

Maranatha Bible Church 2020

Equipping Hour: Advanced Biblical Counseling

Week 1: Need for Change

Introduction

- In the first six-week course of Biblical Counseling we went over the differences between psychology, Christian psychology, counseling and Biblical counseling.
- We also talked about how to view one's self and how to view others.
- We continued by looking at how the Bible describes Biblical counseling as discipleship, and it takes place within the context of one another ministries.
- Lastly, we briefly went over some of the common areas in which people struggle and how we can Biblically help them.

- For this series, we are going to be diving deep into the hearts of men and women. We are going to work through Jay Adams book *How to Help People Change* and learn what it means to walk alongside someone as they change. This too will help us as we seek to be conformed more into the image of Christ.

- Most people fear change or at a minimum, they certainly do not look forward to it.
 - In our day and age, many in the church say *God loves me the way I am* or something like *I don't have to change, I'm perfect in Christ*. If this were true, then Christ came and died for nothing.
 - But in reality, He came in order that you would be changed.
 - Furthermore, He came not only for the once off change (**justification**) but for a continual change in your life which is moving more towards His image (**sanctification**).

- Here is the two-edged sword with change, it can be man-centered, change for moral or personal reasons.
 - It can also be God-centered, change because the Holy Spirit is doing a work and you are obeying in changing. Really, at the end of the day, you are the one that is going to know the difference.
 - Because change always involves behaviors, as Biblical counselors we must be sure that we are not changing behavior but hearts. When the heart changes, the behavior will *always*¹ follow.

- In counseling, this is so key for the Biblical Counselor. The psychologist / psychiatrist desires change so the person will be happy. This can include a change in environment, a job change, a change in spouse or anything else which is on the outside of the person.
 - The individual changes by their own volition and hopes the temporary result does not fade away. *If the reason they change, changes, their own happiness is at stake.*

¹ This is not to say that someone will never slip up again in this area, but with a heart change they are now more than willing to get back on the right track.

- Once again, this is a fundamental difference between Biblical Counseling and Christian Counseling / Psychology. The change a Biblical counselor is aiming towards has the object of God.
 - The husband does not change for his wife’s happiness or so he can get a promotion at work or because he wants to reestablish a relationship with his estranged children.
 - He does so because he has sinned against God, is convicted of that sin, desires to correct it and then desires to live a disciplined life.
 - By doing this, the issues surrounding everything else will start to fall into place.

- If we simply start by trying to manage symptoms, there can be no real change in the heart, just change at the behavioral level. Though we are to behave properly as Christians (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; Rom. 13:13, etc.), we must do it from the heart, not just lip service.

- One of the most common phrases you will hear when discipling someone is *I don’t want to do...* This is a great place to start and our instinct will be to help that person stop doing what they do not want to do.
 - But, we need to get to the why...why are they doing what they are doing, why do they want to stop and why are they coming to you now.
 - Have they realized that what they are doing is sin against God? Are they convicted of that sin or did someone else tell them they are sinning? Are they coming to you now because they know they are under the judgment of God or because they are under orders from someone else?
 - If the person being counseled has only someone else’s motivation, they are just looking for behavioral change. The root of the issue is never going to be dug out.

- Just because something changes does not mean it has become better. *“Restraining evil is not the same as promoting good.”*²
 - This is the case within the counseling world. Many think that if they can simply change their behaviors, they are not only doing better but also better before God.
 - For instance, the common Jews in Jesus’ day thought that the Pharisees were the best people around. So much so that Jesus even said in **Matthew 5:20** *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Even though they certainly looked the part, we know that their hearts were far from worshipping God.

- As Biblical Counselors³ we do hope the person changes! The Bible is replete with exhortations for people to do good (**Gal. 6:9-10**) and to be renewed (**Rom. 12:1-2**) according to God. God does not want us to stay as we are but to be further conformed into the image of His Son (**Rom. 8:29**).

² Adams, Jay *How to Help People Change* p. 6

³ This is not a separate category of Christian or a subcategory of discipleship, this is normal Biblical discipleship and relationships. I am only using this specific term for sake of clarity, but personally I believe these terms to be synonymous.

