needs met, which is the type of assertive mentality characteristic of secular assertiveness. The desire to protect oneself, make life more comfortable, make one feel more loved or adequate, or to bring benefit to oneself is not assertiveness which is compatible with servanthood. If the person's goals and desires are proper then he can be as assertive as he chooses to be.

Rights

It has already been stated that a large part of the theory of assertiveness revolves around the concept of personal rights (see pp. 11-12). A Christian, however, is not free to stand up for his rights just because they are violated. There are other principles involved.

No one has any rights before God which he can demand that God meet. Paul makes this clear in Romans 9:20-21 in which he reminds the believers in Rome that they are mere vessels of clay in the hands of the master Potter, who is God, their Creator. He has the right to treat them and to do with them anything which He desires.

Men have set up rules, though, in order that the world may run more smoothly. Part of this system of rules

is that all men are created equal and worthy of equal respect as creatures made in the image of God. This is obviously not the secular understanding of rights, but they would agree to the equality of all men. No one has the privilege or right to mistreat another person. In one sense, then, humans do have social rights among themselves. They have the right to be treated with the respect that an image-bearer deserves. This is based on the fact that God created man higher than the animals and gave him a special place in His universe.

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul rebuked the Corinthian believers for acting in ways which caused the name of Christ to be mocked among the unbelievers around them. This may have involved various believers standing up for their legal rights by taking cases against other believers to court. Paul's conclusion to the matter was that if anything causes a stumbling block to be put in the way of anyone else then it would be better off to suffer the loss. It follows that the issue of personal rights would have the same restrictions. If standing up for one's rights would cause a brother to stumble then the believer should act in a way that would meet the other's needs and not try to see that his own needs are met. This agrees with the principle of servanthood previously discussed. Trying to make sure that one's own rights are always upheld is not serving the other, but oneself.

When sin is involved in the violation of a social right then the Christian must respond differently than the unbeliever to an even greater extent. The sin on the part of the one shows that there is a problem in the vertical relationship between that person and God. That is a problem which has a higher priority than the horizontal tension between the one sinned against and the one who sinned. When a believer chooses not to stand up for his rights when they are violated by sin he is affirming that his hurt and loss has a lower priority than the needs of the sinner.

It is at this point, especially, that being assertive could be done for the right or the wrong reason, which could influence whether the outcome was beneficial to either one. If the one whose rights were violated acted assertively because he felt hurt and wanted merely to ease that hurt then his assertiveness would not be done as an act of service for the other and would not biblically profit either one. That is, it would not lead either one into a more godly lifestyle or promote maturity. If, however, the one whose rights were violated saw this as an opportunity to serve the other then he could be as assertive as he wished with the desire of teaching the other about God's view of sin and mercy, man, or whatever the topic needed to be. This would be proper, biblical assertiveness. It would benefit the one who was assertive because of the blessing that comes from serving and it may or may not be instrumental

in the growth of the other. It is not the outcome to assertiveness which determines whether it was biblical assertiveness or not; it is the motivations and desires of the one who is being assertive.

Standing up for violated rights, then, must not be done in a way which could cause another person to stumble or mock the work of God and it must not deny the priority of dealing with the sin before God rather than the sin before man if sin is involved. In both cases it is assertiveness which is motivated by the desire to meet the other's needs, and not one's own, that makes assertiveness biblical. Servanthood is again the key to understanding rights as they apply to believers.

Edification

Another important principle involved in an understanding of assertiveness is edification. This comes from the Greek word οἰκοδομή. The verb form, οἰκοδομέω, literally means "to build"[1] or to construct or erect as one would a building. In the New Testament, the word, and its derivatives are used of houses, barns, the Temple, tombs, towers, cities, synagogues, general building, and of the builders themselves. There is the idea of building something piece

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[1] J. Goetzmann, "House," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 251.

by piece with a view to its completion. This provides the background for the principle of proper speech as Paul and others used and developed it in the New Testament.

Figuratively, the word group has four meanings. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 the physical body is said to be an edifice. The next two usages are found in 1 Corinthians 3:9 in which a local church is called a building and in Ephesians 2:21 in which the Universal Church is also called a building. The fourth figurative use involves the concept of encouraging a believer to greater godliness. That action is called building or edifying.

