

Maranatha Bible Church 2020

Equipping Hour: Advanced Biblical Counseling

Week 2: The Principle Place of Teaching

Introduction

Last week we talked about change and how the believer should be looking forward to being changed here on earth more and more into the image of Christ and ultimately our final change when we see Christ face to face. Our daily change is commonly referred to as our sanctification as we are conformed more and more into the image of Christ.

This morning, we are getting into the nuts and bolts of Biblical Counseling. We are going to talk about teaching, looking at what and how teaching is fundamental to Biblical counseling. It is important to keep in mind that someone does not have to have the gift of teaching in order to counsel effectively nor must they have any special training. The Word of God equips the individual to rightly disciple and teach one another.

Keep in mind a couple of things:

- 1) In this 6 week class, we are taking a deep dive into **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.”
 - A) Last week was about change and the inspiration of Scripture.
 - B) This week is about the **purpose, plan** and the **place** of our teaching.

The purpose of our teaching

- 1) When Christians hear *teaching*, inevitably they start to think about Sunday morning from the pulpit.
 - A) While that is certainly teaching, but in the grand scheme of things, it is one of many different ways that we have to teach and disciple one another.
- 2) Looking at **Philippians 4:9** “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.**”
 - A) Paul is encouraging the church at Philippi to *practice these things*.
 - a) The *these things* which Paul has in mind are the various spiritual duties which he called them to not only know but also do. What those things are will be covered later as we are focusing on the means and methods of teaching, not the content right now.

(1) This underscores what Adams says “Discipling assumes that we are willing to adopt the scriptural, whole-person approach to counseling. We become not only biblical authorities who tell counselees what God says they must do, but also persons who do those things ourselves.”¹

b) Lets take a look at each of these four distinct methods which Paul highlights:

(1) Learned:

- (a) This is the personal instruction which Paul used to disciple the church at Philippi. This is not only referring to learning in a public setting through teaching, but also through one on one private times of teaching and instructing.
- (b) The emphasis here is that Paul personally taught them in a more formal setting.
- (c) This speaks to the various methods that Paul used to instruct the people.

(2) Received:

- (a) This refers to “the reception of a particular body of teaching.”²
 - (i) The church at Philippi received what Paul taught them as the word of God. Paul was not using his own thoughts and ideas about how they should live, but gave them instructions from the Lord.
 - a) This is the same way he was with the church in Thessalonica. He says in **1 Thessalonians 4:1** “Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.”
 - b) Just as Paul was not giving out advice mixed with or on the basis of man’s wisdom, we should not either.
 - (b) Paul’s method was to teach in various settings, but his content was from the Lord. All of our teaching must have content which is from the Bible.

(3) Heard:

- (a) This adds another dimension to your counseling or discipling of one another. What the Philippians had *heard* about Paul was very important.
- (b) He had a reputation for upstanding character and being blameless.
- (c) This is a good reminder for us, we need to make sure that our reputation is not one that causes harm. People should not be dreading to interact with us before they ever meet us.
- (d) Word will always spread about people, make sure it is a good word about you.

(4) Seen in me:

- (a) There may be no better way to teach someone than to show them by example.

¹ Adams, Jay *How People Change*, p. 53

² *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary

(b) “The Philippians would have received this teaching by hearing Paul, and they would have learned from his example by seeing how he conducted himself. Thus, they are not simply to ponder the best of the moral standards valued in the culture around them, but they are to follow the distinctively Christian pattern of behavior they learned from Paul’s words and deeds.”³

(c) We need to be on guard that we are modeling the principles that we are teaching.

(i) One reason is that if you do not live by what you teach, then why pass it off to someone else? If you are not benefiting from it, then do you really believe in it?

(ii) Another reason is, just like Paul, it validates your ministry. Paul lived by these principles and saw the fruit from them that he promised to people who followed him.

c) ***This, once again, is Biblical counseling.*** We are not trying to change people by worldly wisdom and means, or for their emotional well-being.

(1) We are not disconnected from the people that we are teaching and counseling, but we are there in the trenches with them...laboring alongside them as they are striving to gain victory in their life.

(2) Paul used any means necessary to get the message of Christ to the people.

3) Teaching is the primary means by which the word goes forth.

A) Over a dozen times in the book of Matthew alone Jesus is said to be teaching.

B) In **Matthew 28:19-20** Jesus gives the Great Commission, which includes teaching people.

C) It is the same in Biblical counseling. God brings forth change when His word is properly taught and applied.

