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# **BIBLICAL COUNSELING**

Biblical Truths for Christian Living for the Glory of God

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## INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

### Historical Note

Protestants have historically been wise physicians of the soul. *“Many of the greatest Protestant writings are marked by an ability to bring Scriptures to bear sensitively on varied ‘cases’. Thomas Brooks’ Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices...and Jonathan Edwards’ A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections all stand out.”*<sup>1</sup>

This familiarity with the soul and facility with the Scriptures was to a large extent lost in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. *“That is, practical wisdom in the cure of souls waned, even while the conservative church, by definition, retained its grasp upon orthodox doctrine, Biblical moral absolutes, the spiritual disciplines, and the missionary calling. The church lost that crucial component of pastoral skill that can be called case wisdom – wisdom that knows people, knows how people change, and knows how to help people change....In fact, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century liberal theology and secular psychology were ascendant in the counseling domain. Only dim echoes and shadows of former wisdom could be heard and seen among conservative Christians.”*<sup>2</sup>

The loss of Christian influence in counseling was lamented in a book entitled The Triumph of the Therapeutic. The author wrote: *“Religious man was born to be saved; psychological man is born to be pleased....if the therapeutic is to win out, then surely the psychorapist will be his secular spiritual guide.”*<sup>3</sup>

A return to a more Biblically oriented approach to counseling may be linked, *“from a human point of view...to the life and efforts of one man, Jay E. Adams.”*<sup>4</sup> The approach to counseling in this course is one which stands in the tradition which looks back to Adams. To appreciate the rich fruit of his labours (and those of others who have sought to adhere to an avowedly Biblical approach) see the following websites:

The National Association of Nouthetic Counselors

<https://www.nanc.org/page.asp?contentid=1>

The Christian Counseling and Education Foundation

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, et al. An Introduction to Biblical Counseling (Dallas: Word, 1994): p. 45. The material in this section is drawn from chapter three of this book, *“Biblical Counseling in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”*, an article written by David Powlison.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 45

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 49. For Adam’s thoughts, see his books Competent to Counsel and More than Redemption, among others.

### Core Elements of Biblical Counseling

- *God is at the centre of counseling:* The God of the Bible and the Bible of God are foundational to all counseling.
- *Commitment to God has epistemological consequences:* all disciplines are under the authority of Scripture. *“The sciences, personal experience, literature, and so forth may be useful, but may not play a constitutive role in counseling.”*<sup>5</sup>
- *Sin, in all its dimensions, is the primary problem counselors must deal with:* a grasp of total depravity is essential to understanding the human problem and ministering to the human condition.
- *The gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer:* the “life of God in the soul of man” is the fundamental need of every person. The manifold grace of God in Christ is the answer to the manifold problems of life.
- *The change process counseling must aim at is progressive sanctification:* ultimate conformity to Christ is not only the aim of God’s predestinating purpose (Romans 8:29, 30) but is also the fundamental aim of Biblical counseling.
- *The situational difficulties people face are not the random cause of problems in living:* *“Influential aspects of one’s life situation do not cause sin. Heredity, temperament, personality, culture, oppression and evil, bereavement, handicaps, old age, Satan, physical illness, and so forth are significant for counseling but are not ultimately causative of sin.”*<sup>6</sup>
- *Counseling is a fundamentally pastoral activity and must be church based:* a Scripturally based, Bible teaching, praying fellowship of saints is the context in which Biblical counseling ought to take place. Such counseling is the responsibility of the elders primarily but also the divinely gifted members of the body of Christ (Romans 15:14).

### **Defining Biblical Counseling**

Jay Adams: *“Truly Biblical counseling...is using the Word of God considered exegetically and theologically to understand what God has said about man, and his problems, and the solutions that God has provided for them. Counseling is a function of sanctification. A system of Biblical counseling*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 57

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 58

*has to be developed out of exegetical and theological work in such a way that all the principles and practices of that counseling system not only emerge from Biblical principles but are consistent with them at all points. That's the key to the difference between a truly Biblical and a supposedly, but not really Biblical, counseling system. One must not take pagan methodology, principles, and presuppositions and try to put these together with Biblical teaching....To have a truly Biblical system means hard work including exegesis and theology that provides the principles that can be turned into methodology and practice in counseling. Anything less is sub-Christian and most probably, anti-Christian.”<sup>7</sup>*

The nature of Biblical counseling may be elucidated by a consideration a Biblical word, “*noutheteo, nouthesia*”.

**Colossians 1:28**

*“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”*

**Colossians 3:16**

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

**Acts 20:31**

*“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*

**I Corinthians 4:14**

*“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.”*

**I Thessalonians 5:12**

*“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.”*

**I Thessalonians 5:14**

*“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”*

**Romans 15:14**

*“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”*

The word “*noutheteo*” means “to put in mind, admonish, warn”.

It means “to train by word” and is to be distinguished from “*paideuo*” which means to “correct by discipline” (**Vine**).

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<sup>7</sup> Frank J. Catanzaro III, *Why Biblical Counsel?* Faith and Mission Volume 17, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary).

Johannes Behm, writing in Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, described the word in this way:

*"The verb means to 'impart understanding, to set right, to lay on the heart.' The stress is on influencing not merely the intellect but the will and disposition....It describes a basic means of education....The idea is not that of punishment but of a moral appeal that leads to amendment....The (noun) group occurs in the NT only in Paul. In Ephesians 6:4 the noun represents a means of Christian upbringing, i.e., the admonition or instruction which will correct but not provoke....The verb denotes a pastoral function. Paul warns and teaches (Colossians 1:28) with a view to bringing believers to maturity in Christ. Admonition is a central part of the cure of souls (Acts 20:31)."*<sup>8</sup>

Richard Trench writes:

*"It is training by word – by the word of encouragement, when this is sufficient, but also by that of remonstrance, of reproof, of blame, where these may be required; as set over against the training by act and by discipline, which is paideia...the distinctive feature of nouthesia is the training by word of mouth."*<sup>9</sup>

Biblical (nouthetic) counseling consists of three elements:

- *There is the implication of a problem:* this is not simply a learning situation but a confrontation is necessary in order to effect a change that will solve a problem;
- *There is training by the word:* the particular means whereby the problem is addressed is by verbal exhortation;
- *There is the goal of the individual's benefit:* the goal of counseling is the betterment of the life of the counselee.