The root idea of what it means to edify is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 8:10 in which one person, by his actions, strengthened another person to eat meat which had been offered to an idol. This is the only time in the New Testament that edification is used for the promotion of sinful behavior. The root idea is that edification involves strengthening someone in his behavior or character. In Romans 15:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 it is stated that edification involves doing what is best for one's neighbor, in contrast to seeking one's own good. This shows the relationship between servanthood and edification. Edification is a means of serving the other people around you.

In 2 Corinthians 13:9-10 the purpose of edification can be seen. Edification is one of the means by which God causes His children to be made complete; just as building

with hammers and nails is a good way to finish a building. God's view of completeness is found in Romans 8:29 where He shows that His desire is for all to be conformed to the image of His Son. This will be accomplished at the time when all the saints are glorified. Believers have the great opportunity to share in that sanctifying process when they do things for their neighbors that cause (or with the motivation of causing) them to become more conformed to the image of Christ. Two aspects of that conformity is that Christ is more and more given pre-eminence in all aspects of the person's life (see Col 1:16) and that the person is made more holy even as God is holy (see 1 Pet 1:15-16).

There are many ways that one person can edify another. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:2-5, 26 that in the exercising of one's spiritual gifts edification will take place. This author believes that the principle of those verses applies, though the specific example of the gift of tongues does not apply any longer. When one exercises his gift he is cooperating with the plan of the Spirit to cause spiritual growth in the Body of Christ through spiritual gifts.

In 2 Corinthians 12:19 Paul explained that he edified through his "speaking in Christ." This included all of his preaching and teaching on a formal basis and also all of his more private conversations in which he was able to share Christ (see Acts 20:20).

For the subject of assertiveness the most directly applicable method of edifying is found in Ephesians 4:29. Here Paul stated that all speech was to be worthwhile. It is not to be "unwholesome," namely, words that are rotten, putrid, vile, or injurious as well as profane or corrupting words.[1] Instead, all words are to be words that promote spiritual growth in the person spoken to. People are to speak in order to meet the need of the moment, namely, to give timely instruction.[2] The words spoken are to "give grace," that is, the person is to be spiritually benefitted[3] by what is said.

God considers edification very important as can be seen by the fact that in at least two places He commands believers to be actively involved in edifying others (Rom 14:19 and 1 Cor 14:12).

Some of the results of edification can be seen in the life of the early church. In Acts 9:31 they enjoyed both numerical and spiritual growth because the believers were involved in edification. In Ephesians 4:13, 15 and 16 the Church experienced mutual growth in fellowship with God as it grew in maturity.

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[1]William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary, Exposition of Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 220.

[2]E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistle to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 110.

[3]Hendriksen, Ephesians, p. 221.

In order for assertiveness to be biblical, then, it must be edifying. It must be such that it builds up a person into the image of Christ and does not tear him down by causing him to sin in his response to situations or people. The believer cannot control the responses of other believers to him or to others, but he can act and speak in such a way that it is motivated by the desire to build up the other person in Christ. Attempts to build another up may not have the desired result, but that does not mean that the spoken message was unbiblical.

Assertive edification involves promoting Christ, not promoting oneself. The content of the assertive message should include teaching the other person about God and his responsibility to Him. Assertiveness is not edifying when it is not motivated by the desire to help the person become more godly, but to make him change for the purpose of making life more bearable for the offended one, if offense is involved. Assertive edification may involve encouragement, the giving of thanks, or rebuke, depending on the situation. It will always, however, contain some form of positive spiritual message. Spiritual growth through edification involves one person being used of God to help another or others in their walk with God, by their learning more about Him and His ways. Assertiveness can be an effective tool or a destructive tool in accomplishing the task of edification.

The Body of Christ

In Matthew 16:18 Christ said that He would build His Church. Through Paul, Christ showed how important this Church is, for in Ephesians 5 Paul stated that the Church was the Body of Christ and that He was the Head of it. Every believer in this Church age is a member of that body. For that reason every believer is to treat every other believer properly. This principle is explained most fully in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 5. Everything that one believer does affects all the other members of the Body. Therefore, only that which is beneficial to the Body should be done by any believer. As a person is considering whether assertiveness is a proper method of behavior in a situation, he must consider the effects that his behavior might have on the Body. Again, his own motivation, governed by truth, is the key, not necessarily a warm response from the other person or persons. Biblical motivation (servanthood) governed by an accurate understanding of what comprises proper, edifying speech is imperative. If the desire is not that the Body of Christ is built up and benefitted then the response is unbiblical.

