

Biblical Counseling Training 101
Class 7 - Step Three: Gathering Data

He who answers before listening, that is his folly and shame. Proverbs 18:13

Introduction

1. What is progressive sanctification and why should it be our goal?
2. What is the first step of biblical counseling? What are some of the components?
3. Share with your table mates Hebrews 11:6 which you memorized.
4. *Approachability and Passport* article – share a few highlighted statements.

I. Most data gathering comes about during “story-telling.”

- A. Three goals should drive you as a biblical counselor during story-telling.
 1. Getting to know them and building the relationship
 2. Gathering data
 3. Identifying/Isolating the heart issues you will be working on (Prov. 20:5)
- B. Data gathering will come about through open- and close-ended questions.
 1. Start with open ended questions
 2. With talkative person, be prepared to use close-ended question
 3. Close-ended (“Yes/No” type) help clarify facts and direct conversation
 4. Open-ended have explanations attached which reveals the heart, attitude, beliefs, motivations
 5. Test your hypotheses with more questions
 6. See section “H” below for more details about questioning
- C. Be quick to listen (**James 1:19-20**)
 1. One common problem with new counselors is losing the person in the conversation. Stay with them by listening carefully to their answers and not getting ahead of them.
 2. What do they say the problem is? Their appraisal of the problem is usually slanted by the biases of their heart. It gives you insight into their perspective, thought processes, maturity and discernment, which in turn help you know how to counsel them.

For example, the most common counseling complaint I’ve heard in 35 years is some form of “*My husband rarely involves himself with me in conversation or emotion. He doesn’t pursue me, listen to me or share himself.*” He watches TV, is on the computer or pursues hobbies, and he does not really invest himself in us having a good marriage. Any man who aspires to be a godly, Christ-centered husband really *should* learn to die to himself and live in an understanding way. (See Romans 6 / Eph. 4:22-24 / Eph. 5:25, ff./1 Peter 3:7) That is the way she could experience love on earth. No question about it. But if the woman is speaking with you and not her husband, is his failure to love well her real problem? That may be her real circumstance, but from a biblical counseling standpoint, it is not the real problem. **What someone says is the problem gets you into their life, but never defines the problem biblically.**
 3. How are they responding to the problem?
 4. What underlying factors or beliefs contribute to the problem?

D. Six **Impediments** to Good Listening

1. Rehearsing
2. Mind Reading
3. Over-Identifying.
4. Dreaming
5. Derailing
6. Placating.

E. Six **Components** of Good Listening

1. Waiting
2. Attending
3. Clarifying
4. Reflecting
5. Summarizing
6. Agreeing

F. Intake Form (*See attached example pp. 8-14*)

This is the written instrument we use to get information on the person/s, the problem/s and where they are in understanding their problem/s. If we refer to you, we'll have one of these.

G. Probing

1. Probe "extensively" (general, more overview)
These are areas on the intake that you ought to get a sense of pretty early on.
 - a. Spiritual life
 - b. Family Life
 - c. Work / School
 - d. Physical Well-Being
 - e. Financial status
 - f. Social connectedness
 - g. Current concerns
2. Probe "intensively" (specific areas problems are likely to lodge). While you process their data sheet and have initial contact, it is not uncommon for your mentee/counselee to have problems in areas common to their age or stage in life. This is obviously not always the case, but pay attention for themes such as:
 - a. **With children**
Relationships with parents, peers, teachers
School issues
 - b. **With youth and singles**
Previous list *PLUS*
Sexuality and Dating issues
Communication breakdown with key people in their life
Meaning of life and Identity issues (Keyed around self-concept as it relates to work or purpose and relationships or connectedness)
School/work success and direction and finances
"Addictions"
 - c. **With older singles**
Identity (who am I in a "married" world)
Spiritual development holes
Unresolved past relationship issues
Resentment about marital status

- Bad habits, immorality or unresolved guilt (e.g., over abortion)
- Disorganization and lack of responsible follow through
- d. **With married persons**
 - Key relationships (husband-wife, children, extended family)
 - Work and/or financial issues
 - Health concerns
 - Immorality and/or addictions
- e. **With men**
 - Anger and depression issues
 - Disconnected relationships
 - Sexual issues
- f. **With women**
 - Husband issues
 - Loneliness
 - Depression
 - Fear issues (especially about money, children or the future)
 - Anger and bitterness
 - Sexual or relational temptations
 - “Abuse recovery” issues
- g. **With retired or older persons**
 - Health, physical limits and fear of death
 - Grown children and grandchildren
 - Loneliness and grief that may metastasize into self-pity
 - Depression and lack of purpose
 - Finances
- h. **With disabled persons**
 - Managing life
 - Finances
 - Resentment & Self-Pity
 - Loneliness, Uselessness and Depression
 - Manipulation of others