Jay Adam: *"The thought of punishment, even the idea of disciplinary punishment, is not contemplated in the concept of nouthetic confrontation. Nouthesis is motivated by love and deep concern, in which clients are counseled and corrected by verbal means for their good, ultimately, of course, that God may be glorified."*<sup>10</sup>

## **Principles of Biblical Counseling**

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<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Editors, abridged by Geoffrey Bromiley. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 645-646.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Chenevix Trench. Synonyms of the New Testament (London: Paternoster House, 1901), p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Catanzaro, Why Biblical Counsel? P. 13.

## The Heart

A grasp of the Biblical concept of the “heart” is essential to Biblical counseling.

Proverbs 4:23 – “keep your heart with all diligence , for out of it spring the issues of life”.

**Paul Tripp:** “the Bible uses ‘heart’ to describe the inner person. Scripture divides the human being into two part, the inner and outer being. The outer person is your physical self; the inner person is your spiritual self (Ephesians 3:16). The synonym the Bible most often uses for the inner being is the “heart”. It encompasses all the other terms and functions used to describe the inner person (spirit, soul, mind, emotions, will, etc.).”<sup>11</sup>

Luke 6:43-45

Jesus uses a different metaphor from the heart, and speaks of the fruit of a tree. Clearly, there is an “organic relationship between the root of the plant (the heart) and the fruit it produces (the behavior)...There is an organic connection between my words and my heart....The problem with my words (is) directly tied to the problem with my heart.” (Tripp)

The problem of the human heart is sin – **total depravity**.

### **Study Focus: Total Depravity**

Sin Defined:

- Sin is an offence against God
- Sin is pervasive
- Sin is irrational

Sin Described:

- Total depravity
- Total inability
- Universal guilt
- Universal death

Sin Defeated:

- Sinners must repent and believe
- Believers must pray and trust

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<sup>11</sup> Paul David Tripp. Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2002), p. 59.

- All must hate sin

The responsibility of the believer is to guard the heart.

### **Study Focus: Proverbs 4:23**

Why we must Guard the Heart

- Because the heart leads to actions
- Because the heart sins

How we must Guard the Heart

- Self examination
- Confess and forsake
- Guard the input
- Guard the focus
- Pray
- Remember who you are in Christ

The aim of the counselor is to cultivate spiritual mindedness.

### **Study Focus: Romans 8:6<sup>12</sup>**

The Mind of the Unbeliever

- They focus on sin
- They are forgetful of God
- They are spiritually dead

The Mind of the Believer

- To be spiritually minded is to be a Christian
- To be spiritually minded is to think spontaneously about God
- To be spiritually minded is to relate everything to God
- To be spiritually minded is to delight in God above all

### The Scriptures<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Don Whitney. How Can I be Sure I'm a Christian (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1994), chapter 6, "A *Spiritual Mindset*". This is a most helpful study of assurance in general and spiritual mindedness in particular.

The need for Scripture is clear in that

- Our minds are finite and so we need the revelation of an infinite mind
- Our minds are sinful and so we need the revelation of a holy mind
  - **Adams:** *“Truly Biblical counseling...is using the Word of God considered exegetically and theologically to understand what God has said about man, and his problems, and the solutions that God has provided for them.”*

The gift of Scripture is reason for rejoicing in that

- God has “given us in our union with Christ and in His Word all that is necessary for life and godliness”<sup>14</sup> – see **II Peter 1:3**.
- **Catanzaro:** *“the basic presupposition of Biblical counseling is that there is an infinite and personal God who has revealed Himself propositionally in the Written word and personally in the Living Word, Jesus Christ. The testimony of both the written Word and the Living Word is that the most basic problem of every human being is his separation from God. This separation is made necessary by the fact that He is holy and we are not. People may solve their problems temporarily and partially by approximating Biblical principles, but they can never experience an absolutely fulfilling life here or eternally unless this separation is overcome by reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ”.*<sup>15</sup> These are truths we discover in the Scriptures.
- **Draher:** *“when we want to know what we are to do, how we are to live, what we are to say, and how we are to act, we discover that by looking at the Word of God that was breathed out by God for us.”*<sup>16</sup>

Consider the following texts and what they tell us about the origin, authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures:

### **II Timothy 3:16, 17**

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

### **II Peter 1:2, 3**

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<sup>13</sup> See MacArthur, et al, An Introduction to Biblical Counseling, chapter 4, *The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling*, for a critique of an integrationist approach.

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Mack, “*The Authority of Scripture in Counseling*”, an article published by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors.

<sup>15</sup> Catanzaro, *Why Biblical Counsel?*, p. 44

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, <sup>3</sup>as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue*

**Hebrews 4:12**

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

**I Thessalonians 2:13**

*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*

In light of texts such as these Jay Adams writes:

*“The Bible is the basis for a Christian’s counseling because it deals with the same issues that all counseling does...The Bible is the basis for a Christian’s counseling because of what counseling is all about (changing lives by changing values, beliefs, relationships, behavior). What other source can provide a standard for such changes? What other source tells us how to make such changes in a way that pleases God?”<sup>17</sup>*

**Study Focus: Psalm 119**

An examination of the life giving and life transforming characteristics of the Holy Scriptures – and we see that the

- The Scripture is perfect
- The Scripture is sure
- The Scripture is authoritative
- The Scripture is precious
- The Scripture is clean
- The Scripture is relevant
- The Scripture is right
- The Scripture rejoices the heart
- The Scripture is clear
- The Scripture enlightens

The Holy Spirit

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<sup>17</sup> Jay Adams, More than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1979), p. xiii

**John MacArthur:** *“Virtually all psychotherapy turns people inward, studying feelings, groping for suppressed memories, seeking self-esteem, scrutinizing attitudes, and generally listening to one’s own heart. But emotional are hopelessly subjective, and our own hearts are deceitful. Only Biblical counseling can offer reliable, authoritative, objective answers. And the truth of Scripture is the only tool God uses in the process of sanctification.”*<sup>18</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the One who teaches us the Scriptures and grants understanding of the text and the implications. He not only works holy desires within but grants ability in life (Philippians 2:12,13).

**MacArthur:** *“The notion is abroad within the Church that psychotherapy is often a more effective change agent – particularly in dealing with the most difficult cases – than the Holy Spirit who sanctifies. But can psychotherapy possibly accomplish something that the Holy Spirit cannot? Can an earthly therapist achieve more than a Heavenly Comforter? Is behavior modification more helpful than sanctification? Of course not.”*<sup>19</sup>

Biblical counselors need to understand the role of the Spirit and the indispensable nature of His ministry in the work of counseling.

### **Study Focus: Galatians 5:13-22**

Every true believer will make progress in his/her spiritual life and thus in his/her ability to deal with the problems which lead them to seek counseling.

