

ADULT FELLOWSHIP GROUP

BIBLICAL COUNSELING FOUNDATIONS

WEEK 6: THE PROCESS OF COUNSELING

- February 22: Psychology, Christian Psychology/Integration, and Biblical Counseling at a Glance
- March 1: Theological Foundation – View of Man
- March 8: *Missionary Share – Daniel Herceg*
- March 15: Theological Foundation – View of Sin & Applying Theology to Counseling Issues
- March 22: Sanctification: The Goal and Content of Biblical Counseling
- March 29: Preparing Our Hearts to Counsel One Another
- April 5: *No AFG – Resurrection Sunday*
- April 12: The Process of Counseling: Teaching, Conviction, Correction, and Training
- April 19: Navigating Specific Counseling Issues

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- What do you think of when you hear the term *counseling*? What are the qualifications to counsel someone? What is the ultimate goal/aim? What does the process look like? What tools are needed to counsel someone?
- Counseling is the opportunity to give advice to someone who asks for it. What makes counseling different for Christians is that *our advice is centered on God's wisdom, and not our own*.
- For believers, the common vernacular used today is that of *Biblical Counseling*.
- The concept of biblical counseling is coming alongside one another with a biblical worldview that views God's word as the sufficient means of counseling, believers as competent to (and commanded to) counsel, and heart change as the ultimate goal of counseling.
- This biblical counseling class is a foundational 7-week series geared towards two main goals:
 - That each person would have an understanding of what biblical counseling is, and
 - That each person would understand the practical implications and outworkings within the church as it pertains to practicing biblical counseling.

THE PROCESS OF BIBLICAL CHANGE

- Having established the biblical basis for the need for counseling, the place for counseling within the church, and the expectation for all of us to pursue one another in this form of corrective discipleship, we now want to get into aspects of the process itself.
- How do we think about coming alongside others in the church as the Lord is working in their heart to bring about heart change and growth in Christlikeness?
 - Again, we don't want to be those who are simply managing symptoms (sinful fruit), but when spiritual issues are present, we want to help others move toward Christ and God-honoring heart change.
 - "Restraining evil is not the same as promoting good."¹
- In his book, *How to Help People Change*, Jay Adams works through the paradigm laid out in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to help define a process of biblical change that is anchored in the word of God and that equips for every good work.
 - **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 is the process that will frame up our time today. We will be walking through these needed steps for biblical change:
 - Teaching
 - Reproof (Conviction)
 - Correction
 - Training in Righteousness
- This is such a helpful paradigm for us as biblical counselors because it puts the authority and sufficiency of the counseling process where it rightfully belongs: with the word of God.
 - **All Scripture** – we recognize that all of Scripture is in view when we disciple and counsel others.
 - **Inspired by God** – Lit. "breathed out by God"; God, through the agency of men carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21) brought about Scripture in a way that views God as its ultimate source.
 - **Profitable** – It is able to do what God intends it to do; it does not return void (Is 55:11)
 - **Equipped for every good work** – God's word is sufficient to direct and equip believers in all areas of life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3)
- This should cause us as believers to 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 must never be ashamed to find ourselves fully reliant upon what God has revealed to us.

¹ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 6.

TEACHING

- The first step in this process of change is teaching.
 - **Διδασκαλία** – teaching, giving instruction
 - Simply put, in the context of biblical counseling/discipleship, teaching is speaking the word of God into one another's lives, calling others to live for/like Christ.
- Likely, when we hear teaching, our minds tend to associate that with Sunday morning from the pulpit or Fellowship Group class.
 - While those certainly are avenues of teaching, they do not form an exhaustive list of ways in which believers are to be taught.
 - We are, in fact, called to teach and disciple one another! (Col 3:16)

The Purpose of Teaching

- **Philippians 4:8-9** - *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **dwell on these things**. 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 here is reminding these believers of the ways in which he had instructed them previously, both in the teaching itself, and in his life as their teacher.
 - **Learned** – Pointing to personal instruction through which Paul disciplined believers in the Philippian church. Likely, this is referring to his them learning through both public teaching, as well as one-on-one discipleship.
 - **Received** – The Greek word emphasizes the implication of agreement or approval. These things that Paul taught them were received and agreed upon, similar to the reception of Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:13)
 - **Heard** – The things which Paul taught and how Paul lived was known by the Philippians. They both heard these things **from** Paul and heard these things **of** Paul.
 - **Seen** – The Philippians saw these very things in Paul. He was an example of what he taught.
- And what was Paul's aim in bringing these things to their mind?
 - He called them to **dwell on** and **practice** these things.
 - The goal is application of the truth! Taking the truth taught/modeled to them, and to putting it into practice!
- 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.²
- We teach truth so that Christ may be formed in others, leading to heart change for the glory of God.