II. Discussion at table

- **Who has been a good listener in your life?**
- **What did they do that made them a good listener?**
- **Why is good listening directly connected to why your counsel will be good or not?**
- **What is needed to turn from a not so good listener to a good listener?**
- **What do you intentionally do to be a good listener with children or strangers?**
- **How might good listening come in handy during evangelistic conversation?**

IV. See Homework Below (One hour, fifteen minutes)

- A. Listening Assessment (p. 4 → 15 minutes)
- B. Listening action points (p. 5 → 15 minutes)
- C. Memory verse (p. 5 → 15 minutes spread throughout the week)
- D. Article (pp. 5-7 → 15 minutes)
- E. Intake form (pp. 8-14 → 15 minutes)

Homework: Assessing My Listening

Listening to a counselee is a skill tied to how well we listen to those close to us in our family. If you are married, please give this to your spouse and ask for their rating. If you are not married, ask someone who knows you well to fill it out. Ask them to rate honestly from 1-5.

1 = Most of the time does not listen, ignores the other person, talks about what they want to say

2 = Rarely understands, talks over you, gets angry easily without understanding, manipulates

3 = They try to take part in the conversation, and sometimes listen pretty well, but still about their story

4 = Actually asks for clarification, quick to hear, slow to get angry

5 = Patient, values your heart, really tries to understand, doesn't speak too soon, helps you hear yourself.

1. He/she listens well to you/kids when you/they say something. _____
2. He/she does not interrupt while you/others are speaking and doesn't seem to be in a hurry to make their point when you/they are through. _____
3. He/she asks questions for clarification and follow-up rather than responding in a way that reflects poor understanding. _____
4. He/she not only hears your words but grasps your meaning. _____
5. He/she maintains good eye contact and relaxed/interested body language while you or others speak. _____
6. He/she seems content when you are talking, not looking at their watch or hoping to rush off to whatever else they might like to do. _____
7. He/she is not pushy to make their point. (*Included because those who are pushy to make a point are generally not focused on listening.*) _____
8. He/she is not overly quick to judge the meaning of another. _____
9. He/she is able to accurately summarize for others new to the conversation what you/others have said. _____
10. He/she refers to what those in the group have said when they speak. _____
11. He/she remembers accurately what others have said in the past. _____
12. He/she is able to draw out quiet people with questions. _____
13. He/she encourages people to share by the way they listen. _____
14. He/she shows care for others by the way they listen. _____
15. In a group, he/she does not monopolize and relates well in a group. _____
16. In one-on-one contacts, he/she is willing and able to understand struggles people have and communicate back to them what he/she has heard in such a way that they feel understood and known. _____
17. He/she understands and can restate each side of a conflict, whether they participate in the conflict or are trying to help others. _____
18. He/she values the input of others and others recognize that. _____
19. His/her emotions do not get in the way of good communication. _____
20. He/she is quick to listen, slow to anger, slow to speak. _____

TOTAL _____

80-100 is a very good listener. Keep it up and please try to help others develop this skill

60-79 is an average to above average listener. Decide on one skill today to enhance your skill.

40-59 is not a very good listener. Observe where you do well and continue. Look for ways to improve 2-3 of the areas where you may struggle, maybe with an accountability partner.

0-39 suggests that you need to get with a mentor or friend who is a good listener to work on this some. Don't get too discouraged. Just realize that without some learning, you can't accomplish your goals as a mentor.

Listening Action Points and Questions (15 minutes)

(Be ready to share with your table next week)

What do I need to work on in my listening?

What are my next steps in improving my listening?

What are the situations where I do not know how to listen well?

**Memory Verse for Next Week
Proverbs 18:13 (15 minutes)**

Reading Assignment (15 minutes)

Also, please read **with a marker** the attached article on listening. The article repeats a few principles we have laid out and elaborates on a few more. Be prepared to **discuss whatever was helpful** in the article with your table.

