

MEANING IN MINISTRY

Pastoral Care with Logotherapy
With **REV. TOM EDMONDSON**

Yearbook Volume 1: Explorations in Logotherapy, Pastoral Care, and Counseling.

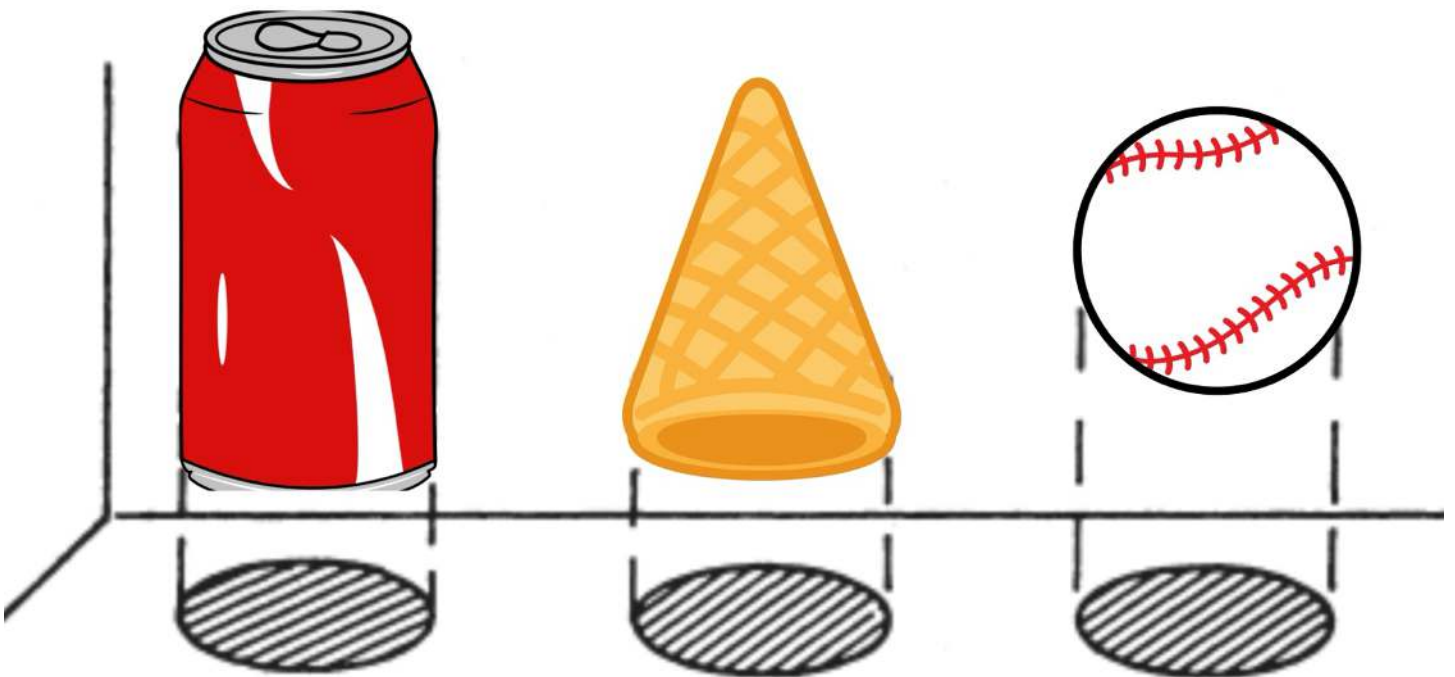


Table of Contents

Introduction	p. 3
Interviews	p. 4-19
• Dr. Ann Graber (full transcript)	pp. 4-13
• Dr. Stephan Peeck	p. 14
• Dr. Edward Marshall	p. 15
• Dr. Anne Niiles-Mäki	p. 16
• Rabbi Dr. Mordecai Finley	p. 17
• Dr. David Sar Shalom, MD	p. 18
• Luis Marrero	p. 19
Translations	pp. 20-22
• Dr. Heye Heyen	p. 20
• Dr. Stephan Peeck	p. 21
• Dr. Ulrich Kusche	p. 22
Bonus Content	pp. 23-29
• 2021 Logosermon	p. 23
• 2021 Book Press Release	p. 29
• Book interview	p. 30
Sign My Yearbook	pp. 31-32
Dedication	p. 33-34
• Teachers	p. 33
• Family	p. 34
In the Pipeline for 2025	p. 35

A special word of thanks is in order to my webmaster and friend, **Nate Martin of NX2 Agency**. Thanks to Nate for all the hard work on my website, Youtube channel, interviews, and other formatting issues! nate@nx2agency.com



© Copyright 2024 meaninginministry.com. A lot of this material is shareware, graciously contributed by colleagues in the field. Please give due credit to each contributor and this publication if you make use of their material.

© Copyright 2024 meaninginministry.com. Ein Großteil dieses Materials ist Shareware, die freundlicherweise von Kollegen aus der Praxis zur Verfügung gestellt wurde. Bitte geben Sie jedem Mitwirkenden und dieser Veröffentlichung die gebührende Anerkennung, wenn Sie ihr Material verwenden.

Copyright 2024 meaninginministry.com. Gran parte de este material es shareware, amablemente contribuido por colegas en el campo. Por favor, si utilizas su material, da el debido crédito a cada colaborador y a esta publicación.

Introduction



Welcome to the first yearbook of **Meaning in Ministry.com!** 2024 has been a busy year for me. I began working on my Diplomate project in Logo-Philosophy with **Dr. Ann-Marie Neale** (Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy). I began learning German to be able to read books by Frankl (and others) not yet translated into English. I began learning *Wertorientierte Imagination (Value-oriented imagination)* with **Dr. Stephan Peeck** (Institutes für Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse Hamburg – Bergedorf), and I conducted many interviews for my website. Now I am delighted to share some summaries and bonus material in this yearbook!

It is a real privilege to have so many willing mentors and conversation partners. What a blessing to be able to reach out to willing people all over the world to talk and share information! Without their generosity and openness, this year of growth would not have been possible. What would the world be without Logotherapists? “You are the salt of the earth!”

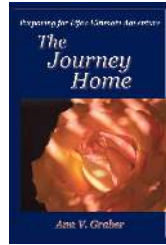
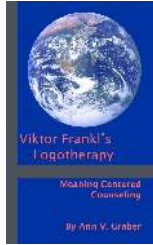
Here is the 2023-2024 “Thank you list.” Some, but not all, have content on my website, but each deserves a word of appreciation:

Rabbi Dr. Mordecai Finley
Dr. Ann Graber
Rev. Dr. Heye Heyen
Dr. Wolfram Kurz
Dr. Ulrich Kusche
Dr. Willem Maas
Dr. Anne Niiles-Mäki
Mr. Luis A. Marrero
Dr. Edward Marshall, M.D.
Dr. Maria Marshall
Dr. Ann-Marie Neale (my Diplomate supervisor)
Dr. Charles McLafferty
Ms. Sladjana Milosevic
Sr. Jaime Paniccia
Dr. Alex Pattakos and Dr. Elaine Dundon
Dr. Stephan Peeck (my *Wertorientierte Imagination* instructor)
Dr. Karl-Heinz Röhlin
Dr. David Sar Shalom, M.D.
Dr. Andreas Schreiber

Note: I have listed everyone I can remember to thank for their willingness to engage me in conversation, teach me, etc. Some have also contributed content (interviews, articles) to my website. This is not to imply that any of these fine people wholly agree with or endorse everything included in my work. My shortcomings are my own. ***If I have left anyone off the list, I am truly sorry. It was not my intention to do so.***

Interviews

Dr. Ann Graber



Bio: Dr. Ann V. Graber is Professor of Pastoral Logotherapy, Fellow, founding Director of the *Graduate Center for Pastoral Logotherapy* and recipient of the Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) at *GTF*. Ann grew up in Europe, was educated in Austria, and later continued her higher education in the USA. She studied Dr. Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy, culminating in the Diplome Credential from the *Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy* (1993). She joined the Institute as a professional member and mentored many students. Her particularly innovative contribution to the Institute has been the "Distance Learning" outreach and participation in developing an English language curriculum in Dr. Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy.