The Plan for Our Teaching

1) No matter where you go for counseling, it is always going to contain something for you to do, there is a plan to follow. If you go outside of Biblical counseling, the plan is whatever the counselor thinks is best for you at that time.

2) The Biblical counselor must have two main ingredients in their plan...it must contain **God’s standards** and **God’s principles**. Lets look at each one of these.

³ Ibid.

God's Standards

- 1) Adams says there is a “fundamental problem of all counseling systems: counselors are out to change others, but they can’t agree on what the end product should be. The fundamental question is, “Change people – into what?” It is a question of standards.”⁴
 - A) There is no doubt that all counselors can agree that the goal is to move people from where they are to another point. It is just that most cannot agree on where that other point is located.
 - B) As Biblical counselors, we must determine which standards we are going to adopt when we counsel or disciple someone.
 - a) God has given us a set of standards by which we are to live. We can be sure that we know what a person is to look like when they are following the commands in Scripture.
 - b) This is why a Biblical counselor can confidently tell the person they are disciplining that God has called **us** to conform to His word.
 - (1) **You and your disciple are in the exact same boat.** The same standards that you are going to be telling him or her are the same standards that you yourself are held to.
 - (2) Biblical counselors agree that the Bible gives us the standard for **what** the disciple is to become and also for **how** they are to accomplish it.
 - (3) We know that the only way to accomplish a Godly lifestyle is by using Godly means.
 - C) **The benefits of God’s standards:**
 - a) They are the only thing which will produce Godly character.
 - (1) You and your disciple will become more and more frustrated if you stray from God’s standards. You cannot expect to see the fruit of the Spirit without using the means of the Spirit.
 - b) They will never change.
 - (1) Year by year there are more and more gimmicks which promise to make you a better person or give you more freedom in your life. If these things were true, why are they always changing?
 - (2) God’s word has been the same since we received it and will never change, no matter what the culture decides.

God's Principles

- 1) One of the most common, yet misunderstood, critiques that people have against Biblical counseling is their use the Bible and frequent quoting of Scriptures.

⁴ Adams, Jay *How People Change* p. 59

- A) This may seem strange at first, but when you start to talk about Scripture and use Scripture with someone, they may (at first) begin to get agitated.
- B) Some may say “don’t just throw Bible verses at me!” I have heard this more times than I care to note. People seem to think this is insensitive and not really counseling.
 - a) When really put into perspective, there is nothing more loving we can do than tell people what God has said to them and how He has planned for them to walk in victory.

C) **The issue is two-fold, in my opinion.**

- a) Firstly, a lot of times those Scriptures which are used, though correct, they are not properly explained. As Biblical counselors we have an unrelenting confidence in the word of God. But, that does not mean that we can just say a verse without explaining (or exegeting) it properly for the person.
 - (1) We cannot just lob a hand grenade and hope that it works. People that we are discipling need to know more than just a cursory reading of the text.
- b) Secondly, the Scripture probably cut the individual to the heart. Scripture is alive and active. It exposes our intents and thoughts. There is a good chance that if someone reacts to the use of Scripture in a negative way quickly, it is because it hurts them...most likely their flesh.
 - (1) Someone who is born again and sinning is already under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. By quoting Scripture, you have now just pushed on the sore spot and caused more pain...it is good pain...but pain none the less.
 - (2) Remember what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:1** “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”
 - (a) We may have the right things to say but if we say them in an unloving manner, they are going to be useless and not accomplish what we desire.

- 2) The use of Biblical standards and principles are used to set the counselee up for success so that they not only start off on the right direction, but also continue to have victory throughout their Christian life.

A) Here is a Biblical example of standards and principles:

- a) Turn to **Philippians 4:6-7**...we are going to briefly talk about anxiety in the life of the believer.
 - (1) *I want to make this point clear at the onset, this is a fast-forward version of Biblical counseling and I am simply using it to show standards and principles. This may be something that takes several weeks or months of discipleship with someone.*
 - (2) The first thing to always find out is if there are any organic issues. Things like improper diet, physical ailments, etc. These are things that can be physical in nature and can be treated through external means. There is a lot of medical research which points to diet, exercise, sleep and many others factors which easily change our moods.

