

MBC WOMEN'S STUDY

Biblical Counseling: The Practice of Biblical Counseling Part 2

INTRODUCTION

- Last week we started the practice of Biblical counseling by discussing:
 - Your relationship with the counselee.
 - The importance of instilling hope in the counselee.
 - What it means to collect data when you meet.
 - How we can then properly interpret and apply what we have gathered from the counselee.
- Today's class is going to continue looking at the practice of Biblical counseling, but we are going to use some different material.
- Because we are going to get into actually practicing some Biblical counseling, I want to add to what you read last month.
- For this class, we are going to be considering **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.”
- We have already set the tone for the Bible being all that we need for our practice of counseling and/or discipleship. Over the past couple of meetings, we have discussed *all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable*. We are going to use that as our foundation for our class today.
- Today, we are going to discuss what it looks like to use the Word of God to teach and reproof and then next month we are going to look at correct and train someone in righteousness.
- **In preparation for getting more practical, there are some changes for the next four class:**
 - We are going to go over *The Biblical Counseling Guide for Women* the final four classes:
 - By going through *The Biblical Counseling Guide for Women*, it will give you real life counseling sessions and interactions to read and work with. (01/08, 02/05, 03/05, 04/02)
 - These final four classes will be the practical application of what we have learned in the first four.
 - The last three chapters in our counseling book (15–17) that you were going to read, are good information but much is applicable for pastors and teachers.
 1. Also, a lot of what is in those chapters we have already covered in other lessons.
 - We will not be going over *The Trellis and the Vine* for this class. This is an excellent book but does not pertain to Biblical counseling in the direction that I desire to go.

HOW TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTION THROUGH BIBLICAL COUNSELING

- Since instruction is a vital part of biblical counseling, we need to know what kind of instruction is necessary. In order to be pleasing to God and helpful to our counselees, our instruction must meet three basic requirements: (1) it must be biblically based, (2) it must be biblically accurate, and (3) it must be biblically appropriate.¹
- Proverbs 12:18 “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”
- Proverbs 12:26 “The righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.”
- These two verses are helpful to remember after you have gathered information from the counselee and are now deciding on what path to take with them.
- We want to be wise, bring healing, be a guide and not lead them astray. This is why it is imperative that we use the Scriptures as our path as we lead people to the Lord.

TEACHING

- 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.”
- Paul is encouraging the church at Philippi to practice these things by how he taught them.
- What those things are will be covered later as we are focusing on the means and methods of teaching, not the content right now.
- 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.”²

Four distinct methods which Paul highlights in his teaching:

- **Learned:**
- 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.
- The emphasis here is that Paul personally taught them in a more formal setting.
- This speaks to the various methods that Paul used to instruct the people.
- **Received:**

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *MacArthur Pastor's Library on Counseling* (TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 162.

² Adams, Jay *How People Change* p. 59

- This refers to “the reception of a particular body of teaching.”³
- 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.
- 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.**”
- Just as Paul was not giving out advice mixed with or based on man’s wisdom, we should not either.
- 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.
- **Heard:**
- This adds another dimension to your counseling or discipling of one another. What the Philippians had heard about Paul was very important.
- He had a reputation for upstanding character and being blameless.
- 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.
- Word will always spread about people, make sure it is a good word about you.
- **Seen in me:**
- There may be no better way to teach someone than to show them by example.
- “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.”⁴
- We need to be on guard that we are modeling the principles that we are teaching.
- 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?
- 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.
- This, once again, is Biblical counseling. We are not trying to change people by worldly wisdom and means, or for their emotional well-being.

³ *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary

⁴ *Ibid.*

- 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.
- Paul used any means necessary to get the message of Christ to the people.
- Teaching is the primary means by which the word goes forth.
- Over a dozen times in the book of Matthew alone is Jesus said to be teaching.
- In **Matthew 28:19-20** Jesus gives the Great Commission, which includes teaching people.
- It is the same in Biblical counseling. God brings forth change when His word is properly taught and applied.

The Plan for Our Teaching

- 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.

You need two main ingredients...God's standards and God's principles.

- **God's Standards**
- 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."⁵
- 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.
- As Biblical counselors, we must determine which standards we are going to adopt when we counsel or disciple someone.
- 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.
- This is why a Biblical counselor can confidently tell the person they are discipling that God has called us to conform to His word.
- 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.
- 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.
- We know that the only way to accomplish a Godly lifestyle is by using Godly means.
- *What are the benefits of God's standards?*

⁵ Adams, Jay *How People Change* p. 59

- They are the only thing which will produce Godly character.
- 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.
- They will never change.
- 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?
- God’s word has been the same since we received it and will never change, no matter what the culture decides.
- **God’s Principles**
- One of the most common, yet misunderstood, critiques that people have against Biblical counseling is their use the Bible and frequent quoting of Scriptures.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The issue is two-fold, in my opinion.
 - **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 it properly for the person.
 - 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.
 - **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.
 - 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.
- 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.”
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