Ann's quest for greater spiritual understanding led her to study Pastoral Psychology and Counseling at the *Graduate Theological Foundation*, earning the Doctor of Ministry (1999) and subsequently the Doctor of Philosophy in Pastoral Psychology (2002) degree. After completing her Ph.D. studies, Dr. Graber was invited to join the *GTF* faculty and became the liaison between *GTF* and the *Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy*. When *GTF* established the Graduate Center for Pastoral Logotherapy in 2012, Dr. Graber was honored to serve as its initial Director (2012-2017), developing a core curriculum in Pastoral Logotherapy with fellow faculty members who were adept in Pastoral Care and Counseling and duly credentialed in Logotherapy. The Pastoral Logotherapy initiative of the *GTF* is the first of its kind to focus specifically upon the pastoral application of Dr. Viktor Frankl's meaning-oriented Logotherapy, which is inclusive of the noetic (spiritual) dimension in its counseling approach.

Interview: Late 2023. <https://www.meaninginministry.com/interviews-1> (bottom of page).

Books: *Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy: Meaning-Centered Counseling* (2004), *The Journey Home: Preparing for Life's Ultimate Adventure* (2009), and *Journey to Your Interior Castle* (2010).

Quick summary: In this meeting, Dr. Graber discusses her journey of studying Logotherapy and earning her credentials at the Viktor Frankl Institute and the Graduate Theological Foundation. She shares examples of how Logotherapy has been applied in pastoral care, including a Muslim imam helping, a rabbi, and a Catholic priest. The discussion also touches on the mystical aspects of Frankl's work and the opportunities for pastors to explore Logotherapy through the *Graduate Theological Foundation*.

Note: Below is the transcript of my audio interview with Dr. Graber. Unfortunately, the sound quality is not the best and I also botched the first minute or two of sound. For these two reasons, I present here a word for word transcription of our conversation. It has not been cleaned up for grammar so that the wording here matches the audio.

Dr. Graber: ... So, Frankl's background is the theory of his Logotherapy impressed me very much and if he could find meaning in life after what he lived through, I can look for meaning in my life under my circumstances. And as I had this more positive outlook, again, things came my way that are just beyond description, such as synchronistic events. I'm still recovering, this is 3-4 years after my initial quadriplegia, and I was getting some better. But I so wondered, how can I study Logotherapy?

And then I find this flyer in my mailbox—I mean, at the time I'm a housewife. This flyer in my mailbox announcing that the *Mid-America Institute*, which was then located in Kansas City, is bringing Dr. Elizabeth Lukas to the United States to teach a seminar, a weeklong seminar on Logotherapy.

Tom: Wow.

Dr. Graber: It was just, well, I can't get to Vienna, but I can get across the state. I live outside of St. Louis, and I can get across the state and make it to Kansas City. I did. It was very, very difficult getting around there for a week, but it's really—this is what I want to do in my life. And especially her emphasis also was she had written numerous books and in some she's often praised as the primary student of Viktor Frankl.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: So, I came to know her, and we could talk in German and I could read her books. And so, this was my major drawing card. And then I continued studying Logotherapy. And eventually in 1993, I earned my diplomate credential at the *Viktor Frankl Institute*. And then I was thinking, well, now I'm a diplomate, if I'm going to be teaching psychologists or counsellors, I better get a higher degree.

In looking around—I really looked at Missouri University and I looked at colleges around here and what I found was, well, too limiting for me. I had a broader cultural background. English was one of the later languages I had to learn. And these colleges here at the time, people were too local. Some of them hadn't been out of the state yet, right? And I just didn't fit in. So, to my astonishment, I was seeing a therapist at the time, and I asked her, you know, where did you get your training? You're so good. And she said, oh, at the Graduate Theological Foundation I earned, you know, after seminary, I earned my doctorate at the Graduate Theological Foundation.

So, I applied and what so impressed me is that The Graduate Theological Foundation was founded in 1962, and very much they wanted to be diverse, inclusive, welcoming of all faith traditions as well as people with broad cultural backgrounds. And today we have globalized so much since then. But anyway, I went there, and I loved the people I found there, every shade and hue of color and background and every accent. And so that was my drawing card to GTF. And then because as I first earned, my D.Min. and my book, *The Journey Home* was actually the thesis of that degree, but then I wanted to earn a PhD, and *Frankl's Logotherapy: Method of Choice in Ecumenical Pastoral Counselling*, was my dissertation for the PhD.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: Then when I defended my dissertation, one of the highlights of my life. I had a committee consisting of the President of the Theological Foundation, a Dean from Oxford, and a well-known, well regarded Catholic university professor. This was my committee that grilled me on my during my

dissertation defense, and then they asked me when I had answered their questions. Would you please step out? We will discuss your answers. And I come there after a while, I'm invited back in, and the question now is, oh, congratulations, Dr. Graber, you passed. And then the president, Dr. Morgan at the time, invited me to join the faculty.

Tom: Nice.

Dr. Graber: One of the biggest moments in my life. Anyway. I happily accepted his invitation and now it became obvious this is an institution that is very ecumenically oriented. Yes, and they're looking for their training pastoral counsellors. So, we wanted explicitly to apply it or, for those who were interested in the pastoral local therapeutic application, it's available. And by this time, I first started as a faculty member of the *Viktor Frankl Institute* after I earned my diplomate in 1993, and then as a college professor at *GTF*. I know I have had students from 50 countries.

Tom: Wow.

Dr. Graber: And it's just amazing what has happened since then, the outreach, the global outreach we now have.

Tom: Yes.

Dr. Graber: And, you know, diversity. We need to be inclusive and we need to be welcoming of all and by and large, yes. So this is how the pastoral Logotherapy team at least, but that was my contribution.

Tom: Well, yes. And of course I went looking once I had really discovered Frankl. I guess I don't say philosophy, but I discovered Logotherapy, Existential Analysis in my own life, began to implement it in the ministry. And then I thought, well, there has to be a training program for higher credit. And then I found the *GTF* and I found you and the rest is history. Wonderful. Yes, thank you it.

Dr. Graber: Was so amazing to me when I OK connection with Frankl. Yes, I had met Dr. Frankl on several occasions, but it was always, you know, I'm one in a line of people shaking hands. But then I attended his birthday party, his 90th birthday.

Tom: Wow.

Dr. Graber: In Vienna by invitation and there were about 1200 people there and that's when I met the grandchildren. His grandchildren, the young lady is the older and then the younger one is the grandson. And so, he noticed that I not only speak German, Austrian, German, so English. And then in time, he was still studying with Dr. Lukas. And when he had completed his studies with Dr. Lukas, he heard about our diplomat credential in the United States and wanted to know what he had to do to earn it. So, I told him, well, it requires a project, and most people write a book.

I don't like to write. What do you like to do? I make films.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: Well, you're sitting on the archives in Vienna. Make a film that gets through the education committee, right? And he made a film for Joe and I and it's a great film. It was this strong emphasis on the noetic dimension, right? More than just mind and feelings and body. We have a higher level of awareness but needing to bring to tap into it and that is where we will be guided in our life purpose our do it meaningfully and so forth, right. So that helps to establishing.

Tom: Very nice.

Dr. Graber: Viktor Frankl. Yes.

Tom: I, you know, you made me think about the fact that we're talking about implementing Logotherapy and Existential Analysis in, in forms of pastoral care. And I, I know from having read not just books that Frankl wrote, but also in the introductions that he wrote for, I think for definitely for Donald Tweedie's book and possibly for Robert Leslie's. I can't remember if he did that, but he always, and also for Ruben, he was.

Dr. Graber: He was. He was half a century ahead of me.

Tom: OK, Ruben, Ruben Bulka, who died recently, a rabbi who worked and wrote. So what I'm getting at is even though, you know, generally Frankl wrote and kept theology a little bit separated, he always seemed to welcome people adapting and implementing Logotherapy in related fields or other fields. And so how do you think he would have looked at the concept of pastoral Logotherapy as a specialized field?

Dr. Graber: I think it's a natural.

Tom: Yes, it's.

Dr. Graber: I don't see it as a specific, I see it as an application of Logotherapy in a specific field.

Tom: Yes.

Dr. Graber: Not so much as a specific introduction of Logotherapy. And another thing what you were mentioning that it is trans-denominational or trans-religious. Yes, I have certainly had people from many, many religions. And because we're not exclusively Christian or Jewish, or what have you, but we speak of the human spirit.

Tom: Yes.

Dr. Graber: And so that makes it available. And you know, another thing that happened, I used to work as a transcriptionist in a hospital. And so, I was acquainted with the medical records. What we didn't have at the time, and we're back before my accident about 40 years ago, yes, patients could request that their minister, their priest, their rabbi come and see them, but we didn't have pastoral care.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: In hospitals, and then as pastoral care became more and more widespread, people needed a method not only to bring their own religious traditions to the bedside, but maybe to have a better understanding of the psychological approach to this person. So, in that sense, pastoral Logotherapy gained in popularity. Also, many, many of the students, especially in recent times, have been chaplains in pastoral care in various settings.