Warnings

There are two warnings which must be taken into consideration in a study of assertiveness. These have been briefly stated before.

Egocentric mentality

An important aspect to consider in understanding assertiveness is the attitude of Christ as portrayed in Philippians 2:5-8. He humbled Himself in order to serve the spiritual needs of people. Biblical assertiveness does not come from a person who is proud and who tries to exalt himself. It may be assertiveness, but it will never qualify for the type of assertiveness that believers are to be involved in. Christians are not to exalt themselves. Sinful pride motivates actions that do not represent the mindset of servanthood spoken of earlier. Lawrence Crabb, Jr. has written a paraphrase of Philippians 2:5-9 as a person with a severe case of egocentric mentality may have written it. Any part of this kind of attitude will make assertiveness unbiblical for that person.

> Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who because He existed in the form of God, asserted His Deity, claiming all the position and value which was truly His by declaring Himself, taking His rightful position as Lord and Master of all, maintaining all the trappings due His regal and majestic stature; and who insisted on His rights as a sinless being, with a healthy display of appropriate self-esteem assertively refused to suffer the humiliating ridicule of the cross. Therefore God had no need to exalt Him, for He had already exalted Himself.[1]

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[1]Lawrence Crabb, Jr., unpublished sermon, "Intimacy, What It Is," part 2, p. 49.

Ministry vs. manipulation

The second warning to those who would be assertive
is that it is very easy to manipulate through assertiveness
and it is much more difficult to minister through it.

Manipulation is the outcome when one uses another
to get his own needs met. This can be done knowingly and
deliberately or unknowingly and not deliberately. Asser-
tive manipulation can be very subtle. A common manipulative
comment in an adverse situation is to be assertive with the
goal that the person who presented the adversive stimuli
would remove that stimuli. This is manipulative because the
perceived need for a non-adversive environment is causing the
person to try to have that need met. That, however, is not
a proper need or goal. For someone to tell a person to stop
doing something adversive simply because it bothers him is
manipulative; not biblically assertive. Manipulation happens
when any person perceives a personal need and uses another
person to meet that need often without thought of that other
person's needs.

Ministry is when one gives himself in order that the
needs of the other be met without any consideration of
whether his own needs will be met. He is able to do this
because his own personal needs have already been met through
Christ and all that He has chosen to provide.[1] Ministry, as

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[1]Crabb, Counseling Manual, pp. 20-21.

a lifestyle, is only possible when one is firmly convinced
of the sufficiency of Christ to take care of his own needs.
Ministry comes from servants and is a reflection of the ser-
vant mentality. The ministry of assertiveness involves ask-
ing what response will be best suited to meet the other per-
son's needs.

Galatians 5:13 summarizes this point by saying that
people should not serve themselves, but others. Assertive-
ness can be used as a means of ministry or manipulation.

Summary

The Bible gives by precept and example evidence that
believers are allowed to be assertive and in fact can be
instruments of real ministry if they are assertive. There
are many principles by which to judge the appropriateness
of assertive comments. Christ was assertive and followed
each of the principles set forth in the previous pages.
Paul and the other epistle writers were assertive when they
encouraged, taught, and rebuked their readers.

The most important principle involved in biblical
assertiveness is servanthood--love in action. This was the
prime attitude and example which Christ displayed. Those
who minister by serving others are those who desire to meet
the needs of others and are not concerned only with meeting
their own needs. They are able to do that because of their
commitment to Christ and His sufficiency to meet their

needs. Assertiveness which is motivated by the goal or desire of making life more comfortable is not biblical assertiveness.

Assertiveness is most beneficial when it contains a message concerning God and proper responses to Him. Biblical assertiveness is effective in causing the growth of individuals in their own personal walk with the Lord. Assertiveness can be edifying.

It may seem as if the qualifications for biblical assertiveness are so strict that no one would ever be able to perfectly meet all of them and therefore they could never be properly assertive.

The guidelines are indeed strict and serve as the ideal and model of biblical assertiveness. Believers, however, do not have to wait until they are motivated perfectly before acting. People are to strive for the ideal motivation and to act as biblically assertive as they can.

Training or guidance in assertiveness is a proper mode of therapy, then, provided that the biblical principles involved are taught extensively.