² *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary.

The Plan for Teaching

- No matter where you go for counseling, there will be 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.
- However, as Jay Adams lays out, a biblical counselor must form the plan for their teaching around two main areas: **God's Standards** and **God's Principles**.
 - **God's Standards:**
 - “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.”³
 - As Biblical counselors, we must determine which standards we are going to adopt when we counsel or disciple someone.
 - Thankfully, God has given us a set of standards by which we are to live. Within biblical counseling, we must call the person we are discipling to conformity to God's word and to Christ!
 - Biblical counselors must agree that the Bible gives us the standard for *what* the disciple is to become and for *how* they are to accomplish it.
 - Biblical counselors must view Christlikeness as the goal.
 - The benefits of God's standards:
 - God's standards are the only thing that can produce godly character.
 - God's standards will never change.
 - **God's Principles:**
 - 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 counsees. Unless the counsee 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.”⁴
 - By this, we need to help a counsee understand their issue through a biblical lens, so that they can know the true nature of the problem, how it developed, and what God requires to solve it.
 - Essentially, we want to teach them, through biblical principles, to develop a healthy, biblical worldview.
 - This is not simply throwing bible verses at them as a band-aid. Rather, it is walking them through pertinent Scripture so that they would begin to think God's thoughts after Him as it pertains to their issue.
 - Again, as a reminder, this means that we need to know Scripture! As the word of Christ is dwelling in us, we can then teach others with all wisdom! (col 3:16)

³ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 59.

⁴ *Ibid*, 72.

CONVICTION

- Next, in 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul refers to the profitability of the word of God for reproof – which Adams refers to as conviction.
- In this, Adams is meaning pointing someone to the recognition of wrongdoing. This is the same as reproof – it is pointing out sin in others with the aim of correction.
- Conviction, then, 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.
 - We are to teach the word of God, praying that the Spirit of God would convict the people of their sin. (John 16:8)
- Teaching brings the truth to their mind, while conviction brings the truth to their hearts.

The Potential Pitfalls to Conviction

- **Convicting/Reproving others according to our own standards:**
 - This is another reminder that we don’t seek to make our own preferences the principles and standards by which we judge others.
 - Scripture brings true conviction leading to heart change, while our preferences are simply giving advice to try and modify behaviors.
- **Not allowing the Holy Spirit to fully convict someone:**
 - As we are teaching and instructing others in the word of God, there will likely be times that they feel guilt and remorse over areas of sin.
 - This is critical and should not be rushed past!
 - We can often move past this too quickly by downplaying their feelings of guilt in an attempt to make them feel better. However, we must allow the Holy Spirit to convict them as a means of drawing them toward repentance and true growth!
 - **Rev 3:19 - *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.***
- **Teaching without conviction**
 - While understanding truth is critical and there must be a cognitive comprehension of what Scripture is saying, if it is not brought to bear on the hearts and lives of others, it will bear little to no lasting fruit.
 - **2 Tim 3:14 - *You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them...***
 - Learning is a necessary first step, but there must be a conviction in the hearts of believers before they will be committed to biblical change.
 - Conviction of the counselee must take place so that they would not just cognitively change, but righteously as well.
 - In short, ***conviction drives commitment.***
 - While this is a work of the Spirit, we must exhort counselees to hold their lives up to Scripture, so that they would, Lord willing, desire the change that Scripture provides.