Tom: Right. Well, I, I agree with everything you said. And it's an interesting dynamic for me to think about how, Yeah, you know, you're talking about implementing Logotherapy in a specific field such as pastoral care. So yeah, now, now I'm thinking about do I call myself a pastor and a Logotherapist? Do I call myself a pastor who implements Logotherapy in my work or so how does the word pastoral and Logotherapy modify each other, or do they stand separately? That's a tough one for me.

Dr. Graber: When an imam wouldn't call himself a pastoral logotherapist.

Tom: Yeah, I wouldn't call.

Dr. Graber: Himself I'm Nima, and I do meaning-centered ...

Tom: Aha, that's OK. Yeah, right, right.

Dr. Graber: And so I hope whatever feels authentic to the person using the term.

Tom: Right. OK. So do you, do you associate the word pastor then with Christianity? Pretty much.

Dr. Graber: Well, pastoring is more, I see it more as the wise elder.

Tom: Sure.

Dr. Graber: And so, when it becomes a title in a given denomination, that's specific denomination, but pastoral would be kind of—

Tom: As an adjective, it is.

Dr. Graber: As an adjective, yes, and then it becomes more widely applicable.

Tom: Yes.

Dr. Graber: And I really like the term, you know, wise elder.

Tom: Yes, you know, that's something that I teach. We have, you know, in my denomination, we have elders who serve in the church. And it's important for me to let them know that, you know, you are, or let me rephrase that. I am a paid elder. You know, my, my job, my title may be senior pastor, but that's the word senior there tells me that I'm, you know, at the top of the pyramid, so to speak. And I hate to say it that way, but then there are all these others who are elders who, you know, they make it possible for me to be with a larger number of people by, you know, making contact with a, with a certain number of our people. And the word pastor comes obviously from shepherding, right? You know, shepherding sheep in a

pasture. So, I think that's very interesting. What my question was getting at is if I get together a group of rabbis and imams and Catholic priests and Orthodox priests and Protestant ministers and maybe some shamen or, you know, people of other religious traditions. And we talk about what we have in common in terms of our practice. You know, we don't have a label that we can put on that that's applicable to everybody. Like the word pastoral Logotherapy would not be appropriate across the board in that situation.

Dr. Graber: OK, then you can go with meaning-centered existential psychology.

Tom: Right. OK, very good. So, you talked about last week in our conversation, 3 examples that I think would be worth sharing if you're willing to do that. You said a, you talked about a, an African American Muslim Imam, a conservative rabbi, and a Catholic priest. And the question that I had written was along the lines of you have worked with students from all parts, parts of the world and many religious backgrounds. And so, would you share a few examples with us?

Dr. Graber: Yes, I will be glad to and these three came to mind because we were looking at not only interfaith, but oh, interracial, shall we say. And so, the three former students who come to my desk, many still staying, but when the need arises. And I had many, many calls during this pandemic, especially. So, the first one I received a call one time from a former student who is an African American Muslim imam. And he said calls to say we are evacuating a nursing home that is flooding. What does Logotherapy have to offer?

And I said, well, we don't have a specific technique how to evacuate a nursing home that's flooding, but if you go to the underlying principles as Frankl used. So, in this case, it would be helping these people feel less terrified, frightened. You can see the water rising and am I going to drown and so forth. Anyway, we had this brief conversation. He needed to run along. And then later on he told me, oh, you know what I did. Yeah, I'm so impressed, he said, First, I went back to my pastoral care giving colleagues and told them, look, let's take off our regalia our [...] that identify us as I don't want to walk into some Christian's room and look like an imam. She thinks now what is he trying to convert me? No, If I go in in my street clothes and say how can I help you? What can I do?

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: [continuing] ... Can I get you out of bed? Can I roll you and you're out of here in your wheelchair? You know, we're being flooded. We need to act fast. This approach, Frankl always emphasized first you establish a trust bridge. Yes. Without it, therapeutic traffic cannot travel. And by extending yourself to the other, what can I do to help? You are reaching out to them. And then if they respond, oh yeah, please get my whatever. And it's a work in progress already.

And then he said as he had them in their wheelchair, anything that's precious to you that you want to take with you, that you can have in your lap. And it's maybe the only thing that will survive. And some will reach for their prayer beads. Others will reach for a family photograph or something like that. And then out in the hall, they go. And he said, yes, we didn't lose anybody. We got them all to another destination. But he said it is so crowded, we have people everywhere and hope they make it. And that was one.

The other one, I had a call from a she was a student at the time, a Conservative rabbi who felt she was sent to this congregation, and she had no idea how conservative they were. And she said, just to give you an example, we have three languages here, Hebrew, which we use only to read our sacred scriptures. Then there is Yiddish. Everybody speaks. And the third one is the foreign language, and that is English. OK. So, she says this is the setting she was transferred into. And she says our major holidays are coming up. The scriptures will mention preparing ourselves for just in dying. And she says every time I even read it in the scriptures, the word deaf. It's like a door slams. No more. I don't want to hear anymore and what to do about it.

And then she came up with this wonderful personal example. And she described it as one day she receives a call from her mother, who says was in the hospital. And her mother wants her to “get me out of here.” I don't want any more treatments. I've lived long enough. We're just prolonging my agony. I want to go home and die. So, she brings her home to her home, and she's taking care of her mother. And she said this is the first time in our life that I and mother spend time together and she could tell me about her life growing up. I was too busy running here and there and I never had time to listen to what mom had to say.

And dad had already passed on. And now she says, she describes what it was like. They were happily married, and they looked forward to a family. And then I was on the way. Pregnancy went very well. And she said as I had tuned to my mother's talking, I wondered what was life like for me in utero. And she said as she glowingly told me about looking forward to my coming, I could feel it, sense it—I was happy and all my needs were met in utero and all went well. Yeah, I've got a little tight and cramped. I grew bigger and bigger, but I was happy. And then labor started, and she said, I got scared. What is going on? What is mother doing to me now?

And this went on and on and on, and she really feared the worst. Somebody's attacking her in bizarre ways. And she said her mother explained to her that, yes, she was in labor for 96 hours. Wow. And eventually, eventually, there was this shock and she found herself what happened? And the first thing she noticed was, oh, I can stretch out my little legs. I can reach out with my arms and my little hands and then the next thing: I took a breath. What is this? Never experienced that before. Breathing. And eventually she said, I opened my eyes. Ah, what am I seeing? I've never beheld anything like that before. And so, she experienced going from a protected life in utero, being expelled into much greater freedom.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: And she says now as I'm watching my mother going through this, well, contortions of preparing for her transition, could it be that she's preparing or being prepared to enter yet another freer, higher dimension ...

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: Where she will experience things that are far more fleeing than being stuck in this aching body.

Tom: Right, nice and.

Dr. Graber: So, she could open the door to hope. Yes, congregants. And she talked about it and she said it was amazing. As she began telling her personal example, they listened.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: Whereas before mentioned the word death no more we don't want to hear about.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: That was the second. So here we have the African American imam, and then we have the Conservative rabbi's example, and then the third example would be a Catholic priest.

I received a beautiful note, postcard with a note and he explained I am accompanying handicapped pilgrims to Lourdes and he said we were going there for a week. So, the anxiety was very, very high among these people. How are we going to get there? They were all handicapped, in wheelchairs and not feeling well and what have you. Just getting them there was stressful. And then he said, yes, we were at Lourdes and every day for three days we went to the grotto and prayed. No, nobody left their wheelchair behind and walked up out. But he said something happened.

He said it's hard to put in words what happened, but now we are on the way home and the attitude that I am privileged to observe in these people now is so different from what it was a week ago. He said such peace and compassion emanates from them. They all want to attend others, assist others, what do you need? Do I have something I can give you? And on and on. And he said this was just so astounding to him. And that is one of the big emphasis Frankl places on attitude. You have to bring out that that the attitude will often, especially in situations that cannot be avoided, right attitude will make a difference.

So, these were my examples from three very different people applying the underlying premises upon which Franklian psychology is built.

Tom: Very nice. OK. So, in some of our discussions, you know, in the past, we've talked about elements of mysticism and Frankl's work and philosophy. So, would you share a few thoughts on that?

Dr. Graber: OK, well, Frankl certainly was a philosopher, but in his autobiography on the first page, he brings up his ancestral heritage, going back to a Rabbi Löw, who is still revered in the oldest synagogue in Europe, in Prague.

Tom: Right.