CHAPTER IV

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

In order for a counselor to use assertiveness train-
ing techniques he must know who would benefit by this form
of guidance. In this chapter, situational non-assertiveness,
assessment inventories, and the validity of those inventor-
ies will be examined in order that the biblical counselor
or pastor will be able to determine who might profit most
from training in assertiveness.

Situational Non-Assertiveness

Andrew Salter believed that unassertiveness was a
character trait of the person he was counseling. He
believed that if the person responded in an unassertive way
in one situation then he would most likely respond in the
same way in all social interactions.[1] For this reason he
recommended assertiveness training for almost every psycho-
logical disorder.[2]

Joseph Wolpe, however, did not agree that unasser-
tiveness was a character trait in that sense. He believed
that a person could be assertive in one situation, but
non-assertive or aggressive in other situations just as

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[1]Rimm and Masters, _Behavior Therapy_, p. 64.

[2]Ibid.

easily. A person may have no trouble being assertive when
he is with his wife, but unable to be assertive with his boss
at work.[1] This led Wolpe to analyze the various social sit-
uations of his clients much more closely.

The research evidence supports Wolpe's view of the
importance of the situation in unassertiveness. Some people,
though, may be unassertive in almost all of their social
interactions. Some may be overpolite, apologetic, or refuse
to confront, whereas others may be aggressive and insensi-
tive in most of their interactions. Many people, however,
are unassertive in specific situations. They have the neces-
sary skills to be assertive, but because of anxiety in any
given situation they choose to be unassertive.[2]

It is important to be aware of this so that when a
person seems to handle one social situation well it will not
be assumed that he will handle all social interactions as
well. It is this variance in people's abilities to properly
handle all of life's situations that have given rise to
assessment inventories. These will be discussed next.

Assessment Inventories

The most common method of gathering information on
a person's pattern of interrelating is through a self-report

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[1]Ibid., p. 65.

[2]Chambless and Goldstein, "Behavioral Psychotherapy,"
p. 251.

inventory. The counselor may simply ask the person how he would most likely respond or feel in various social environments. The counselor may give the person a list of situations to which he must write down how he would normally respond. Some of these lists are such that the person must put down a numerical evaluation of how often he would be assertive and how he would feel in the situations. Appendix A and Appendix B are two of these inventories.

After the person responds to each of the various situations it is useful for the counselor to discuss why the client responded as he did to the questions. The more fully the person explains his responses the more beneficial the assessment inventory becomes.

After the person has been questioned on various types of interactions the counselor knows much more clearly how extensive and in what specific situations the person has problems in assertiveness. Assessment inventories can be a useful tool to accomplish this task.

Validity of Assessment Inventories

This section is necessary in order to caution the biblical counselor or pastor on the wholesale use of the standard assessment inventories currently in the field. A critical issue in assessment is determining what is a proper response to a given social situation. All of the inventories examined have been designed from the secular point of view. The biblical counselor must be aware of this so

that he will not rate behaviors as unassertive which are
not proper behaviors for believers to engage in. For exam-
ple, it would be wrong to rate as unassertive a response
that indicated that a person would not participate in a
heated discussion if he was staying out of the discussion
because of a legitimate concern that it would provoke the
others to more anger and sin. In order to improve behavior
it is important to know what the improved behavior should be.
As has been presented before the main difference in biblical
assertiveness and nonbiblical assertiveness is the motiva-
tion of the one who is being assertive. The present inven-
tories do not reflect behaviors based on biblical motivations
and hence are not designed to test the motivations involved.
This is their greatest limitation. With this in mind, how-
ever, the biblical counselor can use them to great advantage
in spotting problem areas and situations.

CHAPTER V

ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING IN A LOCAL CHURCH

Assertiveness training has become a more popular form of therapy with secular and biblical counselors. This form of guidance, however, does not have to be limited to just the counseling office. This chapter will provide information on how assertiveness training can be used in many ways in the local church setting to bring about the emotional and spiritual growth of the Body.

General Guidelines

Assertiveness training should not be done apart from extensive and comprehensive teaching on the biblical motivations that must govern assertiveness. Teaching someone to be assertive without teaching him and helping him to develop proper motivations is, in essence, helping him to be more ungodly in his actions and thinking.

Therefore, any training in assertiveness must begin with an examination of motivations, the present ways of acting in given situations, and a presentation of the biblical principles dealt with earlier in this study. This must be done whether the guidance is going to be formal or informal, long term or short term, with a few or with many.

