

# Session 1 – The Need for Biblical Counseling

Ryon Reasen

As I've been reading and studying the topic of Biblical Counseling throughout this year there has been one compelling thought that has stuck with me right from the first time I read it and it is this: "Just like \_\_\_\_\_ is the ministry of God's word through \_\_\_\_\_, Biblical Counseling is the ministry of God's word through \_\_\_\_\_." This private ministry of the word through conversation is introduced to us in Deut. 6:6-7 where Israel is instructed to "teach them diligently to your children (impress them upon their hearts), and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise."

**THE \_\_\_\_\_ JESUS HAS \_\_\_\_\_ US TO**

Heath Lambert, in his book "A Theology of Biblical Counseling" says "Jesus has not given us the freedom to avoid speaking of him to others. It does not matter whether we label our conversations "missions", "getting to know the neighbors", "lunch together", or "counseling". Christians are commanded by Jesus Christ to speak of Him out of the overflow of love for Him and our concern for those who need to hear of Him."

**SCRIPTURE 1: Romans 15:14**

*(ESV) "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another."*

*(KJV) "And I myself am also persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, able also to admonish one another."*

- What is the main point of this verse that Paul is trying to convey to these Roman Christians?
  
- Is he wavering, indecisive or unsure about this or has he made up his mind on the topic?
  
- What is it about these Romans that has convinced Paul
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  
- What it is again that he is saying they can do because they are believers filled with goodness and knowledge?
  
- Finally, where are they to live out this obligation? (Hint: last two words of the verse...)

## **SCRIPTURE 2: Colossians 3:16**

*Col. 3:16 (ESV) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

*Col. 3:16 (KJV) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*

- What expectation does Paul set in this verse that is similar to Romans 15:14?
  
- Who is it directed to?
  
- Back in the Romans 15:14, there were some qualifiers that we noted to those who would engage in this ministry of the word through conversation: (Believers, Goodness, Knowledge). In this verse, do we see similar or new qualifications or expectations?

## **SCRIPTURE 3: Colossians 1:28**

*Colossians 1:28 (ESV) "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."*

*Colossians 1:28 (KJV) "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."*

- What is the purpose that Paul lays out for these believers? What is the opportunity that God allows them (and us) to engage in?

#### **SCRIPTURE 4: John 17:17-18**

In John 17 we get the amazing opportunity to listen in on a holy conversation between God the Son and God the Father. In this prayer Jesus shares with us his heart for us to be holy, his heart to help us become holy and the way that happens – through truth. Every counseling conversation should include the ministry of the word of God. In fact, Biblical Counseling just isn't BIBLICAL if it isn't based on directives from God's word. So, let's read Jesus' simple prayer:

*John 17:17-18 (ESV) "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent (commissioned) me into the world so send (commission) them into the world."*

*John 17:17-18 (AMP) "Sanctify them in the truth [set them apart for Your purposes, make them holy]; Your word is truth. Just as you commissioned me and sent me into the world, I also have commissioned and sent them (believers) into the world."*

- We help ONE ANOTHER as we VERBALLY engage in the sharing of \_\_\_\_\_.

So, as you see, there is this tension set up for us in God's word between the \_\_\_\_\_ of Biblical Counseling and the \_\_\_\_\_ of Biblical Counseling. I'm not sure if you'll leave here tonight thinking about Biblical Counseling as an obligation or an opportunity, but I hope you'll leave thinking of it both ways.

## **ENGAGING WISELY IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1. Counseling People THROUGH problems, not around, aside or in avoidance of them**

- God's recipe for spiritual growth includes trials. (James 1)
- At all times we are to seek peace and restoration of relationships (Rom. 12:18; James 3:18; Matt. 5:23; Matt. 18:15-17).
- All things can be accomplished through Christ (I Cor. 10:13).

### **2. "That's just the way I am" mentality**

- God's word continuously teaches and anticipates CHANGE/PROGRESS (Sanctification)

*"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

### **3. Encourage Confession; Don't allow minimizing**

- Confession brings forgiveness, mercy, and healing.
  - I John 1:8-9 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins and to forgive us from all unrighteousness."
  - Prov. 28:13 "He who conceals his transgression will not prosper: but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain **mercy**."

- James 5:16 “Therefore, confess your sins one to another and pray for one another, that you may be **healed**. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”
- Other Scripture: (Psalm 32; Psalm 51:4)
- Don’t minimize sin in a conversation just because it is uncomfortable. Sin isn’t “ok” or “excusable” but it is forgivable.

#### **4. Instill HOPE (truths about God’s word and His character)**

- God’s word provides HOPE
  - “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (*Romans 15:4*)
  - God’s word provides HOPE and we are to leverage it to provide encouragement to those enduring various trials.
  
- Your trial is a purposeful part of God’s special plan for your life, it isn’t unique or beyond your capacity to endure
  - “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted above your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

At the beginning of our session I said that I had 3 goals of this session 1) Open your mind a bit as to what “Biblical Discipleship” is **(the ministry of God’s word through private conversation)**. 2) Help you leave tonight contemplating both the **obligation** and the **opportunity** of Biblical Counseling and then lastly 3) provide you with some scriptural truths to help you put Biblical Counseling into practice right away in the relationships that God has already surrounded you with. I hope that we have accomplished that and in doing so better equipped ourselves to bring glory to our Savior both in our lives and in the lives of one another.