Dr. Graber: And so, there is a mystical awareness that he seems to have had since early childhood, and even as a youngster he was just far ahead of his contemporaries. And where it came from? Call it intuition, call it inner knowing, call it inspiration. He had it. And often his questions were so perplexing to his parents and others. Where does this child get this inner information? So, philosophy would be one way of describing it, but it isn't deep enough, right? Deals primarily with the mental element of it. This higher or deeper inner knowing comes from elsewhere.

Tom: Yes, the noëtic realm.

Dr. Graber: Yes, it's, it's, it's another realm. So, he certainly had that, and that is validated by people who knew him as the child and so forth. And he particularly felt close to his mother because it was his mother's ancestral background that connected him with this mystic rabbi who could do things that just weren't—that were beyond many people's comprehension in his state. Right.

So later on I had a wonderful professor and who was my dissertation advisor, Dr. Ewert Cousins. And we sometimes talked about this mysticism. He, he was a professor at ... Anyway, when I knew him, he was professor at GTF, OK. And he was a linguist par excellence, and he translated some of the mystics that wrote in Latin in the Middle Ages. And he was telling me, oh, what the now term near death experiences sounds so similar to what these Mystics experience.

Tom: Right. Yes.

Dr. Graber: And so here I also felt, oh, somebody knows about these things. And it was very, very helpful to have his encouragement to present it as pastoral Logotherapy.

Tom: Right, right. Very nice. Well, once again, I just believe that this time that you have spent talking with me and answering these questions has really enriched me. And I think that it's wonderful to be able to include this on my website and let other people see it or hear it and know what a great teacher you are. And I do hope that pastors are, sorry, I should say, people who work in various faith communities who care for the souls of the people under them—or with them—I should say, that they will consider looking into the Graduate Theological Foundation either to the Pastoral Logotherapy Certification program and or a higher degree in that field. And I know that their lives will be greatly enriched by a program that you created. And thank you very much. Thank.

Dr. Graber: You. Thank you, since I'm working on the virtue of humility ...

Tom: Of course, right, I understand, I am.

Dr. Graber: A little bit flushed by your praise, but thank you very much. Yes, we do have, just to emphasize what you just said at the *Graduate Theological Foundation*, not only graduate programs, but even certificate programs.

Tom: Yes.

Dr. Graber: Or people just take the four foundation courses in pastor Logotherapy and one elective of their choice.

Tom: Yes.

Dr. Graber: And that has also been helpful because many of them coming for doctoral studies are already—they are beyond their seminary or their religious training, right. So, they're looking for a caregiving methods.

Tom: Yes, I could not have said it better and that is certainly why I came; and that's definitely what I got from it. And it's very life changing.

Dr. Graber: When I because it is always a joy and a pleasure to talk with you, Emissary of the Apostle Paul.

Tom: Thank you very much and you as well.

Dr. Graber: Thank you.

Tom: Well, I guess I should say goodbye for now, but as always, once again I appreciate you and thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

Dr. Graber: You are most welcome in my best wishes are with you and your definition of we're a community of diverse, inclusive, welcoming people.

Tom: Thank you so much.

Dr. Graber: Just wondrous. I think this would fit Logotherapy also.

Tom: Thank you so much.

Dr. Graber: Goodbye friend.

Tom: Thank you.

Dr. Stephan Peeck



Bio: Dr. Stephan Peeck has been working as a logotherapist since 1987. Since 1993 he has also led numerous logotherapeutic training seminars and training events as a teaching therapist.

Qualifications:

- the recognition of his institute by the *German Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis* (DGLE) as a training institute,
- the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP), issued by the *European Society of Psychotherapy* (EAP),
- the certificate for Logotherapy, issued by the *German Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis* (DGLE)
- state permission to practice medicine in the field of psychotherapy
- many years of Logotherapeutic experience in individual conversations in the field of sense-oriented personality development and value-oriented psychotherapy (Heilkunde auf dem Gebiet der Psychotherapie).
- many years of experience in the management of numerous logotherapeutic training seminars, training events, supervision groups,
- diverse external lecture and seminar activities
- his dissertation on the topic of “Theory and Practice of Suicide Prevention” – numerous other publications on logotherapeutic topics.

Links: Institutes für Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse Hamburg – Bergedorf <https://www.logotherapie-peeck.de>

The Institute for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis Hamburg – Bergedorf was founded in 2001 by Dr. theol. Stephan Peeck and officially recognized by the *German Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis* (DGLE) as a training institute.

Books: *Woher kommt die Kraft zur Veränderung* (2005) & *Was uns gesund macht* (2008).

Audiobook: *Kraft zur Veränderung: Über die Wirkung innerer Bilder*

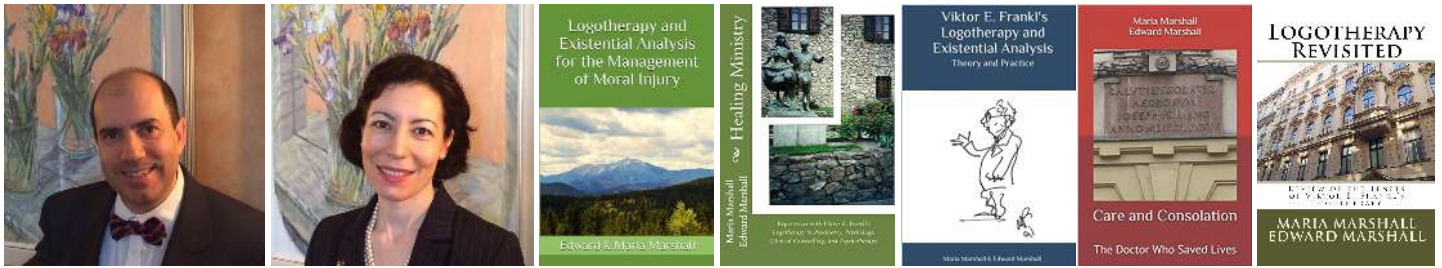
Interview: December 8, 2023. <https://youtu.be/t7uv7j8aKNM>

*I have to mention that I was sick with the flu while conducting this interview with Dr. Peeck. The interview was worth it!

Quick summary: In this meeting, Dr. Peeck, a Logotherapy practitioner talks about the application of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis in pastoral care, the importance of understanding and addressing the deep inner struggles of individuals contemplating suicide, as well as the value of tools like the Enneagram and Uwe Böschmeyer’s *Wertimagination (value-oriented imagination)* in helping individuals find hope and meaning in their lives. Dr. Peeck emphasized the need for collaboration with doctors and the exploration of subconscious images and religious forces in the therapeutic process.

Dr. Peeck also generously provided several papers which appear in the translation section of this yearbook and on the “Articles” page of my website.

Dr. Edward Marshall



Bio: Viktor E. Frankl Professor of Psychotherapy and Spirituality at the *Graduate Theological Foundation*, Sarasota, FL, USA. Registered Psychotherapist with the *College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, Canada*. Medical degree at the University of Navarra, Spain. As a medical student, he first learned Logotherapy and Existential Analysis from Juan Bautista Torelló a colleague of Viktor E. Frankl in Vienna, Austria. Worked as a Family Physician and completed a PhD degree in Neurosciences, University of La Laguna, Spain. Post-graduate Diploma in Clinical Psychiatry, University of Leeds, UK. He trained in psychodynamic psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and humanistic-existential psychotherapy, including Logotherapy and Existential Analysis (LTEA). Worked as staff psychiatrist in hospitals and community mental health centers, England, UK. Advanced Certificate in Personal and Executive Coaching from the *College of Executive Coaching*, California, USA. Diplomate Clinician, Lifetime Member and Faculty Member of the *Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy, USA*. He is accredited member of the *International Association of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*, Viktor Frankl Institute Vienna, Austria. Part-time Professor, School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality, Faculty of Human Sciences, St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada (2020-2021). Certified Supervisor with the National Consortium in Health Education, University of Ottawa, Canada.

Dr. Marshall is married to Dr. Maria Marshall.

Links: Ottawa Institute of Logotherapy <https://logotherapy.ca>

Books: here is a sampling of books Dr. Edward Marshall co-authored with his wife, Dr. Maria Marshall.

Viktor E. Frankl's Logotherapy and Existential Analysis: Theory and Practice (2022).

Logotherapy and Existential Analysis for the Management of Moral Injury (2021).

Care and Consolation: The Doctor Who Saved Lives (2021).

