

## MBC Equipping Hour 2019 Biblical Counselling

Over the past three weeks we have been building a foundation for the primacy of Biblical counseling in the church. We have defined Biblical counseling as *using the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to God's people*. It is only Biblical counseling that **exclusively** uses Scripture to define root causes and set forth principles for God-honoring change.

### Week 4: Preparing Our Own Hearts for One Another Ministry

This morning we are going to look the responsibility of counseling. As I have stated throughout our study, counseling is part of the believer's normal one another ministry. This does not mean that people should not have Biblical counseling degrees or do specific counseling at the church, like family or marriage counseling. The point is, it is part of and directly related to the church. If you are part of the local church, you should not be looking for counseling outside of the church. When counseling is done outside of the church, people have the opportunity to not be as honest because their counselor does not know them.

Paul says in **Ephesians 4:11-12** "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." If you notice, there is not a "position" in the church for counselor. This does not mean we are not responsible for counseling, but it means it is not up to one person or a selective group of people. As the teachers in the church are training and discipling the members, they then are actively participating in the life of the body. There is certainly parts of counseling which are for the elders of the church, not because others are ill-equipped, but because it is part of their shepherding responsibilities from God.

### Who is a qualified counselor?

- Counseling is a body life ministry. What that means is that it takes place in the normal life and fellowship of the church.
- Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 5:14** "***We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.***"
  - Let's take apart what Paul is telling the church at Thessalonica.
  - First of all, who is he addressing?
    - The whole church, the **brethren**. Paul is not writing this letter to a specific person nor is he addressing only a select few. He is writing to exhort the church to be actively looking out for other one another in the church.
    - We cannot look to the people around us to fulfil this, but we must take on the responsibility that we are commanded to do.

- What does he tell them to do?
  - **Admonish the unruly...**
    - This word *admonish* is where Biblical counseling really finds its roots. It is used in many verses throughout the New Testament and means to admonish, correct or instruct.
    - Part of the life of the church is to look out for those who are unruly. As MacArthur puts it “They're never in step. ‘Get with the program’ is a slogan that suits them. When everyone else is moving ahead, they're going backward. Out of either apathy or rebellion, they've gone spiritually AWOL, and they're not interested in learning or serving.”<sup>1</sup>
    - We as part of the church are to look out for those who are not walking in the light of Christ.
    - *Paul’s command presupposes two things, one is that you know what the body life is to be and that you are paying attention to the people around you.*
    - The church will not grow and flourish if we are not actively looking out for one another and willing to confront one another.
    - When you see someone who is stuck in sin, it is upon us to go and admonish them.
  - Then Paul says to **encourage the fainthearted...**
    - The fainthearted are those who are the worried in the church.
    - MacArthur says “To deal with the worried, Paul said simply, “Encourage them.” The idea is to come side-by-side and comfort them. If you know someone like that—fearful, worried, melancholy, or despairing—the Lord wants you to come alongside and develop a friendly relationship with that person. If you tend to be that way yourself, develop friendships with godly people who will console, comfort, strengthen, reassure, cheer, refresh, and soothe you from God's Word.”<sup>2</sup>
    - Once again, we are not only to look out for those who are unruly, but for those who are going through a troublesome time. We are to come alongside them and walk the road with them, offering encouragement from the Word of God.
  - He then says **help the weak...**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A137/dealing-with-problem-people>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

- There are two type of weak people that Paul has in mind.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, those who are weaker in their faith regarding what is sinful and what is not.
- These are the people who struggle with their liberty and feel safer when more restrictions are put upon them.
- The second group are those who are weak in self-discipline. Those believers who seem to continually fall into the same sin over and over.
- He tells us to simply **help** them. This is the same word Jesus uses in **Matthew 6:24** “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be *devoted* to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”
- In Matthew, it is translated *devoted*. This is who we help those who are weak around us, we are devoted to them. We hold fast to them, bear their burden with them.
- Do not give up on them, do not rush them, simply be there for them.
- The capstone is **be patient with everyone...**
  - When we have our own relationship with God in proper view, we will be able to have patience with others.
  - We should never forget how many times God has had patience with us and what he has done for us. We need that same attitude when interacting with others.
- There are a couple of things to point out that are not in the Scripture but are directly implied.
  - One is that you have a general desire for the members of the church to walk in holiness. Can you say that your heart is for the people of the church to be conformed more into the image of Christ or do you look at the church as simply a social gathering?
  - The second thing is that we are intimately involved in each other’s life’s. We need to be looking out for the desires of others, not just ourselves. How can you tell when someone is fainthearted? You should be able to notice because you know when they are not.
    - This does not mean that you must know everyone in the church at an intimate level. But it does mean that you should know some people at more than just a cursory level.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

- The third thing is that you should welcome such counsel when it comes your way. We should never be offended or put off when a fellow believer comes to us with something like this.
  - Even if what they are saying really hurts, we should take it in love and try and learn from what they are saying.
  - How we respond will always show where our heart really is.

