

19. (Case Study) What strategy would you employ to see repentance, reconciliation, and restoration happen between Tim and Emily?

- **Overview**

- An Examination of Tim & Emily's Strategies
- The Only Viable Strategy: Going After The Heart
- The Process of Helping our Counselees Change
 - Introduction
 - Teaching: The Presentation of the Gospel & Confrontation of Sin
 - Reproof: Conviction
 - Correction: The Renewal of the Mind
 - Reconciliation & Restoration
 - Disciplined Training in Righteousness: Holy Spirit Driven Progressive Sanctification
- Summary

I. An Examination of Tim & Emily's Strategies

- A. In the case of Tim and Emily, we can see that they, whether they are aware of it or not, have implemented strategies to get what they want. Unfortunately, the strategies that they have naturally implemented have not been very effective, and some of them have been quite sinful. This is due to mankind's sinful flesh and sin nature.
1. Lundgaard "The Pleasures of sin are the rewards it offers—rewards most people will sell their souls for."¹
 2. Tim and Emily have implemented and executed strategies in their relationship from the outset, even if they didn't know it. A review of the background information demonstrates it.
 - a. "Tim has always had a 'short fuse,' . . . He regularly 'loses it,' . . . their weeks are filled with arguments about everything. . ." These are all indicators that Tim has been regularly implementing the strategy of throwing a temper tantrum to get his way or when he doesn't get his way.
 - 1) Tim's strategy of losing his temper to get what he wants, or if he doesn't get what he wants, may have paid off in the short term, but has not paid off in the long term, as he'd hoped. His current strategy has brought his marriage to the brink of total collapse.
 - 2) Tim wants what he wants, and he has sinned to get it, or if he doesn't get it.

¹ Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within: Straight Talk about the Power and Defeat of Sin*, 30.

ACBC Counseling - Question 19

3. “Emily was always uncomfortable with Tim’s previous pattern of outbursts . . . In tears, she told Tim that something had to change . . . Emily said that she couldn’t take it anymore and wanted out of the marriage. She told him that if something didn’t change very quickly, she was going to leave.”
- B. The strategic approach biblical counselors should take in this case, and all counseling cases, is to focus on and address the counselees’ heart condition.
 1. Adams “The Christian counselor is to minister God’s Word in a life-transforming way, such that God Himself changes the counselee—from the heart outward. The counselor’s is a ministry not of reformation but of the Gospel, which is always a ministry of transformation. The change that he seeks must be *substantial*, in which God brings the counselee closer to Himself.”²
 - a. **Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it.*
 - b. **Psalms 51:5** *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*
 - c. **Psalms 58:3** *The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.*
 - d. Adams “Counselees must not be led down the same path of unrighteousness by those who should know better (counselors, pastors, etc.). God has appointed Christian counselors as guides to a change that is directed toward godliness. Such change (1) Stems from an inward change of heart, (2) Is achieved by the Holy Spirit, and (3) Is therefore entirely acceptable to God.”³

II. The Only Viable Strategy: Going After the Heart

- A. **Mark 8:36** *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*
- B. Adams “No matter how divergent their (different counseling philosophies) dogmas, all counselors—Christians included—agree that the aim of counseling is to *change* people. Change—whether in the counselee’s thinking, feeling, behavior, attitude, sensitivity, awareness, or understanding—is the goal of *all* counseling. Because change is central to counseling and therefore vitally important, the Christian counselor must come to a scriptural understanding of change in all of its dimensions—it’s nature, goals, and process. Otherwise he might as well forget about helping others change, and when comparing ideas with counselors of a humanistic bent, he will have nothing better to offer.”⁴
 1. Jay Adams teaches that substantial change is brought about by the ministry of the Word, is blessed by the Spirit of God, and it brings the counselee closer to the likeness of Christ.⁵

² Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 7.

³ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 8-9.

⁴ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, xi-xii.

⁵ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, xiv.

ACBC Counseling - Question 19

- C. Adams “When someone finds it difficult to get along with others, most agree that something’s got to change, and therefore counseling is in order. The Christian counselor agrees. But unlike his secular counterpart, the Christian considers a person’s inability to get along with God to be an even more basic cause for counseling. Whatever one’s other problem may be, there can be no change that is acceptable to God, and the long run, to the counselee, until fundamental, positive change toward God has occurred.”⁶
1. **Ezekiel 36:26-27** *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*
 2. **Psalm 51:10** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*
 3. **Jeremiah 24:7** *I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.*
- D. As biblical counselors, our ultimate goal and strategy, first and foremost, must be to go after our counselees’ hearts. Without the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of our counselees and Him subsequently taking up residence in our counselees’ hearts, any change that occurs would be temporary and superficial. It would only be simple behavior modification. Until our counselee puts their hope, trust, and faith in Christ for salvation, sincere heart change must be our goal.
1. Adams “. . . outward change may appear good to others, even to oneself, *when in God’s sight it is not*. If, for example, you stop robbing people, they still have their money, and you don’t go to jail: the results are socially good. But, if that outward change does not involve a change of heart toward God, it creates a self-satisfied person who, to that extent, has become a Pharisee. External changes that do not follow an internal change of the heart toward God always move a person further away from the Lord. So change that is socially good may be religiously evil.”⁷
 2. **2 Corinthians 5:9** *So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

III. The Process of Helping our Counselees Change

A. Introduction

1. **2 Timothy 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.*

⁶ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 3.

⁷ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 6.