The Fruit of Conviction

- **Desire to seek repentance:**
 - This may not happen immediately, but hopefully sooner rather than later.
 - As you teach Scripture and call them to hold their lives up to God's standard, you pray that they would be quick to repent as they submit to the Holy Spirit's work in their life.
 - We must remember that this is a slow process, and it requires patience, but true conviction will produce a repentant heart – a sorrow leading to true change.
 - **2 Cor 7:9-10** - *I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance [...] For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation...*
- **Desire to restore fellowship with the Lord:**
 - Part of biblical counseling is reminding them not just of the earthly effects of sin, but also relationally with the Lord. As we continue in sin as believers, we are not in true fellowship with the Lord. (not a loss of salvation, but a departure from walking in the light)
 - **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.*
 - As a believer is convicted of sin, they see the need to restore their relationship with the Lord through confession and repentance.
 - As the word of God is brought to bear in their heart through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it draws them to God in prayer so that this fellowship could be restored.
 - “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.”⁵
- **Desire to live a holy life:**
 - For any believer to experience true joy, a focus on God's holiness is their only hope.
 - This is warped 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.
 - **John 15:10-11** - *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

⁵ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-how-have-fellowship-god-1-john-15-10>

CORRECTION

- As a counselee is convicted, we want to help point them to the word of God to show how to correct their thinking, showing them not only what they are to *put off*, but also what they are to *put on*.
- Correction, then, is literally “standing something up” or “making something to stand again,” because Scripture is not only concerned with addressing wrongs, but also righting them.
- Biblically speaking, this is the process of repentance.
 - **2 Tim 2:25** - *...with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth...*
 - Repentance is “rethinking of one’s behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. It is coming to a different opinion or viewpoint, one so different that it calls for different thought patterns and a different lifestyle.”⁶
- This is a key element of counseling because this is the fruit of true heart change – it is an internal change of the mind which will draw counselees from sin and toward Christ.

The Elements of Correction/Repentance

- Adams lists out some of the key elements of repentance that we must seek to walk counselees through:
 - Confessing sin to God and to others (the outward expression of godly regret)
 - Seeking forgiveness (the first step taken to remedy the situation)
 - Forsaking the sinful way (the next remedial step)
 - Beginning an alternative way of life that is pleasing to God (the last corrective step)⁷
- **Confessing Sin**
 - Repentance and confession are closely related, but they are two individual steps in the process. They most likely will take place either at the same time or within a short time of each other, but they both must take place.
 - Repentance is the change in thinking/attitude/belief
 - Confession is, then, a byproduct of repentance. Our thoughts about our sin have changed through the power of the word, and therefore, we agree with the Lord that what we have done is sinful and goes against His word.
 - “The willingness to acknowledge one’s guilt, to agree with the conviction, is uppermost in the idea of confession.”⁸
 - The counselee begins to understand their sin against the Lord and confess that, “*Against You, You only, I have sinned.*” (Psalm 51:4a)
 - Not only that, but they begin to realize they must go to people whom they have sinned against, confess their sin, and seek forgiveness. (Matt 5:23-24)

⁶ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 142.

⁷ Ibid, 144.

⁸ Ibid, 149.

- **Seeking Forgiveness**

- Closely tied to, and often happening simultaneously, is the conviction of seeking forgiveness as a necessary step of repentance.
- Often, in our flesh, our desire, once we are convicted of sin, is to move past it as quickly as possible and pretend that it never happened (particularly in “secret sins”).
 - While this may make us “feel” like we have moved past it, we are pursuing the easy path, but not necessarily the right path.
 - Sin leaves damage in its wake, in our own sanctification, in our relationship with others, and, most importantly, with God.
 - Therefore, we must seek both confession and forgiveness of sin.
- **1 John 1:9-10** - *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.*
 - What a wonderful and gracious promise from the Lord!
 - God desires to be in good fellowship with His children. Therefore, as we are leading others to the word of God, we must point them to the Lord for restoration.

- **Forsaking Sin**

- Once sin is brought to the light and confessed, it must also be dealt with so that there can be growth and sanctification.
 - **Prov 28:13** - *He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*
- This is the **put off** part of our sanctification.
 - “Putting off sin is abandoning, quitting, forsaking, or letting go of sin.
 - It includes the following:
 - A willingness to deny or say no (as Christ puts it) to selfish desires, either sinful in themselves or sinful as taking priority above Christ and His kingdom.
 - An actual breaking with the past practice, situation, or persons involved in the sin.
 - Setting up a structure that will make it difficult to fall into the same sin again.”⁹
- Notice that there are crucial **proactive** elements to forsaking sin – it is not just reacting differently in the moment (though we must prepare for those moments), but it is eliminating things in your life (“radical amputation” – as Adams says) that cultivate temptation toward that sin.
- There can be no substitute for forsaking sin. We must be showing counselees the necessity of mortifying sin (putting sin to death) in their lives.
- If they are desiring to put on righteousness, that is wonderful, but they make first forsake (lit. “leave behind”) those sinful patterns within them, denying themselves and following after the Lord.

