

Intermediate Biblical Counseling Training 201
Class One – Review of Biblical Counseling 101
March 18, 2018

I. Case Study (7-8 minutes, then discuss)

A. For women –

“Jenny” is a 31 year old woman in your ladies small group Bible study with two young kids. You have known her for about 5-6 months. She often prays about the lack of closeness in her marriage. She doesn’t badmouth her husband, but when you see her eyes, there is sadness / loneliness. You have often prayed privately for her over the past three months. The Lord also seems to bring her to mind every so often – even when you weren’t thinking about her. Might He be “calling” you into a biblical counseling type of relationship? Assuming for now that He is, list five things you would do to begin.

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

B. For men –

“Brian” is about 40 and you have gotten to know him casually for 3-4 years at a variety of events. You both sat at the same table at the Missions Banquet, your wife and he and his wife were both in the same marriage Learning Center class. One spring, your 10 year old sons were on the same soccer team. You have seen him a few times at high school football games you attended because your wife is a teacher. You get an email from the counseling office one day which asks if you’d be open to counseling a guy in the church with recurrent anger problems. The email says he has three kids in elementary, middle and high school and is a sincere believer. After praying, you tell John that you want to say “no” but think God wants you to say “yes.” You tell him it feels like a reach because even though you have had to handle your own anger and you know your way around the scripture a bit, you don’t feel knowledgeable enough – you’re not an expert. As you can guess by now, it turns out it is Brian. How do you start the counseling relationship?

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

II. Review Steps of Biblical Counseling

We might say there are two aspects to your relationship with a counselee: Input and output.

“Input” (Build Involvement, Data Gathering)

How you cultivate a relationship of trust, care and understanding for the person who opens a portion of their life to you and to God.

“Output” (Giving Hope, Interpreting Problems Biblically, Applicable Instruction, Homework)

Has to do with how you point them to Christ through how you relate with him, through God’s Word and through helping him cultivate a spiritual life. If their response to that process is to grow in faith, they will find hope (Matthew 12:21) and wisdom (James 1:5-6) and peace (Psalm 29:11) and direction (Romans 12:2). After all, counseling is typically a pursuit of such things, and God promises them to those who seek it from Him. (See also Psalm 19:7-12)

A. Build Involvement

1. This is the process by which we show ourselves available, committed, willing and able to help them examine and apply the scriptures to their situation at whatever level is necessary and appropriate (from informal to non-formal to formal) and by which the person agrees to pursue the common goal of pleasing Christ (2 Cor. 5:9) and becoming like Christ (Rom. 8:29). It is marked by “gaining passport,” listening, understanding their situation, and offering specific interaction (e.g., “Would you like to meet for 4-6 weeks to examine what God says about this in the scriptures?”), etc.
2. *“He comforts us that we may comfort others”* (2 Cor. 2:4). God ministers comfort to us so that we will move into the lives of others who need it.
3. *“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects”* (Eph. 4:15). It is as we speak truth with others that we help the whole Body grow in Christ.
4. *“Be willing to associate with people of low position”* (Rom. 12:16). We are not to determine our involvement with people by who is lovely to us. (cf., James 2:1-7)
5. *“First take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”* (Matthew 7:5) Our involvement will generally involve helping the other person see sin and encouraging them to turn from it to faith. In order to see clearly (and to be gentle), we need to be doing that with ourselves.
6. *“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perchance God may grant them repentance”* (2 Tim. 2:24-25). Our involvement with them needs to be characterized by humility and patience, realizing it is God’s battle.
7. Example for me when I was 30 – early in my counseling experience. One was when I counseled a 65 year old couple and one was when I counseled a Jewish couple.

B. Give Biblical Hope

1. This is a major part of biblical counseling, because the main challenge for believers, no matter the issue they face, is losing their focus on and confidence in the Lord and thereby falling away from His perfecting work in their lives (see Matt. 14:28-32).
2. *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope* (Romans 15:4). When people see they are not alone, and that the focus of the scriptures is not on beating them up for their sin, but pointing them to the redemption that is in Christ, it can encourage them to trust, to repent and to obey.
3. *We exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint because [of] the love of God* (Romans 5:3-5). When a counselee sees that their trials actually produce perseverance and good character, it is meant to help them to hold on – something good is coming from all this.
4. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Spirit* (Romans 15:13). Your ability to point them to the real hope that is in Christ (more than just quoting Rom. 8:28) opens the door for them to experience His joy and His peace, and that is better than giving them the circumstances they originally came to you hoping for.
5. One was when I counseled a dad whose teenaged son infuriated him. He could not find a way to make any impact on the son. The son was self-centered, had a bad attitude, complained non-stop. The dad felt as if his only options were to be non-stop mad or to withdraw and let his wife take over. Neither seemed to appease his Christian conscience (with good reason).

C. Gather Data

1. This is the core of the front half (*input*) of counseling. It involves listening, asking good questions, and knowing what kinds of things are important to listen for (which takes training and practice). It involves reading non-verbal clues (HALO data) as well as listening to their words. It also involves learning to listen “beneath their words.” It is where you learn what they think, how they think, how they feel, how they respond to life, and their convictions. It is here that we learn “empathy” – the ability to “feel into” what another is experiencing. It does not mean that we experience it *as if it was us* (sympathy), but we identify with the feelings the person experiences. It helps you connect with them, care for them, value them and be there for them. It involves open-ended questions, close-ended questions, and questions that are targeted at their age and life condition.
2. *He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.* (Prov. 18:13)
3. *Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.* (James 1:19)
4. *A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water; but a man of understanding draws it out.* (Proverbs 20:5)
5. One was when I counseled a 40-45 year old woman whose husband had left, whose disabled son limited her ability to work, and whose junior high son was beginning to rebel significantly. She was full of emotion and bouncing from one issue to the next issue to the next issue. I was full of emotion (about the husband leaving and about the plight she was in).