The Need for Inner Change

- We must understand that when discipling (counseling) one another, it is important to direct people to God and finding their sufficiency in Him.
 - Never make the mistake of using yourself or others as a source of reliability for the person.
 - This type of change is only superficial and simplistic.
 - As a Christian, we must never believe that we can get along fine without the working of the Holy Spirit in our life.⁴
 - The fact the person you are counseling is a believer should never be overlooked or ignored.⁵
 - If the individual is born again, then they will respond to Scripture. This is not to say it is going to happen right away or in any given time frame, but it will happen.
- With the Holy Spirit living inside a person, they will come to realize the only way for them to change has to happen from the inside out.
 - This is a constant struggle inside the church today. Because of our individualistic mentality, we do not want to tell people they need to change.
 - Essentially, we are apologizing for God's command to change in His Word and then allowing the person to sit in their own sin thinking they are okay.
- Turn with me to **Ephesians 4** and we can look at what I am talking about: **verses 4:20-24** *“But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”*
- **We are not going to have an exposition on this text, but I want to make a few simple points:**
 - Paul is talking to those who call themselves Christians and reminding them that they are no longer darkened in their mind and walking in futility, ignorance and hardness of heart (you can look back at verses 17-19).
 - Essentially what he is saying is that you cannot live like the old man while claiming to have been saved by Christ.
 - There is going to be change which comes with the new life. In fact Paul says so much in three verbs: **lay aside...be renewed...put on.**
 - In our new changed life **we must daily lay aside the old man**, that means our former life. The thoughts, patterns, habits, etc. that we had before coming to Christ (**Col. 3:9**).
 1. *When Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, they were officially free from their many years of servitude, but some of them went on living as if they were still slaves. The President's proclamation gave them legal standing as free citizens. It was a done deal—they were no longer slaves. But, out of habit and way of thinking, many of these poor people still lived like slaves. So, they needed to live in accordance with the new facts. When they were tempted to think like a slave, they needed to say,*

⁴ Adams p. 7

⁵ As was stated in the last counseling course, our primary goal is the salvation of the person. Only after that are they able to understand Biblical concepts (1 Cor. 2:14).

“No, the truth is I am now a free man!” They needed to appropriate that truth into their daily experience. Lloyd-Jones

- **We must be renewed in the spirit of our mind.**
 1. God does this renewing as we obey Him and have saturated our minds with the truths and practices which are found in Scripture.
 2. True Biblical change does not by-pass the mind. We cannot only have an emotion response to change.
- **Lastly, we must put on the new self.**
 1. This is, once again, a daily discipline in the life of the believer. Every day, making sure that we live applying the truth of the new man with every situation that we face.
- This is just one example in Scripture where change is commanded and simply put, the normal operation in the Christian life.⁶
- Our hope is ***not*** that people conform to our standards and practices, ***but to those of Scripture.***
- Once you and the person being discipled are fully convinced of the need for change, and that it is from the inside out, you can then start the process.
- Though the person whom you are counseling may not seem on board at first, ***it is vital that you yourself are fully convinced of the sufficiency of Scripture.***
- Most people who look for help did not start with the Bible or with Biblical counselors so they will come to you with some preconceived notions about how things are to be done.
 - **It is your responsibility to lead them with love into the Scriptures and show them how they can find more fulfillment in them than anywhere else.**
 - As David Powlison said *“The key to helping [previously counseled] people is to bring truth to bear in a way that explains and addresses their real-life problems. If you can’t make sense of the details of [their] life, your words will have the same taste of those empty husks. If you make sense, your counsel will drip with milk and honey.”*⁷
 - Our desire is that by using Scripture, their experiences and worldview may be reinterpreted Biblically and therefore give them hope.

The Process of Biblical Change

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
- This class we are going to look at what change is over the next four classes. We are going to simply break down this verse and look at what it means for us in the church. The final class we will look at some specific counseling issues and put this into practice.

⁶ Matt. 18; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24, 5:2-6 to name a few more.

