



Giving Instruction and Assigning Homework

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Giving Instruction

I. Give Biblical Instruction

A. Bible based (2 Tim. 3:16-17) *“All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* ESV (See also Ps 19:7-11)

B. Not mixed with man’s wisdom (1 Cor 1:20) *“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”* ESV (See also Col. 2:8; 1 Cor. 1:25; 2:4-5). Some examples of this: “God helps those who help themselves”; “Doesn’t God want us to be happy?” and, “A loving God wouldn’t allow the destruction caused by the hurricane”.

II. Give Accurate Instruction

A. Know the meaning of important Bible words and concepts. For example, the meaning of biblical “love” is much different than it is generally understood by the secular world. The biblical term “joy” is misunderstood by many to mean “happiness”. When the bible talks about “suffering”, it often leads to character building whereas the world looks at “suffering” as something to be avoided at all cost. Biblical “hope” is much different than the worldly interpretation of “wishful thinking”. Other words that often need to be defined or re-defined are justification, sanctification, temptation, reckon or consider, sorrow (biblical or worldly), confess, grace, forgiveness, fornication, adultery, faith, idolatry, guilt, humility, and pride. Don’t assume that the person(s) that you are discipling or counseling are familiar with biblical terminology that differs from colloquial use.

B. Passages must be understood properly within their context. In a flurry to find verses that support what we are teaching, we sometimes invite verses that appear to support our instruction, but address issues other than the one in the counselee’s life.

For example, people sometimes need to be encouraged that the Lord is always with us. And it is good to remember that when we gather with other believers to pray, He is. However, if we are tempted to use Matt. 18:20, "*whenever two or more are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst.*" we should be reminded that the passage begins in Matt. 18:15, "*If your brother sins.....*" and goes on to give instruction on church discipline. A more appropriate passage would be Matt. 28:20, "*and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*"

III. Give Appropriate Instruction

- A. Tailor your instruction to focus on the counselee's problems. All of us have our favorite passages that are true, profound, and have widespread application. But these may not be specific enough to address the core problem(s) so use a scalpel and not a hand saw to pick scriptures that are appropriate and clearly address the problem(s).
- B. The instruction should be appropriate to the counselee's spiritual condition. Is he:
 - 1. Saved or unsaved? Does he need the Gospel?
 - 2. A babe or mature in Christ? (Heb. 5:12) "*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food.*" *ESV*
 - 3. Rebellious, weak, or faint-hearted (1 Thess. 5:14)
- C. The instruction should be tailored to the counselee's learning style (visual/pictures and videos, auditory tapes, reading, role-playing, discussion, etc.)

Assigning Homework

Biblical Foundations

- A. Helps the counselee take responsibility for his/her part in the change process. *Ephesians 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."*
- B. Develops a practical system to help the counselee to be both a knower and doer of the word. *James 1:22 "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

C. Recognizes that talk alone robs people of the **hope available in God and His Word**. *Matt 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

D. Continues the application of biblical truth between sessions.

1. Applications are often best if they have both elements of "put off" and "put on".

2. Example: Romans 6:13 *"Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."*

3. Colossians 3:5-11 is a list of "do nots". Colossians 3:12-17 is a list of "to dos" instead.

4. Help your counselee come face to face in God's word with what He says that they are **TO KNOW, TO DO, AND NOT DO**. This is taking truth home with them.

E. Homework uncovers additional counseling problems and may reveal who does and doesn't want to change.

- The more the counselee sees God's truth in God's word, the more he will understand that the call on his life to change and grow is not from you but from the Sovereign Lord.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT EXERCISE

Case Study # 1: Steve and Sarah have been married 12 years and have come to you for biblical counseling because their pastor told them they should get help with their marriage. Sarah says Steve doesn't talk to her when he gets home from work and just eats dinner and watches TV until bedtime. She says he's a good provider. She longs for the companionship that they used to share, where they talked a lot and did fun things. Steve says Sarah nags him and is not very interested in sex anymore and just doesn't understand why their marriage seems to be going downhill.

Case Study #2: Bill and Susan have been married 12 years and Bill found out about 6 months ago that Susan had an affair 4 years ago with a salesman at the company she works for. Susan insists that the affair is over, the salesman has moved to another company, and she seems to have genuinely repented for the adultery. Bill wants to forgive her and thinks he has, but he has recurring suspicions and feels that he can't ever trust her again. Their marriage has grown cold and both of them are at a loss on how to completely reconcile.