## Session 2 – The Process of Biblical Counseling

### What is the goal of biblical counseling?

*“Counseling is a conversation where one party with questions, problems, and trouble seeks assistance from someone they believe has answers solutions, and help.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Ultimate goal:** Glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

**Immediate goal:** Help people with their problems.

**Strategy:** Give people God’s perspective and solutions to their problems from his Word with the help of his Spirit.

**Two types problems:** Suffering and sin, those these often overlap.

- Often we respond to suffering with sin (Someone close dies so a person picks up the bottle)
  - “Sinners tend to respond sinfully to being sinned against”<sup>2</sup>
- Often sin will lead to more suffering (The lifelong drunkard develops liver cancer)

### The Big Picture

Whether it’s an informal question asked after a Sunday morning service or a friend who asks if they can meet and ask your help on a major problem they are struggling with, keep this grid in mind.

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<sup>1</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, page 13.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Hands of the Redeemer*, page 11.

- **Role of the Spirit** – Ultimately it is God, through the Holy Spirit, who changes us (2 Corinthians 3:18). This mindset will greatly affect the way we approach counseling. We need God to give wisdom (James 1:5), to open blinded eyes (2 Corinthians 4:6), and to give the strength to live for God (). Our goal in counseling people is to point them to God, the one who can really fix their problems, rather than to ourselves. Our job is simply to partner with God in this process (1 Corinthians 3:6).
  - This will require us to be Spirit-filled (Galatians 6:1) so that we can be Spirit-led.
  
- **Role of the Word** – As we saw in our previous lesson, it is God’s Word that changes people (John 17:17). Since God is the one who does the work, and since his Word is alive and powerful (Hebrews 4:12), we must make sure our words to people are God’s Word to them.
  - This will require us to be knowledgeable about God’s Word.
  
- **Role of the Counselor** – God gives us the responsibility as believers to confront others with his truth (Hebrews 3:12-13) and assist one another with the suffering we face on this sin-cursed world (Galatians 6:2).

## **Helping People with Problems**

### **Step 1 – Ask Questions (Data Gathering)**

You cannot truly help someone change if you don’t really know what the problem is. Be careful not to assume you know the details of the situation if you haven’t asked about them. Finding out as much information as possible can

greatly help in pinpointing what is going on in someone's heart as you seek to help them live life in line with God's plan. *Don't allow vague answers, push to really know what is going on in the situation before telling someone how they should live and respond!*

- “When did you become a Christian?”
- “When did this problem begin?”
- “What have you done to fix the problem?”

### **Step 2 – Connect Behavior with Desire (Mark 7:20-23)**

“You do what you do and you say what you say because you desire what you desire. You desire what you desire because believe what you believe about God, about His Word, and about yourself.” – The Wilds

- The Bible clearly teaches that action springs from thinking and desire – nobody makes you sin; you choose to sin.
- Seek to find out what it is they really want, because what they want is driving how they behave (James 4:1-4).

### **Step 3 – Give Them a Plan Going Forward (Ephesians 5:22-24)**

**Repent** – If sin has been committed, there is no going forward until the sin has been confessed and forsaken (1 John 1:9).

**Restore** – Sin must be made right with God through repentance, but often sin against another person will need to be made right before any more progress can be made (2 Corinthians 7:9-11).

**Renew** – Change the way you think about your problem so that you get God’s perspective on your life (Romans 12:2).

**Replace** – Make sure that wrong thoughts, actions, and behaviors are replaced with godly ones (Matthew 12:43-45).

Remember, this is true for people you are seeking to help and for yourself as well! Our problems are spiritual problems, and God’s Word gives us all the answers we need to live a life that pleases God (2 Peter 1:3)!

## Session 3 – Test Cases

Below are several examples of the types of situations that you might face when called upon to give people biblical counsel. With them are several questions to help you think through how you would respond in this situation.

### Ashley – Anger and Bitterness

Ashley’s mom died of cancer recently, and her father has completely withdrawn emotionally. She used to have a sweet spirit at church, now she sits and sulks. People have learned to keep their distance from her. On top of that, her application to Butler was rejected, and after years of studying, volunteering, and working like crazy to get in it all just seems so unfair. As you sit across the table from her at Starbucks, she simply shakes her head with her lips pressed firmly together. “I’m done,” she says. “Just done with everything.”

- What questions would you ask Ashley? \_\_\_\_\_

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What has Ashley’s heart decided it needs to be happy?

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- What would you suggest to Ashley going forward?

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### **Brian – Divorce**

You meet with your friend Brian for a weekly lunch, and at this meeting he tells you he and his wife are thinking about divorce. “It’s just not working, man. We’re two very different people and she’s been impossible to live with over the last few months. I know it’s not ideal, but I really do think this is the best option going forward. I can’t keep going like this. I don’t know, what do you think?”

- What questions would you ask Brian?

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- What is going on in Brian’s heart to lead him to this decision?

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- What would you say to Brian? What does he need to be confronted with from God's Word?

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- What steps should he take moving forward?

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### **Caroline – Fear and Anxiety**

Caroline is a friend of yours who confides in you one day that she needs help. "I just don't know what to do anymore. I'm constantly afraid of the future. I panic over the smallest things. I check my doors three times every night to make sure they're locked, often getting out of bed to do so. I'm afraid that my papers won't be done in time and so I track them through three different systems. I am always looking at my bank account to make sure that no one is using my card without my knowledge. All of this is exhausting me. I can't live this way, but I've tried everything but this problem won't go away."

- What questions would you ask Caroline?

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- What is going on in Caroline's heart to cause such fear?

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- What Scriptures should she meditate on to change her thinking?

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- What steps should she take moving forward?

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## **Appendix: Resources on Counseling**

Jay Adams

Competent to Counsel

The Christian Counselor's Manual

How to Help People Change

A Theology of Christian Counseling

Christ and Your Problems (Booklet)

Godliness through Discipline (Booklet)

Others

A Theology of Biblical Counseling (Heath Lambert)

Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling (James Macdonald)

Instruments in the Hands of the Redeemer (Paul Tripp)

How People Change (Tim Lane and Paul Tripp)