⁷ Powlison, David *Speaking the Truth in Love* p. 97 Kindle Edition

- **These are the four steps to Biblical Change:**
 - Teaching
 - Conviction (reproof)
 - Correction
 - Training in righteousness
- By way of reminder, we are talking about a saved, born-again person who has the Spirit of God living inside of them. The two-step process is evangelism and edification.⁸
- Furthermore, these four elements of **verses 16-17** must happen in that order. To be sure, this is not commanded in Scripture, but if you can picture trying to train someone in righteousness who has not been convicted of their sin, it just will not work.
 - Also, there can be no conviction without teaching, and you cannot correct someone who does not know they are doing wrong.
- All of this falls under the normal sanctification process of the believer's life. Because of this, it is important to never make a distinction between Biblical counseling, discipleship and the means of sanctification.
- God uses the teaching of His Word (from Sunday to Saturday) to sanctify the believer.

Considering the Bible as the Word of God

- For today, we are going to look at what it means that *all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable*.
- As Adams puts it *"Today the lines have been drawn between conservative, Bible-believing Christians and all others who purport to be Christians precisely on the grounds of their views of the Scriptures."*⁹
- If you believe that the Bible is God's sufficient and inerrant word to man, you will have no problem submitting to it.
 - If you hold to a lesser view of Scripture, you will submit the Scriptures unto yourself. That means that you are now the one who dictates what is inspired and what is to be ignored. With this view, you have moved into subjectivism, losing absolute authority and simply adding your own standards for life and godliness.
 - This is an ever-changing landscape and *always* takes on the character of the culture.
- There is also a line of thinking which states *the Bible is sufficient for what it talks about*. That is a way to seemingly submit to Scripture, but in reality you just want to think and do what is convenient for you.
- What should we know about the Bible?¹⁰
 - **The Bible provides each of us all we need to do any work in the church.**
 - We will discuss this more in a moment.
 - **The Bible is holy (Rom. 7:12)**
 - This book should never be put on the same level with any other book. This is the consecrated, sacred, holy Word of God. *This book contains the message, the only message, which can bring a person from death to life.*
 - When we use the Bible, God is the source from which you are receiving instruction for the person.

⁸ Adams, Jay p. 13

⁹ Ibid. p. 20

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 21-28

- *We have no promise that God will use any other means to save and/or change people. Because the Bible comes from God, we know that it is the means in which He has chosen to communicate with mankind.*
- **The Bible is able.**
 - We have no useless material in Scriptures. It has all been written for our instruction and encouragement (**Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11**) and our example to follow.
 - The Bible is living and active (**Heb. 4:12**) and does things to people today. It is *the* tool that the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction and restoration in the life of sinners.
 - John writes “...but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” **John 20:31**.
 - We find in the gospel of John the demonstration of God’s power to do what He says it is supposed to do.
- **The Bible is inspired.**
 - It is important we do not read this verse in the wrong order. Perhaps one of the most misunderstood terms in Christianity today is inspiration. The Bible authors (Moses, the Prophets, Matthew, Paul, Peter, etc.) were not inspired authors.
 - It is not *All inspired Scripture...*” as some theologians would have you to believe. This is an attempt to take away from Scriptures full inspiration.
 - If this is the understanding, then only *some* of the Bible is inspired. That means it would be virtually worthless to us as a guide for life and godliness.
 - Men would be left to their own senses and desires to try and figure out what areas of Scripture were actually inspired and what areas were not.
 - Of course you would only choose inspiration for areas that you agreed with. Other areas in the Bible would just be Paul’s or Peter’s opinions on the matter.
 - It is the written word on the pages of the Bible which are inspired. God used men to write down exactly what He wanted in the personality of each man (**2 Pet. 1:21**).
 - I like what Adams says about this “*Because an illiterate society might tend to undervalue the written Word, Paul assured believers, through Timothy, that ‘all Scripture is breathed out by God.’*”
 - If God were to really speak today to people, He would say nothing more or less that what is found in the pages of Scripture.
 - Because it is from God, it is as authoritative as God. As Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 3:16** “**All Scripture is inspired by God...**”
- **The Bible is profitable (useful).**
 - We do not want to learn the Bible and study doctrine for the sake of knowing it. *It is a tragedy today that many people are rich with Biblical knowledge and yet fall so short of the victorious Christian life.*
 - The Bible is a very practical book. It not only leads the person down the path of repentance towards salvation, but then keeps going by sanctifying the believer all the way to heaven.
 - When we neglect the Bible’s most basic understanding of life, we will begin to drift and walk in ways that we determine to be the best.