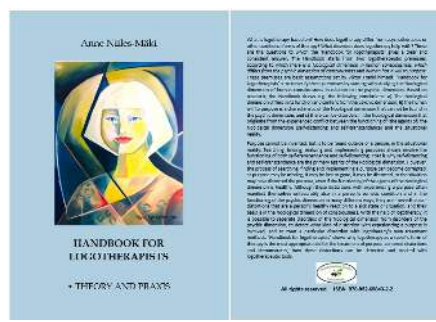
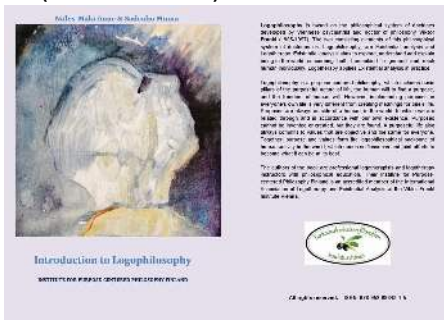
Healing Ministry: Experiences with Viktor E. Frankl's Logotherapy in Psychiatry, Psychology, Clinical Counselling, and Psychotherapy (2013).

Logotherapy Revisited: Review of the Tenets of Viktor E. Frankl's Logotherapy (2012).

Interview: February 13, 2024. <https://youtu.be/blOvm5c3mkY>

Quick summary: In this meeting, Dr. Marshall and Tom discuss the relationship between Logotherapy, spirituality, and healing. They explore the concepts of religiosity and spirituality, emphasizing the importance of respecting individual beliefs and the role of spiritual care in counseling. They also touch on the difference between cure and healing, and the preventive aspect of Logotherapy in promoting mental and spiritual well-being.

Dr. Anne Niiles-Mäki (2 interviews)



Bio: Anne has worked as professional Logotherapist since 2016 and since 2020 as a Logotherapist for the *Family Federation Finland Therapy Services*. Anne defended her dissertation about Logotherapy as a philosophical therapy at the University of Jyväskylä 2021. She is the founder of the ***Institute for Purpose-centered Philosophy, Finland***.

Links: The Institute for Purpose-centered Philosophy, Finland. <https://logoterapeutti.fi/>

Books: *Introduction to Logotherapy* (2022) & *Handbook for Logotherapists: Theory and Praxis* (2024) (available on the website) (other books and articles available in Finnish)

First interview: June 11, 2024. <https://youtu.be/TsQM8NXpJFc>

Quick summary: During this meeting, Anne and Rev. Tom discussed the importance of philosophy in Logotherapy, the distinction between the neurological and psychic dimensions of human consciousness, and the theory of *interventionism*. They also touched on the difference between meaning and purpose in logotherapy.

Second interview: August 8, 2024. <https://youtu.be/ypym7tYaAsI>

Quick summary: In this meeting, Anne discusses the concept of *regional ontology* and its application to psychotherapy and Logotherapy. She emphasizes the ontological differences between psychotherapies and Logotherapy, highlighting the importance of understanding the unique ontological regions of each approach. Anne also mentions the need for proper training and understanding of logotherapy as a philosophy-based therapy.

Stay tuned for further conversations with Dr. Niiles-Mäki in 2025!
(Suggestion: read up on your philosophy in the meantime!)

Rabbi Dr. Mordecai Finley



Bio: Rabbi Mordecai Finley is the rabbi and co-CEO of Ohr HaTorah which he co-founded with his wife Meirav Finley in 1993. Rabbi Finley was born and raised in Southern California. After high school, he served three years in the U.S. Marine Corps, and was discharged with the rank of Sergeant in 1976. He then spent a year in Israel on a kibbutz. After his stay in Israel, he attended the School of Religion at USC and completed his BA in 1980. Rabbi Finley went to rabbinical school at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. He completed his MA in Hebrew Letters in 1983. From there, he took a break from his rabbinic studies to work on his doctorate at the USC School of Religion. He received his rabbinical ordination in 1990 and his Ph.D. in 1992.

In addition to his work at Ohr HaTorah, he served as a Professor of Jewish Thought at the Academy for Jewish Religion, California Campus, where he taught Liturgy, Jewish Mysticism and Spirituality, and Professional Skills. He is former president and former provost of the AJR. He currently on hiatus from his teaching at the AJR/CA

Rabbi Finley integrates into his counseling practice insights from many schools and traditions, most notably: Philosophy, Stoic and Neo-Platonism) Jung and neo-Jungians (especially James Hillman) plus a range of modern psychological schools of thought, especially Roberto Assagioli, William Glasser, Albert Ellis and Byron Katie. He also has background in object relations theorists as well as existential and humanist psychology.

Links: <https://www.rabbifinley.com>

Interview: August 19, 2024. https://youtu.be/xs-8Pyu_iHk

Quick Summary: Rev. and RMF discussed the integration of spirituality and psychology, emphasizing the importance of virtue and wisdom in counseling. They explored the concept of the higher self and the challenges of teaching spiritual practices, with RMF sharing his experiences and insights from his work in Israel.

Main Topics:

- *Religion vs. Spirituality:* RMF explains that religion should integrate spirituality, but often doesn't. Spirituality addresses the inner life and soul.
- *Wisdom Works:* RMF's program focuses on wisdom and virtue, derived from spiritual psychology of the Kabbala.
- *Virtue and Restraint:* Emphasis on teaching virtue as a foundation for wisdom and spiritual practice.
- *Higher Self:* Concept of a higher self that regulates thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- *Freedom of the Will:* Discussion on Viktor Frankl's idea of choosing one's attitude in any circumstance.
- *Destructive Shape (Yetzer Hara, יֵצֶר הָרַע):* RMF's interpretation of the destructive shape of inner life and its opposition to the soul.
- *Rev.'s Insights:* Comparison with Logotherapy, emphasizing the spiritual dimension and the uninjurable spirit.
- *RMF's Experience in Israel:* Personal anecdotes about moving to Israel, the current conflict, and the sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Dr. David Sar Shalom



Bio: David is a general practitioner who did his medical training in South America (Venezuela, 1997-2005) and specialized in Family & Community Medicine in Catalonia (Spain, 2007-2011). He has been living and working in New Zealand since 2015 and is a fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP) with Vocational Registration in this field of Medicine.

He comes from a very multicultural background where books, music and languages were a big part of growing up, and they continue to exert an important influence on him and his outlook. He is involved in many activities outside of his work, among them learning the Māori language (Te Reo Māori) and culture, and Franklian psychology & philosophy (Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy, USA).

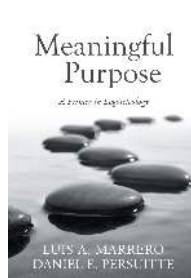
He is one of the founders of the CHROMA Initiative for Southland and currently chairs the committee of this charitable trust. One of the drivers and main goals of this initiative is to create greater awareness and visibility around the LGBTQIA+ community in the Southland area of New Zealand.

His interest in activism comes from his experience with negative stereotypes and the effects these have on bullying, the appearance of mood disorders and their influence on people's general health and well-being. He believes the best way to pay it forward is by becoming engaged in community work, by helping to create safe spaces for dialogue and challenging the (pre)conceptions of what it means to be LGBTQIA+

Interview: August 30, 2024. <https://youtu.be/8bFHBiimrXU>

Quick Summary: Dr. David Sar Shalom and Tom discussed Dr. Sar Shalom's diplomate project on applying Viktor Frankl's logotherapy to the LGBTQIA+ community, emphasizing the importance of understanding intersectionality and minority stress in therapeutic settings. They explored the historical context and relevance of sexual and gender identities, highlighting the need for compassion and holistic approaches in therapy.

Luis A. Marrero



Bio: Luis A. Marrero, M.A., RODP, in Boston, Massachusetts, founded the *Boston Institute for Meaningful Purpose* in 1986. The original name was The Boston Institute for the Applied Behavioral Sciences. Our mission started with research, publishing articles on the applied social sciences, and training professionals to practice Organization Development. Growing to provide OD consulting to global companies and entities, offerings have also included coaching and assessment services.

Following the publication of Luis' first book, *The Path to a Meaningful Purpose: Psychological Foundations of Logoteleology*, our name was changed to the Boston Institute for Meaningful Purpose. This change is meant to reflect our updated mission to help people realize their potential to grow and thrive through Meaningful Purpose (MP).

In addition to *The Path to a Meaningful Purpose*, Luis Marrero coauthored a book titled *Meaningful Purpose: A Primer in Logoteleology* with Daniel Persuitte, a longtime collaborator and practitioner of MP. This was published in May of 2022 and provides a thorough overview of the concepts and methods of MP, reflection and practice exercises, as well as examples of MP in action.

Links: The Boston Institute for Meaningful Purpose <https://www.bostonimp.com>

Books: *The Path to a Meaningful Purpose: Psychological Foundations of Logoteleology* (2013)
Meaningful Purpose: A Primer in Logoteleology (with Daniel Persuitte) (2022).