- (3) **All of that aside, if someone is physically fine (no tumors, blood clots, etc.) then we start to talk about the spiritual side.**
- (a) Here is where you as the Biblical counselor cannot just throw a verse at them and hope that it stick. If someone says *I'm struggling with anxiety...* You then recite **Philippians 4:6** and wait for their response.
- (i) The odds are they have already heard that or something like that and need to have more information than just a verse spoken.
- a) As we are told in **Proverbs 12:25** “Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.” So, we should try and bring them a good word.
- (b) With anxiety, you start by finding out if what they are worrying about is actually happening or something they think is going to happen.
- (c) We need to separate **truth** from **theory**.
- (i) **Truth** would be that your car was stolen and now you need a new one to get to work.
- (ii) **Theory** would be *worrying about if* your car was stolen how you would get to work.
- (d) If there is something that is truly happening, then praying and laying out a plan is the first step. By laying out a plan, it further separates the truth from theory. ***Most often, even in our true anxiety, there is mixed in some theory.***
- (e) Regarding something that is simply theoretical, it is important to pray and focus on the facts. Keeping in line with the car anxiety, instead of worrying about losing your car, focus on the fact that *if my car was stolen, I trust the Lord to be faithful even in those times.*
- (f) No matter what, we need to be able to exercise self-control and put our faith in the promises that we know for sure.
- (g) Going back to **Philippians 4:6-7...**
- (i) **Our anxiety should be replaced with prayer.** Our focus goes from ourselves and our situation...our actual situation...to the Lord.
- (ii) Paul does not say *do not pray about your needs...* but what he does say is start your prayers with thanksgiving to the Lord. Look at your life and realize that there is so much to be thankful for. The Lord really is gracious.
- (iii) After that, make your requests to the Lord. The promise that we have is that when we offer thanksgiving and make our requests, we can rest knowing that God has it under control.
- (iv) The physical manifestation of that is the peace of God...not just the peace of God but ***the peace which surpasses all comprehension*** peace of God which will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

- (v) ***Your hearts and minds are guarded when your focus and energy is on the Lord Jesus.***
- a) This supernatural peace is something that the world cannot offer. It is a peace that makes others look at you like you are losing it.
 - b) In the midst of hardship, trials, pain and suffering, you can have peace. That is the peace which surpasses all comprehension...in a time when you ***should be anxious***...you can have peace.
- (h) A rough outline of **Philippians 4:6-7** is a *Negative Prohibition* (Be anxious for nothing)... *Positive Exhortation* (with thanksgiving, pray to God and let your requests be known to Him)...*Promised Result* (the surpasses all comprehension peace will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus).

(i) What is our Biblical standard?

- a) We are told...*be anxious for nothing*. The verb is an imperative, a command to follow. Why are we to be anxious for nothing? Going back to **Proverbs 12:25** **“Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad.”**
 - a. The phrase *weighs it down* means *causes depression*. A root cause of depression is anxiety. We will not wade into those waters this morning, but there it is.
 - b. The reason this is a Biblical principle is because it is timeless. No matter the situation or circumstances, we are never to be anxious.

(ii) What are our Biblical principles?

- a) Biblical principles are important because as Adams says they “are essential to teaching lasting change, because many counselors focus only on the immediate behavioral change, to the detriment of the counselees. Unless the counselee is taught not only how to get out of trouble, but also how to stay out of such trouble in the future, he will 1) be ripe for failure, and 2) will develop a tendency to depend upon the counselor rather than upon God’s truth and the Holy Spirit.”⁵
- b) The principles found here prayer with thanksgiving and letting the Lord know your requests. Teaching someone how to do this when anxiety comes upon them will guard their hearts and minds.

- B) This brief illustration of **Philippians 4:6-7** is why it is so important for the Biblical counselor to explain the passages to the person they are counseling.
- a) If you simply tell them to stop doing something without replacing it with a Biblical principle, you have created a void which will most likely be filled with something unhelpful.

⁵ Ibid. p. 72

- b) We want to take the principles which are taught in Scripture and show people how to exactly apply these to their own life.
- 3) Within our plan of teaching we must be ready for anything that comes at us. This is certainly not to say that we must have every answer for every question, nobody does. But we must be able to point people in the right direction, or at least be able to look things up with them.
- 4) The Biblical counselor must be able to teach from their Bibles and know their Scripture. When counseling, you do not always have the opportunity to stop and put together a lesson plan. This is why the study of Scripture is so important, so you will be prepared beforehand.

The place of our teaching.