Taken From The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity

"Listening" by R. Paul Stevens © 2004 IExalt Publishing (WordSearch)

Our basic anatomy of two ears and one mouth is highly suggestive. We probably should do twice as much listening as speaking. If speaking is a spiritual discipline, refraining from speech to listen to the words of others or to God's word is equally crucial to living Christianly. The control factor, however, is more subtle and more demanding in the case of listening. Marshall McLuhan makes the rather obvious suggestion that nature has not equipped us with ear-lids. So we compensate for what he calls "nature's oversight" by selective listening (McLuhan and Fiere, p. 111). Rather than consider this internal control as an oversight, we could regard it as a divinely planned opportunity for spiritual growth. So Jesus says, "*Consider carefully how you listen*" (Luke 8:18), not only because all will be revealed eventually (Luke 8:17), but because if you listen well, you will gain even more to hear. So listening is a key to the inner treasures of the soul.

Listening and Self-Discipline

James says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak" (James 1:19). The context refers to both listening to others and listening to the Word of God (James 1:21), two facets of listening that are inextricably related. Instead of finishing another's sentence, we should listen to the soul expressed in the words. She who holds her tongue in check is in control of her whole person (James 3:2-4). Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his classic *Life Together* says, "Thus it must be a decisive rule of every Christian fellowship that each individual is prohibited from saying much that occurs to him" (p. 92). So both speaking and listening involve discernment. Speaking metaphorically, Job says, "Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food?" (Job 12:11), a point with which the young man Elihu fully concurs (Job 34:3-4) as he invites Job along with the three unfriendly "comforters" to "learn together what is good."

So the self-discipline involved in the ministry of listening is not just *how* we listen but *to what*. While we are inundated by a thousand advertisements and siren appeals to the flesh every day, we should heed Solomon's advice of "turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding" (Proverbs 2:2; compare Proverbs 23:12), whether it is a life-giving rebuke (Proverbs 15:31), the law (Proverbs 28:9) or the cry of the poor (Proverbs 21:13). Listening not only *is* selective; it *should be*. We must systematically reduce certain influences in order to attend to those that make us truly wise.

Listening as a Relational Gift

The apostle Paul expounded the metaphor of the body suggesting that some people are like the ears (1 Cor. 12:17). He was, however, promoting interdependence rather than delegation of listening ministry to certain specially endowed members. James exhorts all believers to be "quick to listen" (James 1:19), which he links in the same verse to "slow to become angry." We are less likely to feel thwarted and, therefore, get angry if we know what is going on inside another person. Further, if we listen deeply to the soul of another, we will more likely be confronted with our own shortcomings (James 1:21), more willing to listen to ourselves and less likely either to provoke to anger or to be so provoked. By listening, we renounce control over the one who is speaking and communicate worth.

Listening is a relational compliment. This is true not only for fellow human beings but of God himself. By opening our hearts to hear God's word, we worship God and pay the greatest compliment possible. The reverse is also gloriously true: that God speaks "with his ears." By patiently attending to our cry (Ps. 17:6; 31:2; 34:15; Isaiah 59:1), God communicates his love as eloquently as in his articulated speech. His silence is both revelatory and evocative. In the same way, our willingness to cultivate the discipline of solitude is a profound statement of the esteem with which we hold God and our availability to his speech. Richard Foster says, "One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are so accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others. . . . One of the fruits of silence is the freedom to let our justification rest entirely with God. We don't need to straighten others out" (p. 88).

How to Listen

It is widely recognized that the starting point in all counseling relationships is listening. The same is manifestly true for friendships and in deepening a marriage relationship. By listening we convey our desire to understand, to take seriously the viewpoint of another. When we listen, we refrain from giving advice, preaching or even expressing an opinion until we have first taken the person seriously and gained trust (Collins, p. 290). Adapting the advice given by the psychiatrist Armand Nicholi, we can summarize the following dimensions of listening: (1) having enough awareness of one's own conflicts to avoid reacting in a way that interferes with the person's free expression of thoughts and feelings; (2) avoiding subtle verbal or nonverbal expressions of negative judgment; (3) waiting through periods of silence or tears until the person summons up the courage to say more; (4) hearing not only what the person says but what he or she is trying to say; (5) using both ears and eyes to detect messages that come from tone of voice, posture and other nonverbal cues; (6) avoiding looking away while a person is speaking; (7) limiting the number of mental excursions into one's own fantasies while another is speaking; (8) practicing the full acceptance of the person no matter what is said (Collins, pp. 26-27).

The last point deserves more comment. To accomplish acceptance through listening without condoning or condemning is spiritually demanding. To do this without condemnation, one must have experienced deep forgiveness in one's own life, since we condemn or condone what is still unresolved in our own past. And to show acceptance of a fellow sinner without excusing sin cannot be done without compassion, that quality that links us so closely with the heart of God. So listening, like speaking, reveals the person, casts us on God for his grace and invites us to move forward in the life of discipleship.