Interview: September 16, 2024. <https://youtu.be/OQ3jTnRijjU>

Quick summary: The meeting focused on the Boston Institute for Meaningful Purpose, its activities, and the concepts of meaningful purpose psychology, *logoteleology*, and *meaningantics*. The discussion also touched on the practical applications of these concepts in various fields, including psychology, counseling, and organizational training. The meeting also provided a comprehensive overview of the Boston Institute for Meaningful Purpose, its training programs, and the theoretical foundations of meaningful purpose psychology. It emphasized the practical applications of these concepts in various fields and highlighted the importance of self-awareness, robust value systems, and intelligent decision-making.

Translations



Articles by Rev. Dr. Heye Heyen

Bio: HEYE HEYEN was a professor of practical theology at the *Faculty of Protestant Theology* in Brussels (Belgium) until his retirement in 2018. He is practicing as an independent psychotherapist (logotherapy) at Oldenburg (Germany). He was previously a protestant minister and a psychiatric chaplain in Germany and a university lecturer the Netherlands.

“Logotherapy, Theology, and Pastoral Psychology.”

Link: <https://www.meaninginministry.com/articles-home/logotherapy-theology-and-pastoral-psychology>

Quick summary: This article discusses the life and work of Viktor E. Frankl, the founder of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. It highlights Frankl's emphasis on the will to meaning and the existential vacuum as the cause of mental suffering. It also mentions the potential for dialogue and integration between logotherapy and pastoral psychology, suggesting that both fields can benefit from each other's insights and methods.

“Logotherapy in the Postmodern Age.”

Link: <https://www.meaninginministry.com/articles-home/logotherapy-in-the-postmodern-age-what-the-existential-analytical-and-postmodern-spirit-canchallenge-each-other-to-do>

Quick summary: This article discusses the concept of postmodernism and its implications for logotherapy: the suspicion of grand narratives, the individualization of life worlds, and the need for an unprejudiced attitude towards postmodernism. It also highlights the importance of logotherapy in providing guidance and decision-making authority in a postmodern landscape.

“The Place of Acceptance.”

Link: <https://www.meaninginministry.com/articles-home/the-place-of-acceptance>

Quick Summary: This article discusses the concept of *acceptance* as a translation for the doctrine of *justification* in pastoral care. The term "acceptance" is seen as a way to make the language of faith more accessible to individuals. Practical theology aims to bridge the gap between theological concepts and personal experiences, with the goal of helping people connect with experiences of transcendence and deepen their faith.

Research: if you have access to scholarly periodicals, I highly suggest looking up the following article:

[HSCC 4.1 (2016) 35-50] HSCC (print) ISSN 2051-5553.
doi:10.1558/hsc.v4i1.20578 HSCC (online) ISSN 2051-5561

“Spiritual Care and Logotherapy” by

Heye Heyen, University Faculty for Protestant Theology, Brussels, Belgium

Martin Neal Walton, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, The Netherlands

Evert Jonker, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, The Netherlands

Dr. Stephan Peeck (see p. 14 for Bio and other Information).



“Logotherapy Can do More.”

Link: <https://www.meaninginministry.com/articles-home/logotherapy-can-do-more>

Quick Summary: The paper focuses on the application of Logotherapy as an independent form of psychotherapy, emphasizing the importance of accessing the noëtic unconscious through techniques like Value-oriented Imagination. Several case studies illustrate how clients overcame psychological issues by engaging with their inner symbols and values, highlighting the necessity of addressing both positive forces and resistances in the therapeutic process. The paper concludes with the assertion that effective therapy requires a balance between inner imaginative work and practical actions in the client's everyday life.

“Overcoming Angst.”

Link: <https://www.meaninginministry.com/articles-home/overcoming-angst-gaining-trust-and-courage>

Quick Summary: This paper focuses on the concept of "angst," exploring its dual nature as both a psychological challenge and a catalyst for personal growth. Dr. Peeck emphasizes that while angst is an unavoidable part of life, it can be managed through various strategies, including seeking medical help, strengthening motivation, and uncovering its origins. The discussion highlighted the importance of trust and courage in overcoming angst, ultimately advocating for a proactive approach to facing and understanding these feelings.

Action Items:

- Recognize that angst is a common experience and not something to be ashamed of.
- Explore personal experiences of angst and identify coping strategies.
- Consider seeking medical or pharmaceutical help if experiencing severe angst.
- Strengthen motivation to overcome angst by visualizing a life with less angst.
- Engage in imaginative exercises to uncover inner trust and counterforces to angst.
- Seek out and face angst-provoking situations rather than avoiding them.
- Practice dereflection techniques to manage panic attacks and anxious thoughts.
- Focus on positive experiences and successes to counteract negative thoughts.
- Reflect on the origins of personal angst and work towards understanding them.
- Find meaning in life to reduce the impact of angst.



Experience:

- 50 years of collaboration in projects for international understanding and peace building as well as interreligious encounters and cooperation.
- 40 years of involvement in pastoral care, youth and adult education as well as support in crises and grieving processes.
- 20 years of promoting growth in groups and individuals using imagination, body awareness and energy work.
- 10 years of working on economic policy and economic alternatives to political stagnation and social deprivation - global/local.

“Imagination: Images of the Soul as a Source of Power.”

Revised version of a Lecture in Frankfurt on the 3rd of May 2008.

Link: <https://www.meaninginministry.com/articles-home/overcoming-angst-gaining-trust-and-courage-gf8dm>

Quick Summary: The paper focuses on the concept of *Value-oriented Imagination (Wertorientierte Imagination)*, a technique developed by Uwe Böschmeyer that facilitates access to the subconscious through inner imagery, allowing individuals to explore their strengths and potential for healing. Various therapeutic practices and historical insights were discussed, highlighting the transformative power of inner images and the importance of individual experiences in the healing process. The conversation emphasized the universal nature of imagination as a tool for personal growth and connection across different cultures and therapeutic approaches.

Bonus Content



Logosermon: This is one of three sermons I preached to prepare my congregation for the series of messages that became the basis of my book, *Faith Greater Than Our Challenges: What the Apostle Paul and Viktor Frankl Can Teach Us about Difficult Times*. With this sermon, I began to introduce many common themes in Paul’s writings and Logo-Philosophy. See how many you can identify.

COVID-19 as “Thorn in the Flesh” – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Delivered on January 3, 2021, at First Christian Church of Atlanta.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/-TA1S40Bksw?feature=shared>. The message starts at 19:47.

Even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸ Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, ⁹ but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:7-10, NRSV).

On this first Sunday of 2021 we find ourselves approaching our eleventh month of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was almost a year ago, on January 30, 2020, that the World Health Organization announced a global health emergency. By March 11 they had declared it a global pandemic. And by March 26 the US led the world in confirmed cases. From that time cities and states began issuing shelter-in-place orders and our lives were changed. Now we have adjusted to “social distancing,” ordering groceries online, telemedicine, family gatherings on Zoom, and online church.

But the coronavirus is not the only challenge we face. Who would have thought that Georgia would become ground zero of the 2020 elections? Aren't you sick and tired of the commercials, the phone calls, the text messages, and the piles of junk mail in our mailboxes? And this is not even the real problem. The problem is the divisive and contentious tone of this election. I worry that its long-term effects will include years of finger pointing and accusations.

Many have been touched by death too. Friends and family lost to the coronavirus on the one hand, and on the other, some who passed away from other causes, but in isolation because of COVID restrictions. We could go on and on listing all kinds of challenges we face at this moment. We are hoping that things will change for the better as this year unfolds, but what if things take longer than we expect? How long can we continue to live the way we've been living over the last ten months or so?

This is why I want to talk about how we can rise above all of these earthly challenges by adopting a stronger faith perspective. In this new series I want to share some thoughts on how to develop *a faith greater than the challenges we are facing*. While many think what they need is an end to coronavirus, more money, a better job—or maybe just a job!—or for a certain political party to be in power, the truth is quite different. What we need to find is the meaning in our circumstances. That's where our faith perspective comes in. We can find meaning when we discover the sense of purpose that faith gives our lives.

We begin today by looking at a short passage in 2 Corinthians 12. If you are like me, you have heard sermons and Sunday School lessons about Paul's so-called "thorn in the flesh." And if your experience is like mine, you may wonder if it can rightly be compared to our experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires a brief look at the background of the letter and a closer look at a few terms.

First, if you know anything about the Corinthian church from the two letters in the New Testament, then you are aware that they had lots of conflicts going on and Paul worked hard to arbitrate them from a distance through these letters. One of the problems he addressed is the pride some in the congregation felt about their ecstatic experiences of speaking in tongues. Some members had this gift, but many didn't. Those who did thought of themselves as somehow spiritually superior to the others. And some even looked down on Paul!