⁹ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 154.

- **Pursuing Holiness**
 - Finally, correction/repentance involves not only forsaking sin but putting something else in its place.
 - This is review from a couple of weeks ago, but this is the principle that Paul is communicating: ***you cannot just stop doing something but must replace it with something good.***
 - We are to stop the old way, but not just stop sinning, we are to replace the old sinful ways with a God-honoring new life.
 - This is because the Christian life cannot exist in a vacuum. We are always pursuing something!
 - **Ephesians 4:22-24** - *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.*
- So then, as we are teaching the word of God, instructing others in what it says with the purpose of application, the Holy Spirit will convict them, leading to repentance, which includes confession, forgiveness, forsaking sin, and pursuing righteousness.

TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

- As this is all taking place, our heart should be to help them continue on in this, even once you stop meeting with them. We don't want counselees to be dependent upon us for their sanctification.
- Therefore, we must train them up in the word so that they can continually walk in righteousness.

The Purpose of Training

- “But why is it necessary to do training in righteousness [...] If a person understands God's requirements, willingly confesses his sin, and is restored to fellowship and service whereby he is carrying his load (Gal. 6:5), what more is necessary?”¹⁰
- While it is true that those who repent are forgiven and brought back into right fellowship with the Lord and others, what is to keep them from falling back into that sin?
 - This can be a source of great discouragement for those who fall back into sin, wondering if there is any true hope for lasting change.
 - “Sure, I would like to be the kind of Christian that you describe and that I read about in the Bible and in Christian biographies. But those people must be supersaints; I've tried time and again to be like them, to do all of the things you hear in sermons and read about in the Bible and in Christian books—but it just doesn't work. I do fine for a couple of weeks, but the first thing you know, there I am again, battling the same old habits and sins.”¹¹

¹⁰ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 171.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

- What is lacking is a disciplined training in righteousness.
 - This is the crucial final step in counseling, but perhaps sometimes overlooked.
 - The issue which brought the counselee to you is seemingly resolved: there has been repentance, forgiveness, and genuine growth.
- However, if they are not trained both in pursuing the standard of God, but also how to study the word of God to discern the principle of God in their own life, we have not gone far enough.
- It is like teaching your child to ride a bike as you hold on to the seat, and then send them off having never taught them to ride on their own.

The Plan for Training

- This will naturally come out of the *put on* part of biblical change and repentance.
 - The *put off* and *put on* cycle are continually happening in our sanctification.
 - This training toward righteousness (conformity to God’s biblical standard) is discipling the believer to continually pursue righteousness rather than sin.
- This is what Paul means when he exhorts Timothy to “*discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;*”
 - We are training ourselves, as we continually renew our mind in the Scriptures, to say no to sin and yes to godliness
 - We are “putting in the spiritual sweat”
- The goal at this stage, then, is to not only give a counselee hope and guide them through the word of God, but to also teach them how to study the word for themselves.
- This is often done by means of homework in counseling.
 - You give them a passage to study throughout the week (often something relevant to their sin/struggle) and come back together and discuss it together)
 - As you come back, take time to talk through the passage.
 - Allow them to share what they gleaned from the passage
 - Help guide them to a proper understanding of what it says/means, as well as helpful application
 - Continue this throughout the counseling process.
 - What does this do?
 - Reinforces the sufficiency of Scripture to meet their needs
 - Gets them into the habit of studying Scripture – particularly with application in view
 - Puts responsibility onto the counselee to be pursuing the Lord, learning, and growing throughout the counseling process.
- Remember, again, it is the word of God that is profitable for *teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness*.
 - This should be an encouragement to anyone you are counseling. There is always hope, though it is certainly work.
 - The stage has been set for them, they should know the struggle which awaits them and be encouraged to stay the course, continually putting off the old man and putting on the new.