- **Finally, looking back to the Bible provides each of us all we need to do any work in the church.**
 - *Do you believe that the Bible contains all that one needs for a godly life?* If so, then it is only the Bible which is going to bring about Godly change in a person.
 - The Bible will equip the believer for every good work when it is read, studied and properly applied.
 - This is the purpose statement in **2 Timothy 3:17...** “so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
 - The clause *so that* indicates purpose. That means all the things that Paul said previously in **verse 16** are there for the purpose of making the believer adequate and equipped for every good work.
 - **The Scriptures are adequate:**
 - *Many translations use vocabulary that emphasizes the thoroughness or completeness of the equipping.*¹¹
 - **What all the translators are trying to convey to the reader is that Paul knew that it was only the Scriptures which could outfit a man for the Spiritual work in the church.**
 - We should have not feelings of inadequacy when we have our Bibles and use it to disciple and equip one another.
 - **Lastly, The Scriptures equip for every good work:**
 - This verb means the person is *thoroughly equipped* to do the work of the Lord.
 - We, as humans, do not know every possibility which may come upon us. But God does. It is because of this, His omniscience, that we can fully trust that any situation which may come upon us can be handled with the Word of God.
 - “*Whether our purpose is to lead men and women to saving faith in Jesus Christ, to teach God’s truth to believers, to refute error in the church, to correct and rebuild erring believers, or to train believers to live righteously, our supreme and sufficient resource is God’s Word. It not only gives us the information to teach but also shapes us into living examples of that truth.*”¹²
 - When Paul says *every good work* he does not mean that the Bible contains everything specific to our day and age. That when we seek to learn how to cook, build a bridge, perform heart surgery, or any other task, it will be found in the pages of the Bible.
 - What he does have in mind is that within the pages of Scripture we will find perfect instruction for living a Godly lifestyle here and now.
 - Nothing that the Bible teaches us to do is unworthy, they are all good tasks.
 - Remember, Christ Himself was the perfect counselor (**Is. 9:6, 28:29**). He is the perfect counselor because He is full of wisdom and knows what is in the heart of man (**Jhn. 2:25**).
 - Christ counseled in the New Testament with only the Old Testament written. He did not have the perceived “benefits” of our modern-day counselors.
 - This is the hill on which many Christian counselors and psychologists will plant their flag. We did not know about all the human intricacies regarding the mind until men like Freud, Carl Jung, B.F. Skinner, Carl Rogers, etc. came around to enlighten us.

¹¹ Swanson, James A. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament*, Logos Edition

¹² MacArthur, John *2 Timothy: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Logos Edition

- None of these men were professed Christians but yet we would rather rely on them for Godly matters than the Bible itself.
- The very common argument that *we now have a more complete understanding* has some unintended consequences attached to it.
- One of them is that God left His church helpless for some 1900 years before letting us in that there was more to Scripture than what He originally revealed.
- If these men found something new, that was not previously revealed, then God made His people suffer needlessly until these studies could be conducted.
- You need to either adhere to that or the fact that God gave us what we needed, and it is all we need.
- We must tell ourselves that as Christians, there is nothing more that we need.
- I have seen Biblical counseling work 100% of the time.
 - When people follow what the Bible prescribes and submit to its authority, they will walk in victory. It is when we veer off the path and start to think of our own ways to do things that we will falter.
- **I would submit that our problem is not that we need to add more to Scripture but that we need to know the Scriptures more.**
 - We must stop looking for something to appease the secular world and fit into a mold which they have created and fully rely on what God has said.
- We should never be ashamed to find ourselves fully relying on what God has revealed to us.

Just a quick overview of how the next few weeks are going to go:

The Next Six Weeks:

1. Introduction... (April 12th)
2. Step One, Teaching (April 19th)
3. Step Two, Conviction (April 26th)
4. Step Three, Correction (May 3rd)
5. Step Four, Discipline and Training in Righteousness (May 10th)
6. Putting it all into Practice...some practical counseling examples (May 17th)