One of Paul's responses to this arrogance is found in the verses leading up to our passage today. In 12:1-7 we see Paul's use of irony—or sarcasm?—to give them a different perspective:

It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. ³And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—⁴was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. ⁵On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, ⁷even considering the exceptional character of the revelations.

In these verses Paul speaks as if talking about someone else as a matter of convention. But all of it makes sense when we re-read what follows from our text today (verses 7b-10):

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, ⁹but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

The contrast between verses 1-7a and 7b-10 is between pride and humility. If the heavenly visions makes one feel pride, there is also the “thorn in the flesh” to keep him grounded. And since it is Paul who has the “thorn” to keep him from being “too elated,” then it only makes sense to see him as the one with the grand visions of heaven.

In the second half of verse 7 Paul uses two images to describe the challenge that kept him grounded: “a thorn in the flesh” and a “messenger of Satan.” Both images describe the same thing—a challenge that he wanted removed but God refused to do it. Let’s look a little closer at each term.

What most translations render as “thorn in the flesh” (σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί) can just as correctly be translated as “a wooden stake.” As someone who loves Dracula movies, I can’t resist making the connection of Dracula with a wooden stake through his heart. For Dracula, the wooden stake was death, but for Paul it was just a hindrance.

Seriously, though, the type of wooden stake described by this term is the kind used in warfare, like in a covered pit with spikes, or a large spike for impaling a victim (a connection to the real Dracula, Vlad the Impaler!). I realize this is not a pleasant image, but perhaps it has merit when we connect it to the other image of “a messenger of Satan to torment me.” What the NRSV translates as “to torment me” (ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ) refers to beating or rough treatment. It makes me think of a mafia goon squad sent to intimidate and harass innocent people.

This is a bit different than what we usually think of when we talk about a “thorn in the flesh.”

Typically people read this passage and think that Paul is describing a physical ailment like glaucoma, epilepsy, etc. Others psychologize it as an addiction like alcoholism or some “besetting sin.” I am asking you to consider an alternative understanding. One that has Paul on a mission from God and finding his path boobytrapped by the enemy. “Three times” he writes, “I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me” might just as easily be translated, “three times I appealed to the Lord to remove it from me,” and by this we would understand “remove the traps.”

Haven’t we done this? Have we not faced challenges, and in a moment of weakness, asked God to take them away, make life easier for us? And on that note, how often has God said, “sure, let me make this easier for you?” If you are like me, you have probably NOT had that experience. Rather, God has kept us in those circumstances.

Before we move on, let’s look at another biblical figure’s experience here. Remember Jacob in the Old Testament? When fleeing from his brother Esau he had a dream of a staircase extending to earth from heaven with angels going up and down. Years later, on his way home, he was attacked by a mysterious figure—an angel—who wrestled with him all night. As dawn approached the angel touched his hip and dislocated it. Then Jacob looked up and saw his brother approaching. In that moment, Jacob had to greet his brother from a position of weakness.

To make the connection clearer, remember that Jacob was “clever” and manipulated people. The earlier vision confirmed that he was chosen by God, but perhaps he let that “go to his head.” If so, the experience of wrestling with an angel—or God!—might have given him a much needed dose of humility. Could this have been in Paul’s mind when he wrote 2 Corinthians 12:1-10? Is it possible that people who have these grand experiences of God need a little hardship to keep them grounded? That is, to keep them from becoming “too elated” as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12:7.

Let's zoom out now and consider a wider perspective. Do we as Christians live in a different world than everyone else? Are we immune to coronavirus or struggles because God is going to run interference for us? No, of course not. We are no better than the Apostle Paul. The same applies to the challenges we face coming into this new year. Like Paul, we may want our challenges to go away to make things easier, but that is probably not realistic. What we need instead is a resilient faith to endure hardship and to thrive in spite of it.

Returning to Paul, what can we learn from his experience? If we think of the "thorn in the flesh" more like a trap or pitfall rather than an illness or a besetting sin, then we see a person on a mission who faces opposition from the enemy. What was the "thorn" specifically? Who knows? He certainly expected the Corinthians to understand what he meant, but it is pure conjecture when we try to figure out what it was. And frankly, a wholistic reading of all of Paul's letters argues against attributing the "thorn in the flesh" to moral weakness on Paul's part. I believe this is a solid interpretation of the text.

And we can learn the same lessons that Paul learned. First, that God could remove the challenge but chooses not to. Second, that God's grace is sufficient. And third, that God's power is made perfect in—or in spite of—our weakness. After all, what is the cross a symbol of if not that God's power is revealed through weakness. What the enemy thought was God's defeat, was his triumph. And if Jesus could suffer, why couldn't Paul? And why can't we?

Whatever the *messenger of Satan* intended to accomplish by opposing Paul, only served as a reminder that he depended upon God and his grace. In other words, it kept him grounded. And as a bonus, we might say that opposition is a sign that a person is doing the right thing. For this reason, perhaps we, like Paul, should welcome adversity! Why, because in it God's power can be made perfect!

What is the coronavirus but another virus? We are observing an unprecedented worldwide pandemic response to it because humanity does not yet have a good immunity response. But does it make sense to talk as if it will go away? Perhaps it will become like the influenza virus of a hundred years ago. It is estimated that some 500 million were infected by it and around 50 million died. A hundred years later, people still die of it; figures vary from 250 – 650 million per year. As of last Wednesday, there were 82.3 million cases of COVID-19 worldwide with a death count of 1.8 million. But now vaccines are available, and we don't yet know how effective they will be. But isn't it reasonable to say that it may be with us from now on like influenza? If so, what we have to do is stop wishing it will go away and start learning how live "with it."

It is the same with politics and any other challenge we face today. We should change what we can, but we should also recognize that some things will not be changed. We can—and probably should—pray that God will act to remove any of these that he will. But if he doesn't, like Paul, we should look for the divine perspective. How can living with these challenges be a good thing?

Paul used his struggle as a model for the Corinthian church to give them a different perspective on pride and humility. And as we will see in this series of messages, he faced lots of opposition, even death. What gave him the strength to endure these circumstances? Was it not his faith in God? His belief that he was doing what he was supposed to be doing and that even *satanic* opposition meant he was, in fact, on the right track?

For us, this pandemic has another side. It has taught us how to be the church in spite of not being together in a brick-and-mortar building. It has rallied many good people to contribute food and money to the less fortunate. It has helped us to learn new skills. And the current political climate has given us the opportunity, if we will accept it, to speak out against the divisive tone and actions of our politicians. After all, what they are doing now is no different than what they've been doing, only they are at it more intensely because they are fighting for control of the US Congress. The fever pitch with which the advertising and rhetoric has increased in the last two months should be a warning to us if we do not oppose it. I am talking about both of the major political parties, by the way.

If anyone can model a better way; if there is hope for us as individuals, as a church, and as a country, it must come from allowing God to work through us despite our challenges. It begins with faith and ends with faith. If we feel helpless in the face of a global pandemic and politics run amok, then let's allow God to work within and through us. For his power is made perfect in weakness.

End

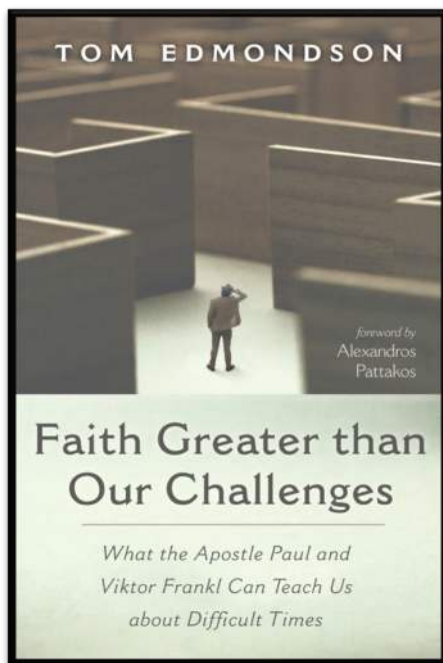
This sermon, as I mentioned above, was one of three that served as a prequel to the series that became my book, *Faith Greater Than Our Challenges: What the Apostle Paul and Viktor Frankl Can Teach Us about Difficult Times*.

Here is the 2021 press release for my book:

New Title from Tom Edmondson

Faith Greater than Our Challenges: What the Apostle Paul and Viktor Frankl Can Teach Us about Difficult Times

The year 2020 brought about a totally unprecedented experience for humanity: a worldwide pandemic. Life as we knew it changed almost instantly. We found ourselves quarantining at home, wearing masks in public, and using large amounts of hand sanitizer and disinfectant. As the months dragged on and the search for a COVID-19 vaccine continued, social distancing began to feel like solitary confinement, the rising death toll from the virus made the future feel very uncertain, and the US Presidential campaign made us feel more divided than ever. Was there hope to be found?