D. Identify Problem Biblically

1. This is the beginning of the *output* of counseling. It involves interpreting the data you have collected in biblical language and according to biblical convictions. This is important because we believe the Bible is sufficient for the non-organic problems we face, but in order to address the problems the way the Bible does, we must identify them as the Bible does. If we call it what people call it, we often start off with an unbiblical presupposition we cannot later overcome.
2. *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures which wage war in your members? ... You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so you may spend it on your motives (James 4:1-3).*
3. *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is – that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).*
4. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 16:25).*
5. Examples:
 - a. Women: You may be helping a woman who says that she is “so upset because her husband teases the children and her and will not stop.” How would you process this with her to get it to biblical language and why is that important?
 - b. Men: You may be helping a man who says that he is “not about to talk with his wife about how his discussion with the mortgage company went since she gets so mad about everything.”

E. Biblical Instruction

1. This is the most important part of what you give in the counseling session. It is the redirection of their thinking according to a more biblical direction. In one way of thinking, this is why they came to you as a biblical counselor. They could get someone without Christ to build involvement and gather data. But it is the unique way that you as a biblical counselor interpret their problem in biblical language and begin instructing (or reminding) them in biblical language that most sets us apart.
2. *For this reason, we constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but for what it really is: the word of God, which performs its work in you who believe (1 Thess 2:13).*
3. *Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And 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 (Matt. 7:24-27).*
4. *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of the deity dwells in bodily form and in Him you have been made complete. (Colossians 2:8-10)*
5. One man had his bags packed to move out but came in for a last ditch counseling meeting. He was a mild guy, skilled professionally but his wife was intimidating. We looked at 1 Peter 3:7 together and God humbled her to tears (she saw ‘weaker vessel’) and used the Word of God to cause him to take the loving lead.

F. Give Homework

1. This may be the single most important part of counseling out of the six parts. It is where they meet with God. It is where they carry the lion's share of the responsibility to grow and change. It is here that God most shows up and probably the one thing, when done well, where hope is built the most substantially.
2. *Be diligent ("Study" KJV) to present yourself a workman approved unto God, accurately handling the Word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)*
3. *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 (2 Tim. 3:16-17).*
4. One man whose wife left him was understandably beside himself with hurt, fear, guilt and frustration. He felt very wronged, very concerned for the kids. He went to a different church but had been at FBC for a variety of community events, and always heard that it was a church centered on the scriptures. He asked us to help him. His biblical counselor helped him look to the Lord, look to the scriptures. He grew so much that he asked his pastor if he could begin using his homework to teach a class to men, and they let him. The class that was 15-18 at first grew to almost 40 and he said that it enlivened the group so much that the assistant pastor who observed said, "Boy, you are really good at this." He laughed and said, "No, not really. I'm learning these things one week ahead of the men to save my own life and I am just sharing what God is showing me in the scriptures."

III. **Workshop**

Bill and Susan have been married 12 years and Bill found out that about 6 months ago that Susan had an affair 3 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 her 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, so has been monitoring her email and phone traffic, and lets her know that he is doing this. Their marriage has grown cold and both of them are at a loss at how to completely reconcile.

What questions/statements would you make for each of the six steps?

Sam and Beverly have been married almost 40 years and have raised two daughters and one son. They have devoted their time to their children and their activities, even to the exclusion of their time together. They have always sent their children to Christian schools, even when it stretched their budget, and now the youngest is just graduating from college and is involved with a man, although he is not a Christian, which worries Beverly. Sam says that the kids have to make their own decisions since they are adults and that they have done their job in “bringing them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord”. He would like to start relaxing and longs for a time when he and Beverly can take vacations and recapture the romance that they once had before children. Beverly feels that they should take a more active role in discipling their children even when they are outside the home, and this has caused friction between she and Sam. Their arguments about this have become more frequent and Sam has accused Beverly of valuing the kids more than him.

If you are called to counsel Sam and Beverly, what questions/comments would you make for each of the six steps. How would you address the problem of a “kid centric” home, and what scriptures and other resources would you suggest for both of them.

IV. Homework

- A. **PRACTICAL:** This week, pray for an opportunity and **look for it** where you can in an informal or non-formal way **follow these steps with someone**. It may be a friend from work or study group. It may be someone you take the class with. It might be your spouse or one of your kids. As a **last ditch effort**, if absolutely nothing else is available, take a problem in your own life and attempt to do this with yourself. [Believe me, this is not the same and is far less beneficial than with another person.] Keep it simple. Do not try to be sophisticated with it. **I will ask the class next week what they gained from the experience (without names or identifying information).**
- B. **LEARNING:** I may send you an article this coming week by email to ask you to read it and share 1-2 highlights with your table mates..
- C. **BEING TRANSFORMED:** Memorize Romans 15:4. *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*
(I will ask you to share it with your tablemate next time.)