- Progress is part of a great plan
- Progress is a precious gift
- Progress is by faith
- Progress is tough
- Progress is certain
- Progress is by the Spirit
  - We learn by the Spirit – John 14-16
  - We pray by the Spirit – Ephesians 6:18f; Romans 8:26f
  - We put sin to death by the Spirit – Romans 8:13
  - We grow in holiness by the Spirit – II Thessalonians 2:13
  - We are guided by the Spirit into paths of holiness – Romans 8:14
  - We are granted assurance by the Spirit – Romans 8
  - We maintain unity by the Spirit – Jude 19; Ephesians 4:3

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<sup>18</sup> MacArthur, et al, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, p. 132.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

- We obey through the Spirit – I Peter 1:22
- We worship by the Spirit – Philippians 3:3
- We love by the Spirit – Colossians 1:8
- We are stirred by the Spirit – I Thessalonians 5:19
- We hope through the Spirit – Galatians 5:5
- We bear fruit by the Spirit – Galatians 5:22,23
  - Fruit bearing involves negative and positive – Galatians 5:16, 24, 25
  - Fruit bearing is the expression of life and power within – Matthew 7:16-20
  - Fruit is holiness
  - Fruit is the work of the Spirit

### **Study Focus: II Corinthians 3:18**

Every believer is predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-30). It is by the Spirit that this work is accomplished. Consequently the work of the Spirit is essential for the progress necessary in counseling.

Seeing the Glory – verse 18

- We all see His glory
- We see in a mirror
- We see Him continually

Being Transformed – verse 18

- We are changed *essentially*
- We are changed into His image
- We are being changed continually
- We shall be changed finally

Sanctified by the Spirit – verse 18 - consider Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26, 27

Consequently in the work of counseling and in the process of receiving counseling, let believers be encouraged, be prayerful, be thankful, and be eager.

*The Qualifications of the Spirit* – John 14:16-26:

He is:

- *“Another” Helper*: John 14:16 – “another” means “another of the same kind”, as opposed to “heteros”, another of a different kind. He is just like Jesus.
- *He is our Guide into truth*: John 14:17, I Corinthians 2:10, 12, 14 – He is the Spirit of truth who enlightens His people.
- *He is the One who permanently dwells within His people in order to sanctify them by the Word*: Ezekiel 37:14 and John 14:17; 17:17

Consequently: since *“every aspect of true spiritual growth in the life of the believer is prompted by the Spirit, using the truth of Scripture...the counselor who misses this point will experience failure, frustration, and discouragement.”*<sup>20</sup>

### Definitive Sanctification

Change in the life of the counselee is the goal of counseling but change is difficult.

**Jeremiah 13:23** – *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.”*

**Jeremiah 22:21** – *“I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said ‘I will not hear’. This has been your manner from your youth, that you did not obey My voice.”*

It is vital for the Christian counselee to understand, believe and act in light of the fact that change is possible in light of definitive sanctification.

Definitive sanctification may be defined as that radical break with the power of sin that occurs at the point of conversion and is foundational to progressive sanctification (the continuing efforts of the believer to mortify sin and grow in holiness by the grace of God).

### **Study Focus: Romans 6:1-4**

The Abuse of the Gospel – verse one

An Understanding of the Gospel

- We have been saved from sin
- We have been saved through Christ
- We are saved by grace
- We are saved to be God’s slaves

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<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, et al, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, p. 140.

## The Implications of the Gospel

- Be encouraged
- Be holy
- Be aware

### **Study Focus: Romans 6:3-11**

## The Characteristics of the New Life

- Believers are dead to sin
- Believers are alive to God

## Living out the New Life

- Be what you are
- Be encouraged
- Be hopeful

### **Note: Secular Psychology<sup>21</sup>**

Extreme caution must be exercised as regards the Christian's relationship with secular psychology.

- Secular psychology's rejection of the fear of God suggests that extreme caution is necessary – Proverbs 1:7; 9:10
- Secular psychology's plethora of approaches suggests that extreme caution is necessary.<sup>22</sup>
- Secular psychology's evident hostility toward religion in general and Christianity in particular suggests that extreme caution is necessary.

By way of conclusion, Catanzaro writes: *"one must come to the Bible in a spirit of expectancy and submission while regarding the ideas of psychology as stimulating and catalytic, but not as authoritative. The data of psychological research should not be totally disregarded; what is observed should be noted. Then one must come to the Scriptures for an understanding of why the data exist and what he should do in response to what he has observed. In every case, however, the instruction of Scripture must be final."*<sup>23</sup>

### **The Qualities of the Biblical Counselor**

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<sup>21</sup> See Ed Bulkey, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> See Time Magazine articles, "A Therapist in Every Corner", December 23, 1985, and "Psychiatry on the Couch", April 2, 1979.

<sup>23</sup> Catanzaro, "Why Biblical Counsel", p. 48

*Counseling is the work of the eldership:*

**Hebrews 13:17**

Elders are men under authority – “*they must give account*”.

Elders are men with responsibility – “*they watch out*” (“to abstain totally from sleep, to be watchful and attentive to spiritual things”).

*Counseling is the work of the congregation:*

**Romans 15:14** - *Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to **admonish** one another.*

**Ephesians 4:11, 12** - *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry”.*

The qualities now discussed **should** be manifested to varying degrees in all who offer counsel. The qualities now discussed **must** be manifested in ministers of the gospel.

Spiritual maturity

I Timothy 3:6

The one who watches over souls ought not to be a “novice” (one “newly implanted in the church, newly converted and instructed”).

Walking with God

Genesis 5:21-24

Like Enoch he will be one who can aptly be described as one who “walked with God”.

Those who walk with God will practice spiritual disciplines:

*Grounded in the Scriptures*

This will involved regular reading of the Scriptures and Scripture memorization – Psalm 1; John 17:17; Romans 12:1,2; Philippians 4:8; Hebrews 4:12; II Corinthians 10:4

II Timothy 3:16,17 – given the characteristics of the age (verses 1-7) the counselor who would be equipped to minister to those living in such times must be equipped through diligent study of the Scriptures.

Along with Biblical knowledge the counselor should endeavour to be as familiar as possible with other disciplines (psychology, medicine, sciences). Such knowledge is gained as you minister or as you read and study relevant materials.

*Prayerful*

The prayer life of a counselor is a response to God’s command (Colossians 4:2; I Timothy 5:17), an

attempt to follow the example of Christ (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12), and a desire to enjoy the presence of God (Matthew 6:5-9).