In *Faith Greater Than Our Challenges*, Rev. Tom Edmondson offers a message of hope based on the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians and the writings of Viktor Frankl. Though separated by nearly two thousand years, both faced certain death—Paul in prison, Frankl in concentration camps. Despite such dire circumstances, each one in his own way affirmed that life—even under the most extreme difficulties—has meaning. More than this, both Viktor Frankl's and Paul the apostle's words of encouragement have the power to inspire hope and patience to us during this time of pandemic.

Tom Edmondson is Senior Pastor at First Christian Church of Atlanta in Tucker, Georgia.

Bachelor of Arts, Pre-seminary, from Atlanta Christian College, 1992.
Master of Theological Studies (MTS) from Candler School of Theology, 2005.
MA in Jewish Studies from Emory University, 2007.
Certificate in Pastoral Logotherapy, the Graduate Theological Foundation, 2023.
Certificate in Noëtic Care and Counseling, Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy, 2024.

Recent Awards:

2020 Member of the Year, Tucker Civic Association.
2021 Member of the Year, Tucker Business Association.
2021 Atlanta Regional CARE-NET Volunteer Caregiver of the Year, Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers.



the field. Please give due credit to each contributor and this publication if you make use of their material.

What was the motivation for writing this book?

I was motivated by a desire to encourage my congregation during the very difficult months of quarantine and isolation due to COVID-19. I wanted to show them concrete examples of people who had found peace and strength despite isolation and the looming threat of death. The chapters in this book were originally sermons preached in January through March 2021. I then edited them into chapters and added discussion questions.

How did you make the connection between Paul's letter to the Philippians and the work of Viktor Frankl?

The short answer is that I realized both had experienced persecution, isolation, and the threat of death. Both were men of faith, though Paul's perspective is more theological and Frankl's more psychological. Also, they both found meaning and purpose. With Paul I limited myself mostly to the letter to the Philippians, but with Frankl I made use of several of his books.

Might some complain that Paul was a Christian and Frankl a Jew and that putting the two together is problematic?

Absolutely not. Anyone familiar with Frankl's life and greater body of work will know that he was very ecumenical. His second wife was Roman Catholic when he married her. Also, he wrote a very nice introduction to Robert C. Leslie's book, *Jesus and Logotherapy*. Regarding Paul, if you read all of the Pauline literature in the New Testament you will see that he never used the word Christian. I tend to agree with Krister Stendhal, former professor at Harvard Divinity School and one time Bishop of Stockholm, Sweden, who argued that Paul's Damascus Road experience was not a "conversion" but a "calling." In other words, Paul was not converted from Judaism to Christianity (a word he never seems to have used), but rather, a Jew who was called by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel. I mention this in the book and I also go to lengths to explain that my work is not designed to be a "Christianization" or "baptism" of logotherapy.

How much did you address scholarly issues of Pauline authorship and chronology in the book?

I pretty much avoided it. The reason is simple. When you are preaching to a general audience, the debates over what Paul did or didn't write are distracting and unnecessary. And where Paul was geographically or chronically is such a thorny issue that it needs to remain a conversation for specialists only. Ultimately, the answers to these questions don't affect the message significantly.

Talk about the role of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, the book by Alex Pattakos and Elaine Dundon.

Without *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* I could not have written this little booklet. Alex and Elaine's book is a distillation of Viktor Frankl's timeless wisdom into seven easy to understand principles. I had already read (and listened) to this book before I set out to preach a series of sermons based on Frankl's work. And as I looked for ways to shape the material I realized that it had already been done for me. All I really needed to do was find scriptures that legitimately illustrated those principles. When I came to realize that Paul's letter to the Philippians exemplified all of those principles plus two more that I formulated, it was like a ray of sunshine from heaven. It was a very inspiring moment!

Alex and Elaine have been wonderful, supportive, and gracious throughout the whole process. I am really grateful to them.

Sign my yearbook

Thank you Tom for the great interviews! I wish you all the best for the many years to come,

Anne Niilos-Mäki



Ich freue mich sehr, dass ich rev. Thomas Edmondson kennenlernen durfte. Die Gespräche mit ihm machen mir viel Freude. Er ist ein sehr feiner und angenehmer Mensch! – **Dr. Stephan Peeck**



Dear Thomas, I pray you can continually find and extend positive and meaningful meaning to a world searching for it. You are playing an active role in this mission. I wish and pray that your contribution makes this world a better place. With meaning, Luis A. Marrero.



Luis A. Marrero
CEO
Discovering Life's Answers.™
www.bostonimp.com

During my numerous interactions with Rev. Tom Edmondson I not only felt heard but understood. He demonstrated this rare quality of perception! Our common attachment to Dr. Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, no doubt, played a role in it.

My heartfelt best wishes in all your future endeavors, especially as you apply Logotherapy in your pastoral work.

**Grace and Peace,
Dr. Ann Graber**



“I only started talking with you after Ann-Marie introduced us earlier this year but your kind nature and inquisitive attitude made me feel comfortable to share my thoughts and story with you, and I really enjoyed being able to expand on my diplomate project during our own conversation in October. Thank you for the tireless and important work that you do. Your congregation should be proud and grateful to have you there by their side.

With kind regards, David”



Драги Томе,

Било је велико задовољство упознати Вас путем е-поште на *LogoChat*-у који организује Виктор Франкл Институт из Тексаса. Назив предавања је био: „[Егзистенцијалистичке филозофске идеје у логотерапији Виктора Франкла](#)“ коју је одржала Др Дида Кимор.

Имали сте веома добра питања за Диду, па сам одлучила да Вас позовем да се повежемо на Фејсбуку, јер сам мислила да могу да научим више од Вас и наше повезаности. Обоје смо део [групе „Логотерапија – Трећа бечка школа психотерапије“](#), па сам Вас лако пронашла. И била сам у праву!

Из само неколико порука на Фејсбуку и пар мејлова дали сте ми информације о филозофима и различитим приступима које сматрам заиста вредним. Хвала Томе и радујем се што ћу у будућности учити од Вас.

Слађа
Београд/Србија
(Европа)
4. новембар 2024.



Dear Tom,

It was great pleasure e-meeting You at LogoChat organized by Viktor Frankl Institute in Texas: [Dr.Dida Kimor: ““Existential Philosophical Ideas in Frankl’s Logotherapy “ – viktorfranklinstitute.org.](#)

You had very good questions for Dida, so I decided to invite You to connect on Facebook, as I thought I could learn from You and our connection. We both are members of [Logotherapy - The Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy | Facebook](#), so it was easy to approach.

I was right! From just a few messages on FB and emails Tom gave me information about philosophers and different approaches that I have found really valuable.

Thank You Tom and I am looking forward to learning from You in the future.

Sladja
Belgrade/Serbia (Europe)
Nov 4th 2024.

A Dedication for Your Dedication

As stated above, I appreciate all of my teachers and conversation partners, but this year's yearbook is dedicated to two who deserve special mention because they have spent the most time working with me this year:

Dr. Ann-Marie Neale (my Diplomate project advisor)

and **Dr. Stephan Peeck** (instructor in *Werteorientierte Imagination*).



It would be difficult to predict the number of hours these two have spent working with me this year, but it is a LOT!

Where Would I be without my Family?

가족이 없었다면 나는 어디에 있었을까?



In the Pipeline for 2025

Here are a few things in the pipeline for 2025. Some of them are finished and ready to go, some are in process. And, there is a lot more to follow.

My Diplomate Project: “Noëtic Concepts for Pastoral Care and Counseling.”

Now in the editing stage. I am very excited about this project. And as a Diplomate project should be, I consider it to be my best work.

More Interviews

Dr. Anne Niiles-Mäki

Dr. Alex Pattakos

Rev. Dr. Gerhard Sprakties

More Translations of Important Articles and Resources

Dr. Wolfram Kurz

Dr. Stephan Peeck (my *Wertorientierte Imagination* instructor)

Dr. Karl-Heinz Röhlin

Do not see yourself here and want to be included? Get in touch:

rev.edmondson@gmail.com

Sie sehen sich hier nicht wieder und möchten aufgenommen werden? Nehmen Sie Kontakt auf: rev.edmondson@gmail.com

¿No se ve aquí y quiere que le incluyamos? Póngase en contacto con nosotros: rev.edmondson@gmail.com

