

MBC Equipping Hour 2019

Biblical Counselling

Week 1:

Introduction: Psychology, Christian Counseling and Biblical Counseling at a Glance

This Biblical counseling class is a very simplistic 6-week study that is geared towards two main goals. One is that each person will have an understanding of what Biblical counseling is and two is that each person will understand the practical outworking of a church which practices Biblical counseling.

Some of you, and undoubtedly many in the church, have either been influenced by or have had others in their life influenced by counsel that was not grounded in the Bible. We use terms today that were unheard of in the church 50-100 years ago. These terms have come in through the back door by the influence of the culture around us. Instead of the church standing firmly on the sufficiency of Scripture, it has bowed to what the culture and fallen man has deemed to be right.

Throughout the next 6 weeks, we are going to look at many things which pass as Christianity but actually find their roots in secular thought. Some things may offend you and your way of thinking, but I really want to encourage you to keep on and find out what Scripture has to say about counseling. ***We are going to talk about mankind and how your view of mankind will directly affect your view of Biblical counseling.***

Why does any of this matter? Why does it matter if we give people advice or counsel from Scripture or from some other source? What if we use or start with Scripture but also integrate man's wisdom?

If you are involved in fellowship and one another ministry, you will, I guarantee, come head-on with many issues which will cause you seek answers. That is the question you must answer...***is the Word of God sufficient for all things? Can I go to the Scriptures for any and all problems and rely solely on what God says?***

“We have been in a battle for the Bible for many years. First, it was a battle with liberals of the issue of inspiration. Then, it was a battle over the issue of inerrancy. Today, the battle is with those who say the Bible is not sufficient.”

What do you think of when you hear the term *counselling*? Is it meeting with someone at an appointed time in an appointed place for an allotted time? Is it something that you would go to a professional for, seek out someone who is properly trained? *Counseling* is the act of giving counsel to someone.

If you look up counseling in Webster's Dictionary (1979), you find the following definition: “*professional guidance of the individual using psychological methods.*” Did you notice how this definition claims that counseling is something that *only* someone with a professional degree can give? It also says that when you provide counseling, you are helping people by providing psychological ways of thinking, feeling, or behaving. Sadly, I think Webster's Definition reflects how most Christians think of counseling: It is something done in an office, by a professional, and it is very psychological. In contrast to Webster, I would like to suggest an alternate way to think about counseling that is distinctly Christian: *Biblical counseling is the opportunity to speak into someone's life using God's wisdom, and not your own.*

Counseling is the opportunity to give advice to someone who asks for it. *What makes counseling different for Christians is that our advice is centered on God's wisdom, and not our own.* We are not giving our own opinion. Rather, we are trying to help people to view their situations from God's perspective.

Before we look at the various forms of counselling available for people today, let's take a brief look at the very foundation of where many of the popular views in the church came from:

- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
 - One of the founding fathers of contemporary psychiatric thought and therapy.
 - Started with neurology and used opium to try and ease patients' pain, he eventually became addicted to it himself, lost funding and decided to pursue the profitable realm of psychiatric counseling.
 - Freud saw man as an instinct-ruled beast (animal) dominated by sex drive and aggression.
 - Freud also believed that it was man's past events (even events he was not aware of) which governed his present actions.
 - The patient would lay on the couch and say whatever came to mind...thus Freud is the father of psychoanalysis
 - Freud would tell patients they were not responsible for their behavior but that something or someone else caused them to be this way
 - There is no more damaging thought than this, as the Bible says, **'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'** (Rom. 3:23) Man is held accountable for their own sin and any foundational thought that starts differently can only end with a detrimental outcome.
- Carl Jung (1875-1961)
 - A disciple of Freud but they split because of Jung's involvement in the spirit realm.
 - He is the father of analytic psychology, where the patient is to look inside themselves through various means such as dreams, imagination, etc.
 - He also pushed individuation, which describes the manner in which a thing is identified as distinguished from other things.
 - This counseling technique helps the client reach one's collective unconscious.
 - This is therapeutic because it helps the person become whole
 - He also started the *introvert vs. extrovert*
 - It was one of the ways to put people into categories and separating them
 - This is in the church today under the guise of *visualization* where people are told to visualize something (usually healing) and then it will become true.
- Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993)
 - A Dutch Reformed pastor (and 33-degree Free Mason) who brought Jung's visualization into mainline Christianity, and his book *The Power of Positive Thinking*
 - He transformed countless church-goers to believe that they had the power within themselves to make the changes needed or wanted.
 - He said, as a Christian minister "It's not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God, I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine ... I've been to Shinto shrines and God is everywhere. ... Christ is one of the ways! God is everywhere."
 - "Peale developed a fascination with psychiatry as an answer, or partial answer, to his congregant's problems. While he was at Marble, he teamed up with a Freud-trained psychiatrist, Dr. Smiley Blanton, to begin a religious-psychiatric clinic in the church basement. They wanted to respond to the psychological needs of their congregation and especially the deep-rooted effects of the Great Depression. In 1951 this clinic was organized

