

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.

After that, we looked at man's make-up and his sinful nature. We also read that the Bible defines man as fully sinful, not as fully sinful as he could be, but fully infected with sin. Man's thoughts, desires, intentions, actions, etc. are sinful without the intervention of God. Man will never seek after God without God taking the initiative. This is of the utmost importance when counseling because we must rely on a perfect source, not man's own sin stained thoughts.

Finally, last week we talked about who is qualified for counseling in the church. We determined that there are three "levels" of counseling (admonishing) which happen in the church. One is the pulpit as the teacher rightly divides the word for the congregation as a whole, it also happens in the normal body life as we interact with each other and also there are situations for the elders to shepherd. We also talked about the importance of counseling being under the authority of the local church and not being farmed out to strangers.

With that being our foundation, this morning we are going to look at our own hearts and tendencies to stray away from one another ministry. We are also going to briefly look at how psychology has replaced much of our Biblical vernacular and what some common phrases in the church are. We need to find out the root causes of not using Biblical terms and realize that *without Scripture there can be no real and lasting change*.

Week 4: Preparing Our Own Hearts for One Another Ministry

After looking at the importance of one another ministry last week, we are going to start this morning by looking at a few of the one another verses in the Bible. Then, we are going to discuss some of the reasons or ideologies which preclude us from a fruitful one another ministry at church.

Bible Verses:

Romans 12:10 *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor"* (From Rom. 12-16 there are 9 one another encouragements from Paul).

1 Corinthians 12:25 *"so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."*

Galatians 5:13 *"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*

Ephesians 4:2 *"...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love."*

The idea throughout these verses (there are dozens of them throughout the whole New Testament) is that *we are to be looking out and coming alongside one another*. We should not be looking for things that divide us but ways that we can love, encourage, serve and exhort one another. Our culture/society is constantly trying to find ways to keep us apart and/or separate us into various groups. We are constantly inundated with reminders of how much better we can make ourselves, how much more we need to add to our already stuffed garages/attics/basements and what our life could look like with just a little more.

We are in a spiritual battle, not just for the salvation of souls, but for walking in this life in such a way that glorifies God. Once we are born again, Satan's attacks do not stop but are concentrated in different areas. The goal is to bring division, discontentment, unrest and simply keep the Christian and the church away from being sanctified. We must know our own hearts and not think too highly of ourselves or our opinions. We are told in **1 Corinthians 10:12** **"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall."**

Here are some of the methods the enemy uses to stunt our growth as Christians and keep the church from fulfilling her purpose.

- **Apathy**

- *"The nice thing about apathy is you don't have to exert yourself to show you're sincere about it."*—Anonymous
- Literally means *without feeling*. It is to have a lack of concern or interest for something or someone.
- We can become uncompassionate or uncaring about the Bible and the people in the church.
- Our involvement in church activities starts to diminish and other things start to take precedence in our life. Spiritual things start to lose their luster and the former hunger for growth in grace falls away.
- Subsequently the concern for others also falls away because focus has shifted from Christ and His church to self.
- **Romans 12:11** **"...not lagging [sluggish or slothful] behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord..."**

- **Scared/Nervous/Insecure**

- When we see confrontation as a negative thing, we will not desire to do it.
- Confrontation is a good thing when used with the glory of God in mind.
 - Paul had an interaction with Peter when they met up in Antioch.
 - Turn to **Galatians 2:11-14**, we see a few things here:
 - Paul opposed Peter to his face, he confronted him. Peter had been eating with Gentiles until certain Jews came up and then he shunned the Gentiles and ate with the Jews.

- Why did he do this? He feared the backlash of the Jews (v. 12). It was out of fear that he was starting down the path of sin, bringing division into the church.
 - Paul calls what he did *hypocrisy* (v.13) and he influenced *the rest of the Jews* and also Barnabas.
 - Peter’s sin was so great that Paul knew he had to step in immediately and say something. It was starting to influence other people and the church, in its infantile stage, was in danger of fracturing.
 - *Paul did not go behind Peter’s back, he did not go and consult what others thought, he knew the damage was going to be severe and acted promptly.*
- We have to remember that sin is not just going to bring consequences upon the individual committing the act, it will ultimately spread if allowed to go unchecked. We must have the boldness of Paul to speak as he did, with the Word of God. Paul spoke when he “*saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel...*”
 - Do we care enough about the gospel and the church to take a stand, even when it is not popular or easy?
- Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”
 - Looking out for church is what it means to be part of the church.
- **Individualism and busyness**
 - Putting your own needs/wants above the needs of the group.
 - Paul says in **Philippians 2:3-4** “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
 - The common question when it comes to this subject in the church is *if I am looking out for others, who is looking out for me?*
 - This question is not out of place. It is the same question that Peter asked of Jesus and is recorded in all three gospels.
 - Peter asked Jesus in **Matthew 10:28** “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.” Jesus’ answer was profound in **verses 29-31** “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms, for My sake and the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with

persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

- As we seek to bring the gospel and serve for the sake of Christ, He is the One who is ultimately going to take care of you.
 - This does not mean we do not work or plan for our families and future, but it means we do not make those things our priority.
 - Our priority needs to be serving the body of Christ for the glory of God and growth of His saints.
- We should not be seeking out comfort or ease, but how we can best honor and glorify God with our lives.
- Jesus exhorts us in **Matthew 6:33** “But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**”
 - Christ takes care of His children who are seeking after Him.
- **Feeling ill-equipped**
 - Often times we do not want to speak up because we think that our knowledge or training is somehow not good enough.
 - Paul says in **Colossians 2:9-10** “**For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority**”
 - This verse comes right after Paul’s exhortation about worldly wisdom, in verse 8 “**See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.**”
 - We have all that we need to exhort a fellow Christian in their walk. We do not have to know about everything that is bad, we just need to know the truth.
 - It is important for us to be in our Bibles and to make sure that we are not simply going off of emotion but Biblical principles.
- **Treating non-essentials as essentials**
 - Is the thing offensive to God or only offensive to you?
 - Are the things that I allow to bring division or discontentment worthy of eternal life or are they just hills I am standing on?
 - When we allow our non-essential ideologies creep into our essential list, we will foster an attitude of disunity.
 - If we desire that people think like we do, we will always come up short. The issue is that we will think of ourselves better than the other person and put our own opinion above theirs.
 - If we lose sight of the gospel and the essentials of the Christian faith, we are no longer a church but a social club that gathers because we have the same interests.
 - We are told in **1 Peter 3:8** “**To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.**”

- We are to have one mind (not drones but with regard to the essentials of the Christian faith), have compassion with people, not looking down on them when they do not agree with your opinion and be friendly and kind.
- If all we worry about is how people think regarding secondary issues then we miss the point of unity, faith, the gospel and ultimately the church.

There are several other things we could add to the list, but these are what I notice to be front and center in the life of the church.

- **Here are some of the phrases or popular excuses people use for their continued sin or lack of care for the church.**
 - *You need to firstly forgive yourself*
 - I hope that with our mature congregation here at MBC we would recognize that this is not only absent from Scripture, but it also usurps God's authority.
 - When we tell someone this (or they say it) it sounds helpful, but what are we really telling them?
 - When the Christian is forgiven of their sins by God, there is no higher authority that they need to find forgiveness from.
 - We are told to forgive others because God, in Christ, has forgiven us, Paul says in **Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."**
 - The attempt of self-forgiveness can lead to two things:
 - It can cause us to stay living in the past reliving our sins.
 - There are people who just like to relive their sins for the sake of remembering them. Maybe it was a past experience or person that you knew that you sinned with, if we cannot forget that it will become sin again to us.
 - It can also cause us to withhold forgiveness from others.
 - If we put self-forgiveness as the highest priority (or any priority) then we can withhold our forgiveness from someone as we attempt to work things out with ourselves.
 - *You must learn to love yourself before you can love others*
 - Once again, this is absent from Scripture and undermines the very foundation of the Christian faith.
 - We are told in **1 John 4:10 "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins."**
 - This is love, sacrificing for those who not only hate you but are actively going against you. This is what Christ did for us and what we are commanded to practice with others.

- Furthermore, Paul says in **2 Timothy 3:1-2a** “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self...”
- One of the key characteristics of the last days and having difficult times is that there will be a love of self that is promoted and accepted among the world. This will (and already has) crept into the church.
- The Bible says we are to focus on others and their needs and also makes the assertion that we love ourselves far too much already. Paul says in **Ephesians 5:29** “...for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.”
 - Because the Bible is silent about commanding us to love ourselves, it is implied that it is our natural bent. Because the Bible is filled with exhortations to love others, it is implied that it is not our natural tendency.
- *You need to trust and just follow your heart*
 - I know this sounds super loving or spiritual, but what does God’s word say about it.
 - **Genesis 6:5** “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that *every* intent of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil *continually*.”
 - Notice the words that are used here, **every intent** and **only evil continually**. This is the state of our hearts as God sees them.
 - **Jeremiah 17:9** “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”
 - Than all else, the heart is **more deceitful** and is **desperately sick**.
 - We should not seek to follow our hearts as they will constantly lead us astray, but we need the objective Word of God.
- *I’m just broken or We’re all just broken*
 - We are to be broken when we come to Christ.
 - **Psalm 34:18** “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
 - God desires us to have a broken spirit, that means that we are not prideful and think less of God and more of ourselves.
 - But we also need to know that God does not leave us there once we have been saved.
 - God says in **Isaiah 57:15** “I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”
 - To live a life that is constantly characterized by “being broken” is to deny the reality that God is with you, God is on your side and that God is taking care of you.

- Paul also says in Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
- Your old you is dead and now you have a living and fruitful life in Christ because he loved you and died for you.
- You have no reason to live in such a way that denies that reality. When we live a “broken life” it is because we are too focused on ourselves and not on the reality of Christ.
- *Everything is going to work out or be okay*
- *You need to just be you or be true to yourself*
- *He is just a good person who got caught up in some bad things*

Looking forward to next week:

- What is the goal of Biblical Counseling?
 - Sanctification? Becoming more like Christ?
- How do we accomplish the goal?
 - Putting off and putting on.