REPROOF (CONVICTION)

The place of Conviction

- Conviction is the fruit of teaching God's standards to God's people. This is why we first need to handle the Word correctly and teach the word to people so that they can know the standards which God has set and know they have not met them.
 - While the majority of counseling which takes place today has very little focus on conviction, it is of the utmost importance to the Biblical counselor.
- Often times the phrase *you are not the Holy Spirit* is used when dealing with people's sins. While this certainly is a fact, we need not shy away from using Scripture to convict people of their sin.
- **There are some pitfalls that we must look out for:**
 - Putting our own standards on someone. The standards which are set forth for the believer are found all throughout the Bible. We cannot put our own personal preferences above the commands of Scripture. This is simply giving someone advice and attempting to modify behaviors.
 - Not allowing the Holy Spirit to fully convict the person. When we teach God's standards and the person knows they have sinned, they will feel remorse or guilty.
 - We must not minimize this phase by telling them that they are okay or anything else which takes away from the work of the Spirit.
 - This is them, hopefully, on their way to repentance (this is covered more in the next section).
 - Thinking that education will stop people from continually committing sin.
 - While education certainly has its place, we must never think that an intellectual understanding of something will result in a righteous change.
 - For example, we know certain diseases are transmitted by drug use and illicit lifestyles.
 - Some diseases are almost exclusively because of these choices.

- Our schools and governments have spent billions of dollars educating the public about what happens to them when they partake in these alternative lifestyles.
- If education worked, people would see what doing drugs and abusing alcohol will do to them and then they would either never start or stop right away.
- But obviously, education in this area is not working.
- Even with an abundance of education and knowledge, man has not even come to definitive conclusions regarding what the Bible calls sin.
- Conviction of the sinner must take place in order that they may not just cognitively change, but righteously as well.
- This is why the place of conviction is so important in counseling. Without it, we are left to blame a myriad of other things, always keeping the focus off of the individual.
- When we do that, there can never be any real and lasting heart change.
- **Where is the place of conviction in Biblical counseling? After we teach them what the Word of God says and bring it to bear on their hearts.**
- We must not let other excuses get in the way as we are teaching them the Scriptures.
- Even as Adams says, not every single person coming to you for counseling will need to be convicted. To be sure, the vast majority will, but there will be some that just need clarification on Scripture or perhaps some better understanding.
- They are already convicted, but perhaps they just do not know what the right course of action is.

The Plan of Conviction

- There are two things you must know when enacting a plan of conviction.
 - You must know the person that you are counseling, and you must know Scripture.
 - Knowing the person means that you have asked enough questions to get a good understanding of why they think they are with you and then why they are really with you.
 - If you do not know the person well enough, you will start to make assumptions.
 - To know Scripture means that you know what Scriptures to give someone for the circumstance they are presently in and for where they need to be.
- For example, a very common theme in marriages is a lack of love between the couple. God fearing men and women, who do not understand the Scriptures, can struggle in their marriages.
- She says he is not loving; he says that he would love her if she treating him with respect.
- This is a very common theme that I have encountered in various church settings. The main issue is that they might have a little Bible knowledge, but not the right knowledge.

- Most cite Ephesians 5:25a “Husbands, love your wives...” and verse 33b “...the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”
- This is what is known as a never-ending cycle. He would love her if she respected him, but she cannot respect him because he does not love her.
- Looking at this as just a brief example and assuming that you know them well enough, you would want to take them to that passage and read it out loud with them. This is where you would begin to teach them what it is saying.
- I do this by observation with them.
- I ask them what is there and what is not there. 9 times out of 10 they both are very satisfied because they find what they are looking for in the Bible...he must love and she must respect.
- Then I ask them what is not there. Specifically, what is this love and respect predicated upon? I want them to see what is lacking in their understanding regarding the Scripture.
- To be honest, most do not see what I hope them to see so I must point them to the fact that these are commands which have no qualifier except that they are for husbands and wives.
- After teaching (usually fairly brief), I move onto a plan of conviction. My plan is that they would see that each of them have a responsibility within their role that has nothing to do with their spouse.
- What I mean is that a husband is commanded to love his wife...*not when she is lovable* but as Christ loved the church.
- That kind of love usually needs some explanation with it. Thankfully Paul did not leave us hanging...but he defines this love by saying that Christ “gave Himself up for her [the church].”
- What Paul did not say is that Christ loved the church after the church started to love Him.
- You can get a sense here of how teaching and conviction work at the same time.
- I would say the same thing to the wife. Reading all of **verse 33 “Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”**
- I would first start by adding to the definition of a husband's love to his wife by stating that we love our wife as Christ loved the church and also as you love yourself. You can also reference back to verse 28.
- The hope with this is that it would bring the concept of love down closer to reality for him. That he would be convicted that he loves himself (both in action and thought) more than his wife.
- Looking to the wife, I would point out the *and* in verse 33. It does not say so that or any other conjunction. There are two separate commands for one marriage.
- She is to respect him, her husband...not when he is ready in her eyes to be respected, but because it is a command from the Lord.

