

Life on Life: Personal Ministry 201
January-May, 2021

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Life on Life: The Art of Personal Ministry (201)
Class Three – January 17, 2021
Six Steps of Personal Ministry

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us:
We beg you on Christ's behalf – be reconciled to God. **2 Cor. 5:20***

I. Overview of Personal Ministry

You were able to see this process acted out in front of your eyes the last two weeks of the fall semester with the live counseling video. This is a more detailed explanation of those six steps.

A. Build Involvement

1. This is how we show ourselves available, committed, willing and able to help them examine their lives and apply the scriptures (from informal to formal). It is characterized by things like listening, understanding their situation, and offering what you can offer (e.g., "Would you like to get together to talk about that issue?").
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. Part of involvement.
3. *"Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects"* (Eph. 4:15). As we build involvement, we earn the right to speak truth with others, such that we can 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 trusting and following the Lord. To do that humbly, we need to do it with ourselves, too.
6. *"The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but 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. It is God's battle.

B. Give Biblical Hope

1. This is a major part of biblical counseling. 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, and it is meant to help them to hold on, it encourages them "something good is coming from all this."

4. *Now the God of hope fill you will 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 dad whose teenaged son infuriated him 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 his only options were to be non-stop mad or to withdraw and let his wife take over. Neither seemed right to him (with good reason). His friend who counseled him helped him articulate to God (and to himself) that he really didn't want to keep sinning by angry outburst or by abdicating his role, and he didn't know how to do anything else. His friend encouraged him to believe the Lord wanted to meet him right there in his ignorance and weakness, and it encouraged him to hope on the Lord and to be open to Him. The Lord did that very thing within 4-5 weeks.

C. Gather Data

1. This is the core of the front half 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 hear, 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)

D. Identify Problem Biblically

1. This is the beginning of the *output* of counseling. It involves interpreting 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 we must identify them as the Bible does. If we call it what society calls it, we often start off with an unbiblical presupposition we cannot later overcome (e.g., disease of alcoholism, affair).
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).

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 Well-Targeted Homework

1. This 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. Discussion

- A. What do you think you need to learn about “building involvement” with people?

- B. Explain how giving hope can be instrumental in providing biblical counsel.

- C. What situations in your own life have you found that “defining problems biblically” enabled you work on the issue with the Lord’s help?

- D. Discuss amongst yourselves Romans 15:4-6. What does it mean, and how does it contribute to the idea that the Bible provides what we need?

IV. Homework

Memorize 2 Cor. 5:20

Memorize in order the six steps of Personal Ministry

V. Sample Counseling Cases for Class Discussion

- A. Your friend, Amber, approaches you for some help. She is from an FBC attending family you know from community group. Over lunch, Amber tells you that her husband is a workaholic and constantly consumed at home with work email, work tasks, and other work responsibilities. She feels that his work has become his love and he doesn’t really have time for her. For the first year, she tried to talk to him about it, but in the last two years she has given up on talking to him anymore. She says that she has decided to keep believes that her husband has abandoned her emotionally and that her marriage is no longer fulfilling. She says she has fallen out of love with her husband. She ends her summary of the situation by saying that she never wanted to get a divorce, but she sees that as the only end to this terminally distant relationship.
 - 1. What do you need to consider in regard to building involvement as you meet with your friend?
 - 2. What are some elements of data you would want to collect?
 - 3. What does Amber perceive as the problem?
 - 4. What would you consider as some of the problems in Biblical terms? There are likely some issues with the husband that need to be addressed. However, for discussion, only focus on Amber.
 - 5. What Biblical instruction should you give Amber?
 - 6. Amber needs hope, what hope can you give her?
 - 7. What homework can give to Amber for the next week until you two meet again for lunch?

B. "I'm a little discouraged in my faith because God hasn't taken away my pain." Your friend Ronnell has asked you to grab lunch. He asked you for help because he says that he is finding himself in a place of lost motivation. He got in a car accident 4 months ago that wasn't his fault. The accident has caused some continuous back pain and he finds that he can't do all the things he used to do. He used to enjoy cycling and running, but he can't do that anymore. You ask him about his emotional response to the accident and he describes that every time his back hurts, he is reminded about the frustration he feels toward the young 17 year old who hit his car and hurt him. As you talk to Ronnell, you feel his pain. When you ask Ronnell about his faith response to the accident he says, "I don't really know how to answer that. I still believe in God and the salvation I have in Christ. I don't really think my accident changed my faith. I have prayed for God to take away my pain, but that hasn't happened. Maybe I'm a little discouraged in my faith because God hasn't taken away my pain."

1. What do you need to consider in regard to building involvement as you meet with your friend?
2. What are some elements of data you would want to collect?
3. What would you consider as some of the problems in Biblical terms?
4. What Biblical instruction should you give Ronnell?
5. Ronnell is living a life of pain and he needs hope, what hope can you give him?
6. What homework can give to Ronnell for the next week until you two meet again for lunch?