into the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry, with Peale as president and Blanton as executive director.”¹

- Those who follow him today are Robert Schuller, Oprah, Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Tony Robbins, and many more who combine the power of the mind and faith.
- B. F. Skinner (1904-1990)
 - The father of behavioral therapy with an emphasis in positive reinforcement
 - Controlled people by using various techniques and repetitions to have the outcome which is desired
 - Within the school, he believed that teachers needed to modify the child’s behavior with positive reinforcement and sought to eliminate punishment.
 - He was a humanist who thought looking out for number one was top priority
- There are many other men and women who have influenced today’s thinking within the church that we must be aware of. Not everything that is in the church has Biblical roots and all forms of counselling must be viewed through the lens of Scripture.

What are some of the forms of counselling available to us today? Because psychology has over 200 various forms, many which contradict one another, it is impossible to nail down one main method. Most psychologists simply choose one way they feel to be the best and go with it.

- **Psychology**

- Behavioral therapy
 - The study of animals to try and figure out how man works
 - Cognitive analytical therapy
 - No moral standard, no right and wrong...just change thinking to what makes you happy
 - Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
 - Cognitive therapy
 - Family therapy
 - Gestalt Therapy
 - Client centered, humanistic attempts to have the person ‘heal’ themselves
 - Hypnotherapy
 - Integrative approaches
 - Multimodal therapy
 - Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)
 - Person-centered counselling
 - Psychoanalysis
 - Psychodynamic Counselling
 - Relationship counselling
 - Solution-focused brief therapy
- Many diagnosis’s that come from therapists or counselors without a Biblical foundation are not real diagnoses at all ***but simply describing the problem in technical terms.***
 - They will either give some general symptoms which we all suffer from, or they will simply say that there is something else wrong which is not quantifiable.
 - The real issue is that they cannot tell you ***why*** the symptoms exist.

¹ <https://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-norman-vincent-peale/>

- **Christian Counselling**

- Christians who rely—to one degree or another—on the counseling insights of secular people have been called integrationists, Christian counselors, and Christian psychologists—among other things.²
- Christian counseling may include pastoral counseling, psychology, discipleship, training, therapeutic counseling, family counseling, career counseling, as well as other approaches to the helping process.
- 3 Areas Where Biblical and Christian Counselors Agree
 - Both are generally conservative and our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Both seek to care for and comfort people who are genuinely hurting.
 - Both believe that psychologists can make accurate observations.
- Where they disagree
 - The necessity of secular counseling techniques
 - The assumption that it is necessary to add secular counseling techniques to biblical ones in order to provide the best help for struggling people.
 - That the Bible is a sufficient counseling resource
 - Christian counselors believe that secular counseling strategies are a necessary adjunct to the Bible. They do not believe that the Scriptures are a sufficient counseling resource.
- The differences in practice between the various forms of counseling are theological.
- “The 5 Love Languages” by Gary Chapman probably the most widely used.
 - This focuses on how you need to be loved to you feel loved.
 - This is classic psychology with its focus on self and not on the Lord or others.
- Most Christian Psychology or Christian Counsellors are “Christian” because of their ethics/morals or because they use Biblical principles.