The prayer life of a counselor is a vital component of his ability to counsel:

For we need the Spirit's help to understand relevant Biblical principles as regards a counselee's problems;

For we need the Spirit's help in understand the details of the counselee's problems;

For we need the Spirit's help in resolving the counselee's problems – *“Only the Spirit can give the necessary insight and motivation for permanent change. So counselors must pray that the Spirit will work in their counselee's lives and must pray that their own lives will be examples of obedience to Biblical principles and constant growth in the knowledge of the Word of God.”*<sup>24</sup>

**Jay Adams:** *Prayer is a resource that Satan doesn't possess and the flesh knows nothing of it. Yet it is yours – a powerful asset which the Lord warns you not to neglect. Of course faithful prayer is difficult, as the disciples discovered and as we all know. And right here many battles are lost. People who know the Word and whose minds are fixed on the right goals and who want to win the war within, nevertheless fail because they do not pray. It is important to have the Spirit's aid in praying as well as in the battle itself....If God provides for all aspects of the battle, including the very prayer with which you call on Him for provision, then make no mistake – there is no excuse for failure. You cannot even plead that you do not know how to pray.”*<sup>25</sup>

So Biblical counselors must be people of prayer.

### Compassionate

#### **Mark 1:41; 8:2, 6:34**

Compassion means to *“to feel deeply, viscerally, to yearn, a feeling of distress at the sufferings of others”*.

Compassion will involve the counselor deeply in the life of the counselee.

Compassion will mean profound reliance upon the power of God in order to avoid burn-out, despair and discouragement. Galatians 6:9

### Wisdom

#### Proverbs 1:7; 9:10

Wisdom in ministering to troubled people is rooted in a relationship to God and ongoing study of His Word.

### **Study Focus: Proverbs 1:7**

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<sup>24</sup> MacArthur, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, p. 144.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

## The Meaning of Wisdom

- Wisdom
- Instruction
- Understanding
- Wise dealings
- Shrewd

## The Source of Wisdom

## The Acquisition of Wisdom

- The fear of the Lord
- The Word of the Lord
- Prayer to the Lord

Such wisdom will equip the counselor and be manifested in many ways:

- He will be wise when counseling women
- He will discern the differences between the counsel needed for teenagers as opposed to adults
- He will be knowledgeable about the difference between the genders – **I Peter 3:7**
- He will be wise as regards the length of the counseling period

## Trustworthy

Proverbs 11:13; 25:9-10

Confidentiality is essential in counseling and records ought to be kept safe.

Note: Absolute confidentiality

**Jay Adams:** *“What then does one say when asked to keep a matter in confidence? We ought to say, ‘I am glad to keep confidence in a way that the Bible instructs me. That means, of course, I shall never involve others unless God requires me to do so.’ In other words, we must not promise absolute confidentiality, but rather, confidentiality that is consistent with biblical requirements.”*<sup>26</sup>

## Skills in counseling

Listening – James 1:19

Avoiding hasty conclusion – Proverbs 18:13; 18:17

Humility – I Peter 5:5-7

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<sup>26</sup> MacArthur, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, p. 183

## The Process of Biblical Counseling

### Involvement with the Counselee

**Wayne Mack:** *“Biblical counseling is about solving people’s problems. It is about discovering the causes of their problems and then applying Biblical principles to those causes. Sometimes, even well-intentioned counselors err, however, by counseling without cultivating the key element of **involvement**.”*

**Mack:** counselors *“cannot allow themselves to become exclusively problem-oriented. Rather, they need to be person-oriented, then the treatment of problems that flows from that emphasis will be set in the proper context.”*<sup>27</sup>

Biblical counselors must seek to exemplify the emphasis the following texts:

**Proverbs 27:6** – *“faithful are the wounds of a **friend**”*.

**Proverbs 27:9** – *“and the sweetness of a man’s **friend** gives delight by hearty counsel”*.

### **Study focus: Proverbs 18:24**

The Needed Friend – Proverbs 27:17

The True Friend – Proverbs 14:20; 19:4,6,7; Philippians 2:20,21

The Constant Friend – Proverbs 17:17; 18:24

The Long-suffering Friend – Proverbs 17:9; I Peter 4:8

The Counseling Friend – Proverbs 27:5, 6, 9; 28:23; 29:5

The Wise Friend – Proverbs 22:24-25

The Best of Friends – Proverbs 18:24

A Biblical counselor will seek to be **involved** as a friend to a counselee.<sup>28</sup>

### *Involvement through Compassion*

The Example of Jesus – Matthew 9:35, 37-38; Mark 3:1-5

The Example of Paul – Acts 20:31; Romans 9:1-3; II Corinthians 11:28-29

In order to develop compassion: put yourself in their shoes (Matthew 9:36); think of counselees as family members (I Timothy 5:1-2); think about your own sinfulness (Galatians 6:1).

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<sup>27</sup> MacArthur, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, p. 173

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 177f. The material in this section is drawn from chapter ten, “*Developing a Helping Relationship with Counselees*”.

### *Involvement through respect*

Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3

Show respect by proper communication (II Timothy 2:24,25; Ephesians 4:15; Proverbs 15:1; 16:24); by taking their problems seriously; by taking their input seriously; by maintaining confidentiality.

### Instilling Hope in the Counselee<sup>29</sup>

#### Characteristics of False Hope

- False hope is based on false perceptions – “the grass is always greener”
- False hope is a denial of reality – “I still think my husband will come back to me”
- False hope is based on magical/mystical thinking – “I just know God’s going to save him”
- False hope is based on an unbiblical view of prayer – “name it and claim it”
- False hope is based on wrong interpretations of Scripture – is Zechariah 9:9 really a promise of romance?

#### Characteristics of True Hope

- True hope is a Biblically based expectation of good – Romans 8:28 offers solid ground for firm expectation of good.
- True hope is realistic – Romans 8:28 informs us that all things work for good, but does not suggest that all things **are** good (Mack). Psalm 46:1-3 and Ecclesiastes 12 give realistic portrayals of the troubles believers will face, yet nonetheless God is a present help in trouble.
- True hope is inseparable from a diligent and accurate study of God’s word – Psalm 119:49; 130:5
- True hope is a matter of choice – the difference between hope and despair whilst in the midst of trouble is a matter personal choice (I Peter 1:13 gives us this command: “rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”)
- True hope is based on knowledge – counselees need to be familiar with Biblical truths such as these:
  - Romans 6 and our freedom from the power of sin
  - James 1:1-3 and Romans 5:2-3 and God’s sanctifying purpose is tribulation
  - Ephesians 1:11 and God’s supreme control over all things.

#### How to Inspire Hope

- Help people grow in their relationship to Christ

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., see chapter 11, “*Instilling Hope in the Counselee*”.