Going back to the Scripture at the beginning, **Ephesians 4:11-12** “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”

Notice the results of a healthy body of believers who are equipped for serving one another and the body of Christ will be built up.

Jay Adams states “While God assigned the counseling task informally to all Christians (just as all are expected to teach, exhort, and perform other tasks informally), He assigned the work of formal nouthetic counseling to the church elder.\* Such counseling is a part of his official job description.”<sup>4</sup>

Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

- There are really three “layers” of counseling happening in the church.
  - Firstly, from the pulpit as the Word is taught and expounded upon.
    - This is for the general body of Christ to hear and obey. On any given Sunday, we are admonished, exhorted, warned and encouraged through the normal teaching of the Word.
  - Secondly, there is the body life ministry which Paul talked about in **1 Thessalonians 5:14**. This takes place when we see someone or they come to us and are in need of counseling.
    - We should be ready to confront those who need it because we have a concern for their Spiritual health in hopes there will be a Biblical change in their life.<sup>5</sup>
    - Paul also said in **Romans 15:14** “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”
    - Paul knew that because they were born again, they had all they needed to counsel (admonish) one another.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nouthetic.org/who-should-do-counseling>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nouthetic.org/about-ins/what-is-nouthetic-counseling>

- Then thirdly, there is counseling that is specifically for the elders of the church. This is what Paul is referring to in **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**.
- Notice that Paul here is addressing the church but specifically talking about the elders of the church and their responsibility towards the body.
- The church is to appreciate those who are laboring among them and those who are giving them instruction.
  - That word *instruction* is also the same word Paul used in **5:14** when he encouraged the church to admonish the unruly
  - These counseling situations are ones that are possibly heavier to bear and take more time to go through or need deeper study of the Word.
    - Do not make the mistake of thinking that an elder has better resources than someone else. We all have the Bible, they just have been specifically tasked and equipped by God for the duty.
  - This is part of the shepherding process that God has commanded the elders to be responsible for (**1 Pet. 5:1-2**).

When counseling within the body of Christ or even at the eldership level, a belief in the sufficiency of Scripture will be tested. You may hear things like “*Is this all you have to offer?*” or “*What do **you** think I should do?*” The counselor may be tempted to try and find a clever way to offer advice through their own lens, outside the bonds of Scripture.

Paul says in **2 Timothy 3:16** “**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;**” God’s Word, because of its source, is all that we should be relying on. This is *the* foundation for teaching and counseling in the church. If all you have to offer is Biblical wisdom, then all you have is sufficient for the issue.

### **What requirements should we look for when seeking counseling?**

It has been said that anyone who is born again is far more equipped to counsel than anyone who is not. This is a true statement because the believer has the Holy Spirit living in them and is alive to the things of Christ. With that being said, there are some characteristics that you can look for when going to counsel with someone.

- Most importantly, do they have a love for the Word of God?
- **Colossians 3:16** “**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**”
  - Does the person have the word of Christ richly dwelling in them? It is only from the word that one can properly counsel (admonish) another.
  - Do not look for someone who thinks they need to add or take away something from the Bible.

- There are many books out there on many counseling topics, but their written by men without the authority of God. Stick to the Scriptures.
  - As much as it may hurt, do not look for someone who is trying to lessen the effects of sin in your life or blaming something else for your actions.
  - To grow in Christlikeness, we need the wisdom of Christ only found in the pages of His Word.
- Look for someone who has a love for the church. Paul proclaimed in **Acts 20:31** **“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”**
  - You can see the heart of Paul here for the church at Ephesus as he talks to the elders. He did not cease counseling (admonishing) them, with tears, for three years.
  - This compassion is what we need to have for one another, not wanting anyone to fall by the wayside but desire to see all come to maturity in Christ.
  - This is one of the issues with counseling clinics outside of the church. These counselors cannot say that they have been praying for you or that they even know you.
  - When you search outside for help, you are going to a complete stranger, not knowing their heart or motives.
- Look for someone who will tell you the truth. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 4:14** **“I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”**
  - Paul wrote some pretty harsh things in his letter to the Corinthian church. He was not afraid to tell them about their sin and what they needed to do differently, but he did so for their good.
  - Paul’s heart was that they would grow in Christ and honor Him through their life.
  - Paul desired a pure church. When we withhold the truth from someone, we are allowing sin to permeate the church and the life of the believer. Though it may be hard, we need to hear the truth.

Overall, a healthy church should be one where the body is looking out for one another, helping and encouraging one another to be more like Christ. This is the idea the writer of Hebrews had when he wrote in **10:24-25** **“...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”** When was the last time you considered someone here at MBC and stimulated them to love and good deeds? Who was the last person you encouraged here at church? These things should be part of the normal daily life of the church.

**Looking forward to next week:**

- Preparing our own hearts for one another ministry.
  - What are some hindrances to one another ministry?
- How has psychology come into the church through the front door?
  - What are some common and popular phrases that we use but are unbiblical?
- Why must our mindset and vernacular be Biblical and not psychological?