

MBC Equipping Hour 2018

Biblical Counselling

Are there any questions from last week? Anything that you did not quite understand or maybe something that you did not agree with? The goal was just to have a very simple, introductory overview of psychology in counseling and the fundamental differences between psychology, Christian and Biblical counselling.

This morning we are going to start to develop our counseling techniques using three main components, a Biblical understanding of man and sin (looking at the heart of man) (we are going to spend the majority of time on this point), man's relationship with God and finally developing our own worldview with regards to the sufficiency of Scripture.

Week 2: Developing a Biblical understanding of man: How we view man and God will always drive how we counsel others.

The fundamental difference between Biblical counseling and all other forms of counseling is a theological one. What we believe about God, man and the fall will ultimately guide and direct how we seek to interact with others and what we believe is the best course of action. Biblical counseling starts with the premise that God is holy, man is sinful and the only way to have real life is by putting off the old man and putting on the new. Biblical counseling also holds each individual person accountable for their sins, but also recognizes that bad things happen to people that are simply out of their control. ***But, how they react or respond to those things is always within their control and will always be a matter of the heart.***

When discussing man's relationship with God, we must answer a few key questions. *When Adam fell, did it affect all of mankind? Did the fall affect man's full makeup or are there parts that are still "pre-fall" in essence? Did the fall cause man to fall so far that he is unable to know and understand God's truth/wisdom without the help of God Himself?*

When we seek to give counsel, it is important to know how the fall of mankind has affected and infected mankind.

1. Sin and Mankind

- The fact that man is sinful is a universally recognized reality. There is nothing in our world that sin has not infected.

- As MacArthur notes, there are only four chapters of the Bible that do not mention sin or sinners...Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22¹. This goes to show that sin is a major doctrine and study throughout the Bible.
- We must have a robust understanding of sin and how it has displaced all of mankind and to what extent it has infected mankind.
- Sin entered the world in **Genesis 3** when Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit that God had commanded them not to eat. Thus, sin is any act which is against the command of God and puts man at the center of his will, replacing God.
- We read in **Romans 5:12** “**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.**”
 - This is where you as a Christian need to come to your own personal convictions about the doctrine of original sin.
 - We read in **Psalm 51:5** “**Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.**”
 - Again, in **Ephesians 2:3** “**Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”**
- In **Romans 5:12**, Paul asserts that by one man sin came into the world, death came into the world through sin, death spread to all men and that all men sinned.
- It is the final *all men sinned* that many have issues with.
- Here is a list of various views in a brief summary:²
 - **Bad Example:**
 - Adam sinning left mankind that would follow a bad example. Humans do not have to sin, but when they do, they are only following the example which Adam left them.
 - This was held by Pelagius (360-418), a heretic that supposed man’s will was sufficient to save him.
 - With this view, if Adam was a bad example, then Christ is just a good example to follow, not a needed Savior for our sins.
 - **Inherited Sinful Nature:**
 - This idea claims that Adam’s sinful nature was passed down to all mankind, but the guilt was not.
 - This means that man must choose to sin, and only then are they held guilty for sinning. But, **Romans 5:18** **So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”**

¹ Biblical Doctrine p. 452

² Ibid p. 462

- This word *condemnation* is a legal term used by Paul to establish guilt which was passed down.
 - This view is common among Arminian believers who also believe in prevenient grace (not found in Scripture) which actually takes away Adam's guilt from mankind.
 - **Realism:**
 - This view was held by Augustine and supposes that all men were *in* Adam when he sinned and therefore all men are held guilty.
 - This is commonly defended by **Hebrews 7:9-10** when the author says that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham as he was in Abraham's loins.
 - Realism does well to establish the fact that man has a sinful nature and are guilty because they participated in Adam's sin.
 - Where it falls short is that the same is not true for our righteousness. We are not righteous because we participated with Christ, we are righteous because His righteousness was imputed to us.
 - **Representative Headship (Federal Headship):**
 - This simply states that the action of a representative is determinative for all the member who are united with him. When Adam fell into sin, all mankind after him was condemned because of their relationship with him.
 - This means that all who are then associated with Christ then have His righteousness counted towards them (**Rom. 5:19**).
- The reason that I want you to know the popular/various views is so you will know how to counsel and what the counselee may have in mind. If someone comes to you thinking that Adam was simply a bad example to follow or that they are really not that bad, you will know that you need to start with the gospel and work from there.
- People need to know that they are sinners and that there is nothing which they can do that can pull them from that standing before God. There is only one way, through the sacrifice of Christ, that they can be accounted righteous before God.
- **How does this affect our counselling?**
 - Sin will always be at the forefront of Biblical counseling.
 - **Sin has a hereditary aspect.**
 - This is what we just looked at in **Romans 5:18**, all of mankind are sinners. All of mankind will stand in judgment before God, some going on to eternal life in heaven, others hell.
 - It is important to know the people you will be counseling are sinners. No matter how their stories play out and how innocent they may sound and how it is someone else's fault, you are talking to a sinner.
 - **Sin has a habitual aspect.**