- Help people to think Biblically
  - About the specific situation – an accident?
  - About God’s character – “too wise to be mistaken and too good to be unkind”
  - About the possibilities of good – Ephesians 3:20
  - About divine resources – Romans 8:37; II Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:13
  - About the nature and cause of the problem – “hopefulness blossoms when people begin to realize that their problems are basically spiritual: they are somehow linked to sin.”<sup>30</sup> See John 1:29; I Timothy 1:15; Matthew 1:21; Titus 2:14
  - About what they say – “I can’t”, “they made me angry”

### Collecting Data

**Proverbs 20:5** – “*counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out*”. The thoughts, intents, purposes, of men are rarely revealed unless solicited, but a wise counselor will elicit these “*by questions framed for the purpose, and thus pump the salubrious waters from the deep and capacious well*” (Adam Clarke).

Information must be collected concerning: *sleep*<sup>31</sup>, *diet, exercise, sickness, medication, spiritual state, familial and social resources, emotions as indicators of problems, history*

### Evaluating the Problem

Assuming a “dichotomy”<sup>32</sup> view of man, the counselor will seek to evaluate the nature of the problem. Is this a physical or a spiritual problem.

### Offering Biblical Counsel

- Relevant Biblical principles must be explained
- Relevant Biblical principles must be applied to the situation in detail
- Practical counsel must be given concerning the way ahead – steps to be taken must be clearly laid out
- Steps to be taken must be concrete and understandable
- Accountability should be established where possible

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 205

<sup>31</sup> Robert Smith, M. D. “*Sleep*”, *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1980.

<sup>32</sup> Consider John Murray, “Trichotomy”, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 2, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), pp. 23-33.

## Particular Issues and Biblical Counsel

### Depression<sup>33</sup>

#### *What is “depression”?*

- Everyone experiences “normal” feelings of depression – grief over loss of loved one, times of significant change, periods of stress, loss of job, conflict, etc.
- At any given time about 20% of people are experiencing significant levels of depression – feeling downcast, discouragement, weary, overwhelmed.
- Most people – about 70% - have thought about suicide at some point
- Depression involves prolonged and persistent periods of mood disturbance characterized by
  - Persistent feelings of sadness, melancholy
  - Loss of interest
  - Change in appetite/weight loss or gain
  - Insomnia or hypersomnia
  - Agitation or slowing of physical movements
  - Fatigue or loss of energy
  - Feelings of worthlessness, excessive self-criticism, inappropriate guilt
  - Poor concentration/memory
  - Indecisiveness
  - Recurrent thoughts of death and suicide

#### *What factors contribute to or are associated with depression?*

- Genetics (depression runs in families)
- An early history of significant loss
- Trauma or severe ongoing stress
- Certain medical illness (thyroid dysfunction, etc), head trauma
- Certain personality traits – pessimism, dependency
- Certain behavioural patterns – withdrawal, isolation, lack of physical exercise
- Certain ways of thinking – unbiblical views of self, unbiblical views of life, unbiblical expectations of life,
- Satanic attack (Revelation 12:10; Ephesians 6:10-20)
- Un-confessed sin and sinful patterns of behavior and lifestyle

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<sup>33</sup> For this section I have borrowed heavily from Dr. Steven Swallow, “Emotions, Emotional Distress and Addictions: Part Two – Depression in the life of a Christian”, a lecture delivered at Trinity Baptist Church, Burlington, Canada.

*Believers and Depression*

Elijah (I Kings 19:1-4)

Martin Luther and C. H. Spurgeon

**Study Focus: I Kings 19**

This chapter is about God

This chapter shows the need for grace

This chapter is about hope

This chapter is about people

A Man on the Run – three words describe Elijah’s situation

- Fear
- Flight
- Finished

A Man of Like Passions – James 5:17 indicates that others have been in Elijah’s shoes

A Man Loved by God

- God gives him rest
- God gives him food
- God sends His Son

A Man Restored

- A Journey back
- A Probing Question
- A Wrong Perspective
- A Vision of God
- A Renewed Commission
- A Way Out – principles that apply to the problem of depression include:
  - Consider the kindness of God
  - Beware of being dominated by feelings
  - Beware of people becoming bigger than God
  - Encounter with God is our greatest need
  - Success is being faithful
  - God is often at work and we are unaware
  - God is faithful

## Anger

### **Study Focus: Biblical Teaching on Anger**

#### The Place of Righteous Anger

- God expresses anger – Psalm 7:11
- Jesus expresses anger – Mark 3:5
- Paul assumes the presence of righteous anger
- List occasions when Christian ought to be righteously angry

#### The Problem of Unrighteous Anger

- Its Roots – why do we get angry
- Its expression
  - The quick tempered man – Proverbs 14:29; 25:28
  - The simmering man – Proverbs 14:17
- Its control
  - Let love cover the sin – Leviticus 19:17, 18; I Peter 4:8
  - Let love motivate action – Matthew 5:23, 24; Galatians 6:1, 2
  - Pray for the fruit of self-control – Galatians 5:22
  - Recognize the measure of self-control we do have
  - Communication is absolutely vital
  - Consider your own sins
  - Consider the example and patience of Christ

#### The Propitiation of Divine Anger

All Biblical counsel must point sinners and saints to Christ and His cross. The matter of anger affords a tremendous opportunity to do this.

I John 4:10

## Sexuality

Sexual immorality has always and will always be a problem Christians must face, and is an issue for which Christian pastors must be prepared to offer sound Biblical counsel.

Counsel should be offered to young people dating as well as to Christians in general.

## Study Focus: Christian Dating<sup>34</sup>

The following are principles that may be offered to young people:

- Be Familiar with Biblical teaching – the nature of man, the image of God in man, the nature of marriage, the purpose of marriage
- Date a Christian – other considerations must be examined but this is the most fundamental
- Look for a loving leader
- Look for a godly and submissive woman
- Look for godliness not glamour
- Trust the Lord

## Study Focus: I Thessalonians 4:1-8

The Meaning of the Command – understand the significance of “sexual immorality” and “abstain”

The Motives for Obeying the Command

- It is a command
- We have a holy calling
- We have a holy God
- In doing this you defraud a brother
- This is sin against God
- Evangelical motives

The Manner in which we Obey this Command

- Realize who you are
- Walk with the lord
- Guard your thoughts
- Watch and pray
- Get to know each other (before marriage); cultivate your sexual relationship (after marriage)
- Better to marry than to burn

### Pre-Marital Counseling

We require that any couple we marry take a brief pre-marital counseling course from us. This will involve three to four sessions at which we examine the material attached (see Appendix).