- **Biblical Counselling**

- For our purposes in this class, we are going to define Biblical counseling as *using the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to God’s people.* (Joel James).
 - I like this definition because of its simplicity, focus and scope of intent.
 - Simple, just use the Bible.
 - Focus, to bring God-glorifying change.
 - Scope of intent, God’s people.
- If this is our working definition, then we need to fully understand these three aspects *before* we begin counselling.
- **Firstly, simply use the Bible.**³
 - Doctrine of inspiration
 - The Holy Spirit worked through the individual personalities and different styles of the human authors so that they composed and recorded God’s inspired Word to man. Inspiration extends to the very selection of the words of Scripture (**2 Pet 1:20-21, 2 Tim 3:16-17**).
 - Doctrine of inerrancy

² <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/biblical-counseling-vs-christian-counseling-whats-the-difference/>

³ <https://www.mbcmi.org/about-maranatha/doctrinal-statement/>

- The Scriptures are absolutely without error in any part in the original (**Ps 19:7-9; Is 30:8; Matt. 5:18, John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16**). As a result, the Word is alive (**Heb 4:12**), what God uses to accomplish His purposes (**Is 55:10-11**), and that which saves souls (**James 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23**) and changes lives (**2 Tim 3:16-17**).
 - Interpretation of the Word
 - Each passage of Scripture contains only one correct interpretation, namely that intended by the author (**2 Pet 3:16**). This meaning must be determined by employing the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation through diligent study (**2 Tim 2:15**) and dependence on the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 2:12; 1 John 2:27**). Any legitimate application of a passage of Scripture, of which there are many, must be based on the one correct interpretation.
 - Sufficiency (authority) and potency of scriptures.
 - The Word is completely sufficient for all of life and ministry (**2 Pet 1:3**) and is that which alone determines what to believe and how to live to the glory of God (**Acts 17:11**). It stands as absolute truth to be known and applied in every area of life. As such, Scripture is the very foundation upon which the church is built and comprises not only the content of the message that the church proclaims but also the methods by which the church operates.
- **Secondly, bring God-glorifying change**
 - Biblical counseling is about sanctification.
 - **“...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” 2 Peter 3:18**
 - What Peter was trying to get his readers to understand is that in order to grow in their faith it takes grace and knowledge—both, of course, applied to daily living—in order to grow. And growth, as one learns more about Christ and becomes more like Him, is what sanctification is all about.⁴
 - Growth comes about as a believer learns more of the Christian faith and is helped by God to practice it. More and more he progressively comes to walk as he should (not, in this life without failures, of course). But if one is a true believer, he grows. He will change. He can because he is a new creation. Sanctification is not “on the spot,” as one modern preacher recently said. Nor does it come about without effort: studying and prayerfully applying scriptural truth. It is the result of knowing God’s truth about putting off the old sinful ways and replacing them with new biblical ones that please God. Growth is a sign of life—in this case spiritual life. No growth—no life.⁵
- **Thirdly, Biblical counseling is meant for God’s people**
 - **“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” 1 Corinthians 2:14**
 - If we truly believe that the natural man cannot understand the things of God then it is of the utmost importance to make sure someone is born again *before* Biblical counseling.

⁴ <http://www.nouthetic.org/blog/?cat=93>

⁵ Ibid

- If we attempt to use/teach Biblical principles to those who are unsaved, we are simply attempting to reform the flesh and will fall into legalism.
- The regenerate person will (though it may take time) respond to Scripture as the Holy Spirit will bring conviction upon the person.

Looking forward to next week:

- Man's makeup and how that guides our counseling.
- How do we view man's relationship with God?
- How our worldview defines our fundamental counseling philosophy.