- “It is the nature of man, even the nature of a believer, to be easily entangled in sin. It happens so easily. And frankly, there are certain sins which more easily entangle each of us than other ones. Each of us in our own lives have certain propensities for specific kinds of sins. It can be because we have in the past life cultivated habits of sin which now plague us even after our salvation.”³
- Even though you will primarily counsel believers in the church, they can still struggle with habitual sin.
- **Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...”**
- Never underestimate the seriousness and power of sin.
 - Because we forget that sin is firstly against God, we do not put it in the place it deserves...as far away from us as possible.
- When counselling, it is your job to listen and find out if the person has a track record of sin. It usually sounds something like “...I never seem to make the right decisions...” or “...I really thought it would turn out different this time...” These are some key phrases that most likely point to habitual sin.
- **Sin has consequences.**
 - The moment you think that you will never commit a certain sin, you have just taken a step towards committing it. You have let your guard down and stopped protecting yourself from it.
 - Sin will deprive the believer of a life which is growing in grace and communion with God.⁴
 - Sin will weaken the soul the deny strength which is needed for the daily Christian life.
 - Sin can become a delight to the person, actually finding their identity in the fact they are sinning.
 - Sin will become the thing that we think about the most.
 - There will never be a sin that we get away with, whether it is regret for the rest of our life or some other way, sin is not something to take lightly.
 - This is important when counseling. Because sin has consequences, the problems in one’s life *may* be caused because of sin.

³ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-106/dealing-with-habitual-sins>

⁴ <https://www.challies.com/reading-classics-together/6-evil-effects-of-sin/>

- All of our hardships are because of sin, we live in a fallen world. But, there are consequences which are there specifically because of sin. We will look at this point in upcoming studies.

Knowing this about man, the next question we have to ask is how much of man's makeup has been tainted by sin. In other words, has sin infected man's thoughts, reasoning, knowledge, emotions, motives, actions, etc. Are there any parts that are still pure?

- This is the Biblical doctrine of ***Total Depravity***.
- Total Depravity is the "T" in the acrostic *T.U.L.I.P.* which many use for the Doctrines of Grace.
 - This doctrine is helpful on two fronts, we should never take man's wisdom over the Bible because man is infected with sin. Secondly, the person we are counseling is also tainted by sin and will view their circumstances with tainted eyes.
- There is only one main thing I want to point out about total depravity:⁵
 - Man is polluted and corrupted in all aspects.
 - There is not one part of man that has escaped the effects of sin.
 - Paul says in **Titus 1:15** "**To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.**"
 - **Ephesians 4:17** "**Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.**"
 - The word *futility* literally means *what is devoid of truth and appropriateness or depravity*.
 - This is such an important fact to realize when we are reading books written by unsaved men and women trying to glean wisdom about counseling.
 - Our foundation and truth for counseling must come from the Word of God, not from those who are devoid of truth.
 - Both **Jeremiah 17:9** and **Mark 7:21-23** speak to the fact that our hearts are darkened with sin and continually produce sin.
 - Our thinking and understanding (**Eph. 4:18** and **Rom. 1:21**) are also under the curse of sin.

⁵ Biblical Doctrine p. 467

- With all of this, it is important to understand that before one is born again, they are not spiritually neutral...they are actively enemies of God. Man hates God (**Rom. 8:7**) and he is unable **AND** unwilling to accept any spiritual truth.
 - **1 Corinthians 2:14** “**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.**”
 - This is why it is important to start with the gospel and move from there.

As I said before, it is primarily people in the church you will be admonishing/counseling as you walk in your Christian life. Though the majority of verses which have been quoted or referenced refer to the old or unsaved man, it is vital to know that Christians still sin.

Even though a born-again person is a new creation in Christ (**2 Cor. 5:17**) and has been given new desires (**1 John 3:9**) the sin infection has not left him. In a sense, the longer a person lived in sin before being born again, the more they bring with them into their new life. This may be through consequences, thoughts, desires, etc. This does not mean that person is forever doomed or will have a subpar Christian life. It does mean they may have to work harder at renewing their mind or other areas.

Our Worldview and Sufficiency of Scripture

Finally, none of what we just talked about matters if we do not hold to a Biblical worldview. A worldview answers several questions, where did we come from? Why are we here? What is wrong with the world? How can we fix it? All of these answers are found in Scripture.

What is sufficiency of Scripture?

MacArthur says “God’s Word is sufficient to meet every need of the human soul as David verifies frequently in his psalms. Psalm 19:7-14 is the most comprehensive statement regarding the sufficiency of Scripture. It is an inspired statement about Scripture as a qualified guide for every situation. Scripture is comprehensive, containing everything necessary for one’s spiritual life. Scripture is surer than a human experience that one may look to in proving God’s power and presence. Scripture contains divine principles that are the best guide for character and conduct. Scripture is lucid rather than mystifying so that it enlightens the eyes. Scripture is void of any flaws and therefore lasts forever. Scripture is true regarding all things that matter, making it capable of producing comprehensive righteousness. ***Because it meets every need in life, Scripture is infinitely more precious than anything this world has to offer.***”⁶

⁶ <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj15g.pdf>

Psalm 19:7-14 “*The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul*; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes*. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? *Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me*; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.”

2 Peter 1:3 “...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

If you believe these things, then why look to other sources when giving counsel? You have to make the decision to either trust fully in the Word of God or look for answers from man. After learning what man is made of, why would you want to look elsewhere?

Looking Forward to Next Week:

- Who is qualified to counsel Biblically?
 - What are the requirements?
- How do you view the person you are counselling?
 - Is there a “one size fits all” method to counselling?
 - Are people really destined/doomed to simply become what they have experienced?