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Phillips and Sharon Phillips,  Holding Hands; Holding Hearts, (New Jersey: P&R, 2006) – is highly recommended.

## Marital Conflict

A significant amount of the Christian pastor's time will be spent offering Biblical counsel designed to resolve conflict within the Christian home. Principles applicable to such situation will also be helpful in resolving conflict within the church.

Study Focus: Resolving Conflict in the Family

### The Inevitability of Conflict

#### The Sources of Conflict

- Difference – these are not necessarily sinful
- Sinfulness – these involves the contradictions of Biblical commands and principles
- Righteousness – these involve persecution for righteousness sake

#### The Resolving of Conflict

- Identify the root of the conflict
- Urge a close walk with God
- Cultivate improved communication
- Exercise self-control
- Pray
- Urge individuals to seek to be peace makers
- Offer hope – Ephesians 2:14-18

## Euthanasia/suicide

*“Among many ethical problems the bio-medical revolution is forcing upon us as Christians today is the question of euthanasia. While the peak of the issue has certainly not been reached, a crescendo is definitely building,”* wrote theologian **Millard Erickson** in 1976. Thirty years later the issue is more prominent than ever, though perhaps the crescendo has not yet been reached.

Christian pastors/counselors must be prepared to offer a sound Biblical perspective to those who will be wrestling with the issue.

What is Going On?

What do they Mean?

Definitions:

- Euthanasia
- Active Euthanasia
- Passive euthanasia
- Voluntary euthanasia
- Assisted suicide
- Eugenics
- Palliative care

Why are they pushing this?

- The compassion of man
- The evolution of man
- The autonomy of man

What do we believe?

- The sovereignty of God
- The sanctity of life
- The doctrine of death
- The doctrine of suffering
- The doctrine of providence
- The quality of life

What can we do?

- Teach people to understand and resist evolution
- Urge Christians to be aware of the issue before they have to face it
- Pray
- Help the dying and the families of the dying
- Preach the gospel

### Homosexuality

Homosexuality was a problem faced by Biblical writers and is a pervasive problem encountered by Western Christians (same sex unions are legal in Canada). While it may not be a common problem in the Philippines at present, it may well be in time to come as corrupt influences infiltrate your society through the Western media.

**Study Focus: Romans 1:24-27**

What does the Bible say about Homosexuality?

- Homosexuality is sinful
- Homosexuality is the result of a terrible exchange
- Homosexuality is an example of God's judgment
- Homosexuality involves a choice
- Homosexuality involves slavery
- Homosexuality is unnatural

How ought Christians to Respond to Homosexuality?

- We ought to love homosexuals
- We ought to be honest with homosexuals
- We must tell homosexuals the gospel
- We must offer hope

### Worry

The Biblical counselor/pastor has an enormous amount of helpful advice to give those who are plagued with worry and anxiety.

The Problem of Worry – Philippians 4:6, 7

The Answer to Worry

- Priority
- Prayer
  - To the One who is in control
  - To One who knows us
  - To One who looks after us
  - To One who provides all we need
  - To One who is our Father
- Supplication
- Thanksgiving
- In everything
- With confidence – Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28

The Replacement for Worry

- The heart will be guarded

- The heart will know peace

## Abortion

See Christian Pro-Life Resources for the Philippines website:

<http://proliferesources.blogspot.com/>

Biblical counselors must be familiar with Biblical material concern the identity of the unborn and the Scriptural perspective on abortion so as to be able to properly counsel those wrestling with crisis pregnancies.

### The Bible and the Unborn

Consider: Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Judges 13:1-7; Psalm 51:5; Matthew 1:20

### The Christian and the Unborn

What can and ought Christians to do regarding abortion?

- Adopt
- Pray
- Support/start crisis pregnancy clinics
- Protest
- Proclaim the gospel and the reality of forgiveness

## Sickness

The following Biblical principles ought to guide the Biblical counselor as he/she seeks to guide and help those who are troubled as they suffer through the frowning providence of sickness.

Sickness is part of life in a fallen world.

Consider Philippians 2:25-27; I Timothy 5:23

God ordains sickness for our good.

Consider Romans 8:28; Exodus 4:11; Deuteronomy 32:39

God is good and wise

- People get sick because of the fall
- Sometimes people get sick because of particular sins
- Sometimes people get sick and we don't know why
- Sometimes people get sick and they learn more of God
- Sometimes people get sick and it makes them better Christians
- Sometimes people get sick and it is very difficult to make a comment or offer any explanation and silence may be the best temporary help.

#### Pray for Help

- Pray for help in healing
- Pray for help in coping
- Pray for help to be godly
- Pray for help to witness
- Pray for help to use your experience
- Pray for help so that the healthy may be helpful

#### Look to God

#### Look to Heaven

#### The Aged, Infirm, Hospitalized and Dying

Biblical/pastoral counselors often visit their counselees as opposed to having a counseling centre. How ought these visitation counseling times be approached?

#### *Counseling the Aged and Infirm*

- Love them
  - This must be knowledgeable love
  - This must be respectful love
  - This must be sympathetic love
  - This must be attentive love
- Marshal them
- Pray for them
- Be encouraged and inspired by them

#### *Counseling the Hospitalized*

- You are not "professionals" (Piper)
- Time – no simple rule of thumb

- Reading and praying
- Be conscious of others in the room
- Be sensitive to the timing of your visit
- Be polite and sensitive to people
- Be “real”, not “ministerial
- Be interested
- Be timely

### *Counseling the Terminally Ill*

- You need to be familiar with the Biblical perspective on death yourself in order to be able to counsel others:
  - Know what the Bible says about death and hope
  - Know that the Bible says that death is not a natural thing
  - Know that some Christians are deathly afraid of death
  - Know that the Bible says that Christians do grieve
  - Know the Biblical perspective on “why these things happen”
- You need to think about “edge of life” issues – abortion, euthanasia, suicide
- You need to talk honestly with people no matter how fearful the situation
- You must understand that involvement in the dying process is a sacred privilege
- You must understand your absolute inadequacy to minister in such circumstances
- You must allow your involvement in the dying process to clarify things for you

### Theodicy

In counseling unbelievers as well as believers the matter of theodicy often comes up (“justifying the ways of God to man”). How are we to understand evil and suffering in light of a sovereign and good God?