57

Informal Application

Believers can help other believers in the area of assertiveness even without the other person knowing that it is happening. The principles presented in chapter three and the ones to follow can be used whether they are labeled "assertiveness training" formally or not.

The most common way of doing this is in casual conversations. When one knows the principles involved he may teach others without the formality of getting permission to do so. This can happen almost anywhere, anytime, without notice or previous planning, or with anyone. The only other requirement is that the person cares enough about the spiritual growth of another to get personally involved and is perceptive enough to know that a need exists in the life of the other. This is a good way to build up the Body of Christ into emotional and spiritual maturity, especially since it is available to anyone who desires to have this form of ministry.

Formal Application

Some of the training in assertiveness that will take place in a local church will be done formally. Even here, however, it does not have to be called "assertiveness training." The difference between formal and informal training is that formal training is usually preplanned, will involve a specific number of people or group of people, will happen

in a predetermined place at a set time, and consists of more
direct giving of information than in informal training.

There are two major avenues of formal training:
preaching/teaching and counseling.

Preaching/Teaching

One way of presenting the principles of assertive-
ness is through formal preaching and teaching. This author
has done this by preaching sermons which dealt with various
aspects of the biblical principles presented in chapter
three. In this way, the groundwork for more direct assertive-
ness training can be laid while at the same time helping
others to understand what is involved in biblical inter-
relating, especially in difficult situations which few, if
any, know how to handle by instinct. Preaching enables one
to reach more people than he could normally in private coun-
seling. He can also help those in this way who, for one
reason or another, are not willing or able to submit them-
selves to counseling.

Preaching also enables one to present information
concerning a problem which many people may have but are
either unaware of it or too afraid to admit it. Some people
may seek more direct and private help because they have been
made aware that there is help available in this area. Some
of these people may have lost hope that they could ever
learn how to handle stressful and difficult situations.

Preaching, then, has the primary benefit of teaching many people biblical principles of motivation and conduct, and secondarily, it may be a means of recruiting for private counseling.

Sunday School, Bible School, and even home Bible studies can be an excellent place to teach assertiveness principles. Solid biblical principles can be taught to many who would not be reached through private counseling, and it may be an opportunity for others to seek help if they perceive a real need in their own lives in this area. In most cases it will be more effective not to even call the study "assertiveness training," for many may have presuppositions about what assertiveness training would involve.

It could be possible, though, if the people involved deemed it beneficial, to have a Sunday School class specifically for those who have needs in this area and know it. This would be a combination of counseling and formal teaching, as they have been differentiated in this study. Assertiveness training, as can be seen, is not at all limited to a few people in a counseling setting.

Counseling

Some of the work of assertiveness training will take place in the context of a formal counseling situation, in which one or more people have asked for this form of therapy or the counselor has approached them about a perceived need on their part for help in this area. There are

three aspects involved in this form of therapy: group size, skills training techniques, and how to conduct a training program or session.

Group size

Groups may be as few as one to as many as dozens and still be effective for assertiveness training. It will depend on the people and the problems as well as the skill of the counselor in the group.

There are advantages to having more than one in an assertiveness training group. The therapist does not have to role play so many people when role-playing exercises are used because there are many others around who would be able to do it profitably. A larger group allows a wider variety of assertive, non-assertive, and aggressive responses to be reported by the members of the group, thus broadening the scope of the training. There is also more of a tendency on the part of each of the members of the group to encourage each other with support and feedback.[1]

There are also advantages to individual training. In many churches there will not be a group of people who are willing to go through a training program. In these cases individual training is not optional, it is the only option. Another advantage is that some people will be either too shy or disturbed about their problem to take the risk of

[1]Cotler and Guerra, Assertion Training, pp. 79-81.

exposing it in front of many people. To force these people into a group would not be helpful to them at first. After some individual work they may be able to meet with a group. One-to-one counseling may be best also for those whose problems are very complicated, involving much more than regular assertiveness training.

Generally, the needs of the people involved and the skill of the counselor (or counselors) must determine the size of the group, though any size can theoretically be used effectively.

Skills training techniques

Arnold Lazarus has stated that the techniques he uses in his assertiveness training programs include "advice, education, exploration of the inhibiting factors, modeling and behavior rehearsal."[1] He acknowledges that his advice is usually met with resistance, though, at times his advice proves to be helpful. The biblical counselor can also use these techniques to help Christians.