- 1) Though the teaching pastor is the primary teacher on Sunday mornings, those who are counseling and discipling have a great advantage overall...we are in the place of the people. As Jay Adams puts it “the counselor teaches in the milieu.”⁶
- 2) You must be comfortable getting involved with people’s actual lives. We are not just talking theories and broad sweeping implications, but how we are to live as victorious believers in a fallen world.
 - A) A great example is the current pandemic we are facing. We can teach from the pulpit about worry, fear, joy, loneliness, etc. But you may have a specific question that only involves you, not the whole congregation. When you reach out for counsel, we would not speak to you as the whole, but to you as an individual right in your situation.
 - a) Not everyone is responding the same way, though we all need to have a Biblically informed thought process and reaction.
 - B) It is the difference between knowing that you just rejoice in your trials and then *actually* rejoicing in your trials! We need to make sure in our counseling that we are not just teaching doctrine for the sake of teaching it.
 - a) Your goal should not just be that someone can recite a verse or know the story of Mephibosheth.
 - b) The goal is that people will change and move closer to God.
 - c) Listen to what Paul says in **Colossians 1:9-10** “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **so that** you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

⁶ Ibid. p. 83

- (1) You see the first part, Paul prays for the church that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.
- (a) Paul wants them to have an intellectual understanding of God and what God expects. He wants them to fully understand who God is.
- (2) But that is not where he wants them to stop. They are not simply gaining knowledge for the sake of having it. They are gaining knowledge for a purpose...the phrase **so that** is a purpose clause. He wants them to have this knowledge and wisdom for the purpose of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord.
- (a) He desires them to please God in all respects, to bear fruit in their good works and to continue to gain knowledge of God.
- (b) ***Here is where the rubber meets the road in your counseling.*** When you are in the place with your counselee, you can now start to instruct specific things to them that they can put into practice, not because you say so but because the Bible teaches that principle.
- (c) This is a broad command from the pulpit on a Sunday morning, but when you sit down one on one with someone on a Monday night, you can help them directly apply this to their actual situation.
- (i) You are training the counselee in foundational principles that he/she will be able to build upon over the course of their life. As you help them see the importance of applying these truths in one area of their life, they will start to see the need of it in others.
- a) **As you teach these things, you can start to rehearse with them what their responses in certain situations will look like.**
- b) This is called *creating the milieu* for the person. After you have talked about and explained the Bible passage for the person, set up a scenario for them to apply it.
- c) You will want the person to see the different opportunities they have in their life to be able to apply the principles they are learning.
- (ii) By teaching this way, the counselee will be able to see the value of what you are teaching them quicker. It is no longer theoretical but extremely practical and helpful for them to live the victorious Christian life.
- 3) **While teaching to individuals in their own life, we must know how to communicate with them.**
- A) One of the most important aspects of Biblical counseling is the personal involvement which it entails.
- a) **To effectively counsel someone you must be involved personally with their life.** We cannot just give some abstract ideas to someone and hope that it works for them.

- b) The nature of Biblical counseling is to teach the Scriptures and apply them directly to someone. Because of this, we must know someone on a personal level. There must be information that is passed along and proper communication.
- c) Paul says in **Romans 12:15** “**Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.**” How will you know that someone is weeping or rejoicing if you are not involved in their life?
 - (1) As a Biblical counselor you will rejoice, weep, mourn, and many other things as you get to know people and the sin they struggle with.
 - (2) **Galatians 6:2** “**Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.**” We are to share in the problems of people in the body of Christ.
 - (a) This is showing love to them in a practical way, share in their burden.

B) Not only do you need to be personally invested with the person, but you also need to be passionate about what you are teaching them.

- a) The last thing that we want to convey to anyone is a cold, sterile or clinical environment. We want to be warm, loving and fully convinced of what we are going to tell someone.

b) Let me end with a brief example of passion:

- (1) I was counseling a man who was sinfully addicted to alcohol. It was ruining his marriage and his relationship with his kids.
- (2) When I met him, they were all on their last leg, divorce was on the table and he was just about to give up.
- (3) We started meeting up and he was sober for two weeks. His wife was skeptical, but happy.
 - (a) We met up one day, and he told me that he had gone back to the bar and that he had failed. He was severely depressed and told me he was ready to start over and try to do this all again.
- (4) I enthusiastically and passionately told him great...with a smile on my face. I told him I was happy because even though he failed, he came and repented and was ready to put in the hard work. I talked about Peter and his failure with Christ.
- (5) Furthermore, I was upbeat because there was no starting over like other “programs.”
 - (a) The best part of the failure was it allowed him to see that neither me nor God was going to give up on him because of his sin.
 - (b) It also showed him that he could fail, get back up again and continue on. Just like Peter did not start back at square one, but was restored and encouraged to continue on.
- (6) The best part, he and his wife have a great relationship and their family is awesome.

If you are not moved by what the Word of God can do, the people you talk to will not be either. We must have an unwavering commitment and confidence in the Scriptures that they will do what they promise to do.