We must affirm what the Bible says about God:

- God exists
- God cares
- God is powerful
- God is holy
- God is a just Judge

We must affirm what the Bible says about man: man is a fallen creature

We must also:

- Weep with those who suffer
- Pray for those who suffer
- Practically help those who suffer

**Study Focus: Jeremiah 12:1-6**

Lessons from Jeremiah

- The assumption is that God is holy
- The assumption is that God is in control
- The assumption is that God knows
- The fact is that God does not always provide an answer
- The fact is that God does have a plan

Lessons from Scripture

- God is to be revered
- God does have a plan
  - God allows evil for His own purposes
  - Justice will prevail
  - All will be for the benefit of God's people
  - The plan sometimes involves strange methods of saving and sanctifying God's people
  - The plan will glorify God
  - The plan is Christ centered
- God is to be trusted
- God is to be approached – see Psalm 73, Habakkuk 1

Fear

The frequent admonitions in Scripture against fearfulness indicate that fear is a common failing even amongst God's people. The Biblical counselor will be called upon to offer a Biblical perspective on many occasions.

**Study Focus: Genesis 20**

A Faltering Prophet

- Fear exalts men

- Fear belittles God
- Fear humiliates the man

#### A Faithful God

- Sovereign control
- Sovereign grace

#### A Few Implications

- The best of men are men at best
- Crises can reveal the heart
- God is glorified and Christ is perfect

#### Temptation

Temptations of various sorts will enter the lives of God's people and counselors must be prepared to give advice as to how temptations are to be resisted.

#### **Study Focus: Genesis 39**

Consider how Joseph sees the temptation that comes his way:

- He calls sin sin
- He sees sin as against God
- He maintains an eternal perspective
- He thought
- He fled
- He was rooted in the word
- Prayer

#### Alcohol Abuse

In Canada an estimated \$11-24 billion is lost annually because of the effects of alcohol abuse.

#### The Problem of Alcohol Abuse

- The Bible does not teach total abstinence
- The Bible does teach the terrible dangers of alcohol abuse

#### Deliverance from Alcohol Abuse

- Recognize personal responsibility – the reality of slavery to sin (described as addiction) and freedom in Christ must be taught
- Repentance and faith in Christ – the “supreme being” of AA is insufficient
- Be filled with the Spirit – Romans 8:13 – by the enabling of the Spirit sin may be mortified.

### Success

The dangers that come from “success” are manifold and require sound Biblical counsel.

#### **Study Focus: II Chronicles 26:16-23**

See how Uzziah mishandles the success that providentially comes his way:

- He considers these accomplishments his own
- He began to drift from his spiritual moorings
- He saw himself as “a cut above”
- He saw himself as above rebuke

See some lessons drawn from Uzziah’s experience:

- This is a sin committed as a mature man
- Strength can become a stumbling block
- Obedience to the government is right – to a point
- Where is the priest king?
- How should we respond to success?
  - Enjoy the good things God has given – I Timothy 6:17
  - Praise God for the good things He has given
  - Do not trust in the good things He has given
  - Use the good things He has given
  - Keep your eye on the good things God *will* give us – I Timothy 6:19

### Self esteem

**James Dobson:** *“If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, I would provide each of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth...I have no doubt that this is their greatest need”; “Self-esteem is the most fragile attribute in human nature; it can be damaged by a very minor incident and its reconstruction is often difficult to engineer”; “In fact low self-esteem is a threat to the entire human family”.*

**Anthony Hoekema:** “Obviously, a predominantly negative self-image has evil consequences for adults as well as children”.

**Walter Trobisch:** *“the act of self-acceptance is the root of all things”*

**Robert Schuller:** *“I contend that this unfulfilled need for self-esteem underlies every act”*.<sup>35</sup>

**William Counts:** *“The Bible makes a person feel good about himself. Many try to use it to make people hate themselves. The Bible promotes psychological and emotional health. Often we may have to surrender popular evangelical Christianity to psychology, but not the true teaching of the Bible. This is a very freeing experience.”*

The Biblical teaching:

- *Man is in the image of God:* Genesis 1:26,27; James 3:9,10 – and consequently has significance and dignity
- *Man is in a fallen state:* Isaiah 1:4f; Romans 3:10-20; Jeremiah 17:9 – and thus calls to love himself and appreciate his self-worth are misplaced
  - **Ezekiel 36:31** – *“Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will **loathe yourselves** in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.”*
  - **Job 42:6** – *“Therefore, I abhor myself. and repent in dust and ashes”.*
- *Man in his fallen state already loves himself, and this self-love rather than being cultivated, ought to be mortified as it is as the root of his problem:*
  - **Matthew 22:36-40** – contrary to popular believe this passage does not teach that men are commanded to love themselves, but rather assumes that they do. The same assumption is made in Ephesians 5:28,29.
  - **II Timothy 3:2** – fallen man is characterized by self-love and that self-love is a mark of fallen-ness.
  - **Matthew 16:24** - *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”* Believers must learn to deny themselves not love themselves.

Biblical counselors, while encouraging counselees to see understand themselves in the light of Biblical teaching (on man, on God, on sin, on judgment) will be wary of the teachings of the self-esteem movement.

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<sup>35</sup> Jay Adams, [The Biblical View of Self-esteem, Self-love, Self-image](#) (Oregon: Harvest House, 1986), pp. 8-12. This book I recommend as a sound critique of the self-esteem movement.

## Fallen Ministers

### A Realistic View of Ministers

- They are imperfect – Philippians 3:12
- They are human – James 5:17
- They are weak – Galatians 2:11f

### Contributing Factors to a Minister's Fall

- Failing to walk with the Lord – Galatians 5:16 – private failure is usually present long before public failure occurs
- Lack of fellowship – Hebrews 10:24, 25 – minister have difficulty finding fellowship in their own churches.
- Pride – Proverbs 16:18; 11:14
- Unhappy home life – Proverbs 21:9; 12:4 – as with all married men a minister's failure to "drink from his own cistern" (Proverbs 5:15f) can lead to a moral fall.
- Satanic attack – Ephesians 6:10f
- Unwise practice – inappropriate meetings; inappropriate relationships; inappropriate counseling; inappropriate working conditions

### Counseling a Fallen Minister

- Separate fact from gossip – I Timothy 5:19
- Be a friend – Proverbs 17:17; 18:24b
- Forgive where repentance is evident – Luke 6:37

### Restoration

- Restoration to fellowship – after confession and repentance
- Restoration to ministry
  - **John Armstrong:** *"So sure Biblical text supplies indisputable evidence for restoration to the pastorate after the fall into sexual sin. But by the same token, no text directly argues for permanent disqualification."*
  - John Armstrong: while affirming the previous statement argues that a case could be made for making permanent disqualification the norm in after sexual sin. A pastor should not seek restoration to the ministry for the following reasons:
    - The pastor's high calling
    - The pastor as a public figure
    - A possible relapse

- The pastor as model
- A lack of judgment
- A stricter judgment<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John Armstrong, Can Fallen Pastors be Restored? (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), chapter 9. This book is highly recommended.