For the Christian therapist advice and instruction are closely related. As has been stated before, all biblical assertiveness training begins with instruction in the biblical principles involved. Enough has been said about the content of this instruction.

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[1]Lazarus, Clinical Behavior Therapy, p. 198.

"Behavioral rehearsal involves the role-playing of a previously experienced or anticipated situation that has been or is expected to be difficult for the client to handle."[1] The counselor (or in a group a volunteer will work well) acts the part of the one with whom the client is having the problems and he is asked to respond to him. He is then guided into proper expressions of assertiveness with the hope that he will be able to respond properly when the real situation occurs. This is one of the most common techniques in assertiveness training.

Modeling is when the therapist himself shows the client how he should respond in various situations. The client plays the part of the one who is giving him trouble and the counselor shows him, by example, how he should respond. This type of therapy is most effective if the model is seen as similar in age, sex, and other characteristics as the client.[2] Modeling can be done live, with tapes, or through films. One advantage of modeling is that the client is able to experience how assertive remarks are perceived by the recipient of the remarks. He is able to see that assertive comments are not offensive or destructive by judging his own reactions to the counselor's assertiveness. Modeling can and should be used in assertiveness training

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[1]Foreyt and Rathjen, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, p. 69.

[2]Ibid., p. 68.

just as freely as Christ used it in His teaching min-
istry.

Conducting a training program or session

A counseling program should begin with the coun-
selor explaining to the people involved what will be taking
place over the time frame of the program. This allows the
people to understand the direction that will be followed and
may relieve some of the anxiety that they may be exper-
iencing. Next, the therapist should ask those involved
about the situations in which they find it hard to respond
or feel particularly anxious. The assessment inventories
may be used here. Following that, the counselor should
teach the people involved the principles which must be fol-
lowed for biblical assertiveness. This will take many ses-
sions most probably. Modeling and behavior rehearsal is
helpful next as the therapist works with the people on their
problem situations. A detailed program from the first meet-
ing until the last departure is given by Lange and Jakubowski[1]
and by adding the Christian content of biblical principles
it is one which biblical counselors can find workable.
Each counselor, however, is free to change it in any way
that he deems would make it more profitable for those in
his group.

[1]Lange and Jakubowski, Responsible Assertive Be-
havior, pp. 197-208.

During the assertiveness training program it is often helpful to assign the people exercises in which they may try out their newly learned way of relating. This will help to reinforce what they have learned. To do this, the people are asked to deliberately make assertive comments in situations in which there is little anxiety and a high success rate. This may involve asking a service station attendant for directions. As the people are able they should be encouraged to take more risks in their interactions, for the most profitable learning will take place in the context of the greatest risk.

During the assertiveness training program it is important to give constructive and useful feedback to the client. This should take place after every attempt on the part of the person to be assertive. Begin with the positive aspects of the attempt and then offer suggestions concerning how it could be done even better. Lange and Jakubowski also give a good list of guidelines for giving feedback[1] with the intention of helping the therapist be the best encouragement to the people he is working with. Support from the therapist is important for the people as they try to learn new ways of responding.

The counselor should be aware of the needs of the people that he is working with and be willing and able to

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[1]Ibid., p. 195.

adapt his program to meet their needs. This may involve longer time periods than was previously planned, or the willingness to work on any other personal problems that may arise out of the discussion in the counseling office. Assertiveness training normally takes place in the context of helping people in the total aspect of their maturity.

There are many ways that assertiveness training can be useful in a local church. Some have been mentioned here, though many more exist. There are many needs in the lives of people in the Church and the local body is one place where the need for proper social interaction skills can be met, namely, through biblical assertiveness training.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Assertiveness, as defined in this study, is the open and honest expression of one's feelings, attitudes, desires, and opinions in a way which does not violate the rights of others. It may involve the expression of anger, joy, love, and dislike; or it may involve the confrontation of another's beliefs or actions; or of asking for directions. It is when the person is consciously making some type of impact on the world, whether great or small.

Secular therapists use assertiveness training as a method of helping non-assertive people become more assertive and aggressive people become less aggressive.

The primary justification in the mind of the secularists for the use of assertiveness is that every person has equal rights and should be able to stand up for them when they are violated.

Believers, however, have much more to consider in being assertive than violated or denied rights. Some believers have decided that non-assertiveness is the only biblical approach to threatening situations because of a fear of being aggressive. This blanket approach to assertiveness which says that believers are not to be assertive has

been rejected in this study. Rather, guidelines and principles to the proper use of assertive comments have been presented.