Listening as a Spiritual Discipline

Just as speech reveals the person, so the quality of listening reveals the soul within. Stopped-up ears come from hearts "as hard as flint" (Zech. 7:11-12). Open ears reveal a tender and responsive soul. This is true whether one listens to God or to another person. By learning to attend to the thoughts, feelings and values of others, we are positioning ourselves to attend to God. Of course, the reverse is equally true. Bonhoeffer puts it negatively: "But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God" (p. 98). That prattle leads to the famine prophesied by Amos, not of food or water but "of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:10-12). Good speakers are good listeners. They have the "instructed tongue" of those who have learned from God in their own lives and so are able to sustain the weary with their words (Isaiah 50:4).

God opens the mouth of his servant by wakening the ears of that servant, just as Jesus opened the mouth of the mute person by opening his ears (Mark 7:33), a sign that the day of salvation had truly arrived (Isa. 35:5-6).

Those unready to obey what they hear from God are called “dull of hearing” (Matthew 13:15 KJV), implying that they have their internal ear-lids down (Mark 8:18; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29). Sometimes this willful stoppage is accomplished by externally plugging the ears (Acts 7:57), but more commonly it is an internal predisposition *not* to hear because they are unwilling to obey, something that the apostles of Jesus called “uncircumcised in heart and ears” (Acts 7:51 NRSV). The ear as an organ of reception has not yet heard the full joy and beauty of heavenly sound (1 Cor. 2:9). Heaven will be the ultimate listening experience, as the book of Revelation shows (Rev. 4-5), and we live with true heavenly mindedness by practicing the disciplines of faithful (that is, faith-full) listening to Scripture, to the hearts of others and to the voice of God speaking to us in our life experiences.

References and Resources

D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. J. W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1954); G. R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1980); R. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); M. McLuhan and Q. Fiere, *The Medium Is the Message* (New York: Bantam, 1967); J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 4 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

—R. Paul Stevens

Please thoroughly complete this intake form, *allowing time to give careful answers to each question and to read the biblical passages referenced*. Return this form by email counseling@fbcva.org or postal mail to Fellowship Bible Church, 3217 Middle Rd, Winchester, VA 22602 (Attn: Counseling Office). On receiving your form, we will prayerfully consider which of our available biblical counselors would be a match for you. We will contact you after finding a suitable counselor or, failing that, make an outside the church referral.

Consent to Biblical Counseling

Fellowship Bible Church – Winchester, VA

Our Goal - Our goal in biblical counseling is to help you meet the challenges of life in a way that pleases the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9). We believe this will bring Him glory and allow you to enjoy more fully His love and His plans for you. Whether financial counseling, personal counseling or relationship counseling, we view biblical counseling as “intensive discipleship” and look forward to helping you see how God may work in your difficulties to bring you into conformity with His purposes (Romans 8:28-29, Colossians 1:28).

Biblical Basis - We believe that the Bible provides thorough, adequate guidance and instruction for our faith and life (2 Peter 1:2-3, Romans 15:4). Therefore, the biblical counseling/intensive discipleship we offer is based on scripture rather than on man’s ideas.

Not Professional Advice – Our biblical counselors are not professional counselors or financial planners. In our role as FBC biblical counselors, we do not provide professional advice or service such as you might receive if you hired a professional. Therefore, if you have legal, psychological, medical, financial questions and wish to seek advice from independent professionals disconnected from any association with Fellowship Bible Church, we encourage you to do so. Our biblical counselors – *financial and personal* – will cooperate with such professional advisors and help you consider their counsel in light of relevant biblical principles. By signing this “*Consent to Biblical Counseling*” you agree that Fellowship Bible Church and any of its members or counselors cannot be held responsible or liable for any adverse consequences that may follow as a result of any biblically-based advice you receive.

Confidentiality - Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process. We carefully guard the information you entrust to us since we regard what you share with us as your property. The only persons who will see your intake form are the Pastor of Biblical Counseling, his assistant and the lay counselor to whom you are assigned.

In addition, because we train lay counselors, we ask that, if needed, you agree to allow trainees to be present during your sessions. In the event that we have a trainee for any of your sessions, we would notify you in advance.

There are three situations when it may be necessary for us to share certain information with others: (1) When a biblical counselor is uncertain of how to address a particular problem and needs advice from the Pastor of Biblical Counseling; (2) When there is clear indication that someone may be harmed unless we intervene; or (3) When a church member persistently refuses to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation (see Proverbs 15:22; 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). In that case, the counselee will be notified of the need to move in that direction of church involvement. In every case, those who work with you make every effort to resolve problems as privately as possible.