## APPENDIX

### MARRIAGE AND THE BIBLE

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#### I. The Origin of Marriage

1. Who instituted marriage? - **Genesis 2:18, 21-25**
2. What implications flow from this?
  - a)
  - b) c) d)
3. Describe contemporary perspectives regarding marriage. Do these perspectives undermine the Biblical perspective?

#### II The Nature of Marriage

1.

from Malachi 2:14 and Matthew 19:6 regarding the *nature of marriage*?

What do  
we learn

2. How does Genesis 15 help us understand the Biblical concept of marriage?

3. What implications flow from the Biblical understanding of the nature of marriage?

### III. The Purpose of Marriage

What do the following passages reveal regarding God's purpose for marriage?

1. Genesis 2:18

**NB.**

2. Gen. 2:24; I Cor. 7:1-5

**NB.**

3. Gen. 1:27,28; Ps. 127:3-5

**NB.**

4. Ephesians 5:22,23

5. a) What does it mean to "**leave**"? (Gen. 2:24)

b) What does it mean to "**be united**"?

- c) Have there been difficulties as regards "in-law" relations?
- d) Have those difficulties been resolved?
- e) Do you anticipate difficulties? How would you anticipate resolving those difficulties?

#### **IV. Hindrances to Marriage**

1. According to Genesis 2:25-3:23, what is the basic hindrance to the marriage relationship?
2. In your own marriage, how are you going to handle and combat this problem?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
3. **Potential Problem Areas:**
  - Character flaws/Personality clashes -
    - a) What major weaknesses of yours will be problematic in your marriage?
    - b) In what areas do your personalities clash?
    - c) How do you intend to cope with these differences?

Conflict Resolution -

a) List potential causes of conflict in marriage.

b) What truths in the following verses pertain to resolving conflict - I Cor. 13:4-7; Gal. 5:22,23; Ephesians 4:15, 25-32; 5:25-33

Time Management -

a) What expectations do you have in terms of time spent with each other, with family, regarding work, etc?

b) What pressures do you anticipate as regard time management?

Money -

b) Have you discussed priorities as regards financial expenditures and priorities?

a) Have you made plans to work according to a ***budget?***

## V. The Roles in Marriage

### ***The Husband:***

According to Ephesians 5:23,25, what responsibilities does the husband have in the marriage relationship?

1.

2.

*Headship* - Practically speaking, how does the husband exercise headship in the home?

a)

b)

c)

d)

How could a wife hinder her husband's ability to fulfill his God-given responsibility?

*Loving* - The headship the husband exercises must be a loving headship.

- a) According to Ephesians 5:25, what characteristics should mark the husband's love for his wife?
- b) What does it mean, practically, to fulfill Ephesians 5:28-30 as regards a husband's relationship to his wife?

***The Wife:***

According to Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, and I Peter 3:1, the key word for wives is "submit".

1. Does **submission** imply **inferiority**? (Gen. 1:26,27; Luke 2:51)
  
2. What does it mean to **submit**?
  
3. What motivates a Christian wife to submit?
  
4. Ephesians 5:24 says that you are to submit in everything. Are there any conditions attached to this?
  
5. Consider Titus 2:4. What does it mean to **love your husband**?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
  
7. How does the decision-making process work in light of submission?

6. Do you see submission as *a positive or negative* concept?

7. Proverbs 31:10-31. What virtues of a godly wife and mother are evident in the woman of Proverbs 31?

***Husband and wife:***

Dr. Jay Adams has suggested that the husband's function is to love his wife to the extent that he is willing to die for her; and the wife is to love her husband to the extent that she is willing to live for him. Do you agree?

**VI. Communication in Marriage**

Communication is a vital skill in establishing and maintaining sound, Biblical relationships in the home, and elsewhere.

1. How would you define: ***communication***?
  
2. What ***methods*** of *communication* are there?
  
3. Which one of you communicates more easily? Why?
  
4. Consider the following guidelines for communication:
  - a) speak the truth (Eph. 4:15,25)
  - b) communicate regularly, constantly (Eph. 4:26)
  - c) speak humbly (Matthew 7:3-5)
  - d) be a ready listener (Prov. 18:13; James 1:19)
  - e) be slow to speak (Prov. 15:23,28; 29:20; James 1:19)
  - f) don't go to bed angry (Eph. 4:25; Matt. 6:34)

- g) do not use silence to frustrate the other person (Prov. 15:28; 16:21,23; 10:19 18:2; 10:15; Col. 4:6)
- h) disagree without quarreling (Prov. 17:14; 20:3; Eph. 4:31)
- i) do not respond with uncontrolled anger (Prov. 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Eph. 4:26,31)
- j) admit when you are wrong, confess it, asking forgiveness (James 5:16)
- k) avoid nagging (Prov. 21:19; 27:15; 17:9; 16:21,23)
- l) be concerned about the interests of others (Phil. 2:3; Rom. 12:15)
- m) draw people out (Prov. 20:5)
- n) keep confidences (Prov. 11:13)
- o) avoid 'joking' (Prov. 26:18,19)

6. Evaluate your conversation:

- a) Do you really show an interest in what others are saying or are you interested only in what you are saying?
- b) *Are you a know-it-all?*
- c) Is your voice pleasant, gentle, and friendly?
- d) Are you predominantly appreciative and affirmative, or critical and negative?
- e) Do you encourage others or belittle them?
- f) Is it safe for people to tell you the truth about yourself, as they see it?
- g) Do you tend to dominate a conversation in which you are involved?
- h) Are you willing to listen to different opinions or do you feel threatened by them?
- i) Do you give people your undivided attention?
- j) Do you consider communication with friends and family a priority?
- k) When you don't feel like talking, and the other person does, will you deny yourself and seek to meet his/her need?
- l) Are you frequently sarcastic or nasty in your conversation?
- m) Do you nag, lecture or moralize?
- n) Do you read things into the other person's words, and then become angry?
- o) Do you insist on having the last word?
- p) Do you refuse suggestions without really having thought about them?

7. How can you cultivate Christ-like conversation skills?

**Recommended Reading:**

**John MacArthur, Wayne Mack, and the Master's College Faculty, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas, 1994**

**Jay Adams, More than Redemption, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, New Jersey, 1979**

**Paul David Tripp, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, New Jersey, 2002.**