The justification for assertiveness is found in the example of Christ. He was assertive throughout His life in many ways. Some of these have been presented. If one were to look through the rest of the New Testament and Old Testament he would find that the apostles, prophets, and other men of God were all assertive. The question, then, is not whether Christians should ever be assertive, but rather, what the principles are that govern biblical assertiveness. Six principles have been presented along with two warnings. These can be summarized by the admonition in Galatians 5:13 where Paul said that believers were to "through love serve one another." This means that for assertiveness to be biblical it must be motivated by love and ministry so that the needs of the other person is the focus, not one's own needs. Biblical assertiveness will, secondarily, minister to the one who is being assertive because of the blessings related to ministry and doing God's work.

A biblical counselor may use many of the current assessment inventories to aid in the discovery of problem areas which can be dealt with in assertiveness training. These inventories give the counselor many various situations to test the client's behavior patterns and thinking.

Finally, assertiveness training is applicable to many aspects of the church life. People who know the principles involved may guide others in this form of therapy in formal or informal ways. Informally it can be effectively done through casual conversations. Most of the time this type of guidance will not even be labeled "assertiveness training." Formal guidance can be accomplished through preaching, teaching, or the private counseling office.

Assertiveness training can be a valuable way of helping people who have problems responding to threatening situations. Assertiveness is a valid means of responding for believers, provided the motivation is one of serving the other out of one's love for Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

ASSERTIVENESS INVENTORY

The following questions will be helpful in assessing your
assertiveness. Be honest in your responses. All you have
to do is draw a circle around the number that describes you
best. For some questions the assertive end of the scale is
at 0, for others at 4. Key: 0 means no or never; 1 means
somewhat or sometimes; 2 means average; 3 means usually or
a good deal; and 4 means practically always or entirely.

1. When a person is highly unfair, do you call   0 1 2 3 4
   it to attention?

2. Do you find it difficult to make decisions?   0 1 2 3 4

3. Are you openly critical of other's ideas,   0 1 2 3 4
   opinions, behavior?

4. Do you speak out in protest when someone   0 1 2 3 4
   takes your place in line?

5. Do you often avoid people or situations for   0 1 2 3 4
   fear of failure?

6. Do you usually have confidence in your own   0 1 2 3 4
   judgment?

7. Do you insist that your spouse or roommate   0 1 2 3 4
   take on a fair share of household chores?

8. Are you prone to "fly off the handle"?   0 1 2 3 4

9. When a salesman makes an effort, do you   0 1 2 3 4
   find it hard to say "no" even though the
   merchandise is not really what you want?

10. When a latecomer is waited on before you   0 1 2 3 4
    are, do you call attention to the situ-
    ation?

11. Are you reluctant to speak up in a dis-   0 1 2 3 4
    cussion or debate?

Adapted from Alberti and Emmons, Your Perfect Right, p. 40.

70

APPENDIX B

Please indicate your degree of discomfort or anxiety in the
space provided before each situation listed below. Utilize
the following scale to indicate degree of discomfort. 1 =
little, 2 = a little, 3 = a fair amount, 4 = much, 5 = very
much. Then go over the list and indicate after each item the
probability or likelihood of your displaying the behavior if
actually presented with the situation. Utilize the follow-
ing scale to indicate your response probability. 1 = always
do it, 2 = usually do it, 3 = do it about half the time, 4 =
rarely do it, 5 = never do it.

1. Turn down a request to borrow your car.
2. Compliment a friend.
3. Ask a favor of someone.
4. Resist sales pressure.
5. Apologize when you are at fault.
6. Turn down a request for a meeting or date.
7. Admit fear and request consideration.
8. Ask for a raise.
9. Tell a person you are intimately involved with when he/
    she says or does something that bothers you.
10. Admit ignorance in some area.
11. Turn down a request to borrow money.
12. Ask personal questions.
13. Turn off a talkative friend.
14. Ask for constructive criticism.
15. Initiate a conversation with a stranger.
16. Compliment a person you are romantically involved with
    or interested in.
17. Your initial request for a meeting or date is turned
    down, ask the person again at a later time.

Adapted from the "Cambrill and Richey Assertion Inventory,"
Rimm and Masters, Behavior Therapy, p. 67.

71

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72

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