- There is most likely nothing more than a husband wanting his wife to admire him. On the flip side, there is most likely nothing more than a wife wanting her husband's love and attention.
- The two must love, cherish and respect one another, not for what they can get out of it but so they can esteem each other higher than themselves and glorify the Lord.
- There is a lot more to say regarding those verses, but the main point is that you must bring a plan with you when you are counseling. This means that you must have a good knowledge of the Scriptures. You certainly do not have to know them all (nobody does) but be able to go to some different places for various people.
- Regarding plans of conviction, you will find that most people fall into just a few different categories. This is why you must get to know the person so you do not just lump them in with so many others, but you personalize something for them, so to speak.
- Remember, the Scriptures have one interpretation but many applications. You interpret the text for the people in the same way but you apply it in accordance with their situation.

The Profit of Conviction

- After having the right place and putting together a plan of conviction, it is time to see the profit. What should we see produced in the individual?
- This step of conviction is most likely the hardest for the counselor to not only start but also to work through. Many people will say things like don't judge me or you think your better than me; or a number of other deflections that take the responsibility off of them.
- These things are both okay and should be expected.
- Why are they okay...because it means they are convicted. Imagine if they sat there stone cold and agreed with you and did not care at all.
- Also, we should expect that as we use Scripture, people are going to be cut to the heart.
- In Acts 2, Peter preaches a sermon on the day of Pentecost. Take note that he uses Scripture to explain what happened, then again to show them how they were guilty of the committing this sin.
- What was their response? In 2:37 **“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”**
- This is obviously a good outcome to using Scripture to convict, but the point is that they were convicted (or pierced) to the heart.
- We see the opposite in Acts 19 in the city of Ephesus. Paul had gone there and because of the message he preached, we are told in **verse 26 “You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of the Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.”**

- Paul was teaching the people the Word and telling them their gods were nothing (this is Biblical counseling). They were convicted and turning to the true and living God.
- What was the fruit? If you read on in the chapter, you will see that there was a great riot. Even though Paul wanted to go and address the people, he was persuaded not to.
- This is the step in which much time may be needed. There is a good chance that much of what you just said is fairly new to them and they may need to really meditate and think about your counsel. That is okay. You do not want a superficial or knee-jerk response.

Some things that you should hope to see in the regenerate person:

- **Repentance for their sin.**
- Once again, this may not happen at that time, but hopefully sooner rather than later.
- The Christian should be he quick to repent from their conviction as they submit to the Holy Spirit's work in their life.
- Sometimes repentance is slow because the person thinks they needed to sin. They do not see their sin as something that broke God's law but something they were forced into without any other options.
- It is our responsibility to be able to rightly teach the word so that the counselee understands God would never do that to them.
- We are told in **James 1:13-16** "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."
- **Fellowship with the Lord to be restored.**
- As you are talking with the counselee, you must be able to explain to them that their fellowship with God has been broken.
- We are told in **1 John 1:5-10** "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."
- This fellowship with God is at the heart of Christianity. At the very core of Christianity is not following rules and rituals, but it is a personal faith in the Lord Jesus and fellowship with the true and living God.

- “To have genuine fellowship with the holy God, we must walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light. It’s easy to claim to have fellowship with Him, but to be mistaken or deceived. The false teachers were claiming to have fellowship with God, but their claims were patently false. There was in John’s day, as there is today, the peril of profession, the danger of claiming to know God, but of being deceived.”⁶
- **A desire to live a holy life.**
- For any believer to experience true joy, a focus on God’s holiness is their only hope. It is easy for someone to think they are okay or to even feel okay.
- This happens when we bring God down to our standards instead of looking for His.
- Only repentance from our sin can bring true and lasting peace and joy.

A few things to keep in mind regarding conviction:

- This can be the longest step out of the four. If someone does not want to see their sin for what it is, there is no going past this part. You cannot correct someone who does not think they have done anything wrong.
- You may need to go back to step one, teaching, and attempt to explain the Scriptures to them again.
- This is okay in the counseling process.
- I have found that when this step of conviction is done properly and the person is allowed some time to think about what is going on, they are eager to find out what the next steps are.
- I like what Adams says about conviction “The idea is not to make the counselee sweat it out.”⁷
- This is not an interrogation room from your favorite police show where you need someone to confess to the murder. These are brothers and sister in Christ whom you desire to see live a life which honors and glorifies God.
- Conviction can be the hardest and most confrontational step in the process, but it also offers the greatest profit for the work.

⁶ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-how-have-fellowship-god-1-john-15-10>

⁷ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*. p. 133