Additional Comments - On rare occasions, a conflict might arise between a biblical counselor and his or her counselee/s. To make sure such conflicts are resolved in a biblical manner, we require all counselees to agree by signing this form that, should a dispute arise with the counselor or this church as a result of counseling, the matter will be settled with biblical mediation, initiated within the church, and according to the principles of scripture and authority of this local church.

Because our counseling is an effort to help you apply biblical truth to your situation and we believe that doing so requires more exposure to truth than one hour a week of counseling, we require that, as while you are our counselee, you attend weekly worship services in this or another Bible teaching church and that you commit to take part in a small group or adult learning opportunity. Counseling without the regular input of truth and community leaves a counselee overly dependent on the counselor and not on the Lord. It also runs the risk of letting the problem become the center of a person’s life rather than their relationship with Christ and their role in the community.

We welcome the opportunity to minister to you as the Lord helps you grow in spiritual maturity and prepare you for usefulness in His body. If you have questions about these guidelines, please talk with a pastor or elder. If these guidelines are acceptable to you, please sign below.

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

CONFIDENTIAL PERSONAL DATA INFORMATION FORM

This form must be completed and returned before the first counseling session.

IDENTIFICATION DATA

Name:

Email:

Address:

Phone (cell, home, and/or work):

Birth date:

Occupation and employer:

Referred here by (if applicable):

HEALTH INFORMATION

Rate your health (circle or underline): **Very Good** **Average** **Fair** **Declining**

What health issues are you **currently dealing with** or **have you dealt with in the past five years**?

Your physician name and phone number

Please indicate and explain in the space below if you have gone through any **significant losses** (difficult move, death of a loved one, divorce, parents' divorce, job loss, incarceration, etc.) and when.

EDUCATION

Last grade you completed or degrees obtained:

Additional training (list type and years):

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY INFORMATION

Marital Status (circle or underline): **Single** **Engaged** **Married** **Divorced** **Widowed**

Name of spouse (if married or engaged):

Date of wedding (month/year):

May we contact your spouse if needed? _____ Their number _____

Is spouse willing to come for counseling (if needed)? _____

Have you been separated (circle or underline)? **No** **Yes** If yes, when?:

How long did you know your spouse before marriage? _____ Length of engagement: _____

Previous marriages? If so, to whom and when? Cause of dissolution of marriage?

Information about children from youngest to oldest (indicate if child is from a previous marriage):

Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	From Previous Marriage?
------	-----	-----	----------------	-------------------------

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

OTHER IMPORTANT MARRIAGE OR FAMILY INFORMATION WE SHOULD KNOW?

Because we have seen that many folks who have had an abortion or have been a party to an abortion have struggled in relational and spiritual areas of life, and not because we are judging anyone on this difficult area needing God's grace, we ask if you have had an abortion or been party to an abortion, and if so, when?

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

How long have you attended your church? _____ Are you a member? _____

What is the name of your home church? _____

How often do you attend worship services, Bible classes and study groups per month? (Circle or underline)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

What class or small group do you attend if any? _____

What kind of religious training and background did you have as a child? _____

Do you believe in God?	Yes	No	Uncertain
Do you believe Satan exists?	Yes	No	Uncertain
Would you say you are a Christian?	Yes	No	Uncertain

If you are a Christian, please explain how and when you came to know Christ.

How often do you read the Bible (circle or underline)? **Never** **Occasionally** **Often** **Daily**

How often do you pray (circle or underline)? **Not much** **Occasionally** **Daily**

Explain recent changes in your religious life, if any: _____

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. Please describe the main problems as you see them.

2. What help would you like us to provide?

3. In what way or ways might you have contributed to the problem?

4. If relationship counseling, how do you think the other person contributes to the problem?

5. What have you already done to try to resolve the problem?

6. Please describe
 - Who God is and what He is like

 - The impact Jesus Christ has had on your life

 - Some of the specific ways the Bible has impacted your life

7. Please explain the gospel.

8. How do you define sin?

9. Which sins are hardest for you to avoid? (and if married, which sins would your spouse say are hardest for you)?

10. **What are you currently doing to promote your spiritual growth and, if married, that of your spouse?**

11. **What changes do you think need to be made in your own spiritual life?**

12. **What changes do you think your spouse should make in his/her spiritual life?**

13. **I get angry when:**

14. **Some things I fear include:**

15. **I have had a hard time forgiving when:**

16. **How well would others say you handle it when you do not get what you want?**

17. **How well do you receive criticism or correction?**

18. **My greatest failures are (fill in the blank):**

Counselor Notes