- a. Adams “Within the process of edification itself are four steps: (1) Teaching, (2) Conviction, (3) Correction, and (4) Disciplined training in righteousness. Just as evangelism (and its goal, salvation) always must precede edification (and its goal, sanctification), these four steps must always occur in the same order. That may seem like a bold claim . . . when you try to imagine the four elements in some other order, you run into all sorts of trouble. That is just as unthinkable as reversing evangelism and edification. For instance, attempting the disciplined training of a counselee before teaching him what he must do, or before he is convicted that he should do it, or before he has corrected other erroneous and sinful ways, simply won’t work. Moreover, there can be no conviction apart from teaching—one is convicted over against a standard. Similarly, correction is impossible for one who doesn’t first know what is wrong.”⁸

B. Teaching: The Presentation of the Gospel & Confrontation of Sin

1. The first step to helping our counselees is to give them the Gospel. Jay Adams said, “People must first hear the gospel, believe, and be saved . . . You cannot build where there is no foundation.”⁹ The Word of God is the standard by which we measure the righteousness of our thoughts, words, and deeds. Therefore, to bring our counselees to a place of repentance, they must be confronted by their need for repentance. This can only be done by showing them their sinfulness, by measuring their deeds against Scripture.
 - a. The Gospel Presentation is intended to establish a foundation of biblical truth, principles, and concepts that will be built on throughout the counseling process, and the rest of their lives. We must first teach our counselees the truth of the Scripture, reframing their worldview to one that is biblical so that they can properly see their actual state in relation to God.
 - 1) A Gospel Presentation should help the counselee understand who God is, what Christ has done for us, how the Holy Spirit regenerates and indwells a new believer, and how hopeless and incapable an unrepentant sinner is to save themselves. A Gospel Presentation also helps address unbiblical beliefs held by the counselees while providing a defense for biblical teaching.
 - b. Adams “Since those whom you counsel profess faith in Christ, they should have some acquaintance with and allegiance to the Scriptures as the standard for faith and practice. A genuine commitment to Christ and His Word makes all the difference. You and your counselee start out with much in common, and you can be assured of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to help you in all you do. Early in counseling, it is often wise to stress the Bible as the standard and the Holy Spirit as the power for change.”¹⁰

⁸ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 13-14.

⁹ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 12.

¹⁰ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 66.

ACBC Counseling - Question 19

- c. The inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures are seriously important at this stage of the counseling process.
 - 1) Adams “Today the lines have been drawn between conservative, Bible-believing Christians and all others who purport to be Christians precisely on the grounds of their views of the Scriptures. Conservatives believe the Bible is the one inerrant, infallible rule of faith and practice; other do not. Everything rides on this point of contention: has God revealed Himself fully and infallibly in the Scriptures? If you believe the Scriptures are the inerrant, full revelation of God’s will to man, you will submit to them, whether you like what they tell you or not. If you believe in some lesser view of the Scriptures, you will bring them into submission to your reason, accepting what you wish and rejecting whatever does not please you. The minute you make yourself the judge of which parts of the Scripture are authoritative and which are not, you slide into a morass of subjectivism from which there is no escape. As soon as you add another standard for belief or behavior, you take away from biblical authority. Here adding is subtracting, and the bottom line is no authority, no touchstone for life.”¹¹

C. Reproof: Conviction

- 1. Adams “Conviction is the second step in the process of change because conviction follows an awareness of God’s requirements. . . In order to produce conviction, one may have to teach new material or reteach in new ways what the counselee has heard but has not yet converted from theory to practice.”¹²
 - a. Adams “In convicting us of sin, God is calling on us to recognize that the change we must make is not simply good advice; it is an imperative. He is telling us that what we have done is not merely inconvenient, counterproductive, or undesirable; it is flat out wrong and *must* be changed. Convictions, therefore, brings a dimension to change that is otherwise lost.”¹³
- 2. The relationship between guilt and conviction seems obvious when considering a court proceeding. When we think about our faith, these words tend to carry another meaning. However, they should contain the same meaning, but rather than man’s courts, it’s God’s judgment throne, and instead of man’s judgment, it’s His perfect judgment against His perfect standard.
 - a. Adams “The conviction of guilt may be apparent to all but the one who needs to repent. . . Until one is convinced of his wrongdoing, he cannot repent. . . Conviction, then, is proving that charges made against someone are true.”¹⁴

¹¹ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 20.

¹² Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 107.

¹³ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 109-110.

¹⁴ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 114-115.

ACBC Counseling - Question 19

- b. Adams “Sin is disobedience to the law of God. It is an offense against one’s Creator. . . In the analysis of a counselee’s problems, any construct or terminology that denies or minimizes lawbreaking will fail to bring conviction to the counselee.”¹⁵
- 3. We know that the Holy Spirit works inside our counselees, convicting them in their hearts, so, practically speaking, what is our responsibility as counselors in the counseling process concerning conviction?
 - a. Adams “Because the Scriptures do convict, you must deliberately use them for that purpose. That means learning how to use them skillfully. The deliberate, skillful use of the Scriptures in bringing conviction of sin to counselees involves at least the following factors: (1) Knowledge of what Scripture portions to use for what specific convicting purposes, (2) the ability to explain thoroughly any and all portions used, and (3) skill in showing counselees how the Holy Spirit intended to convict him of sin through a given passage.”¹⁶

D. Correction: The Renewal of the Mind

- 1. **Romans 12:2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- 2. Adams “Conviction is the unpleasant task whereby the counselor brings a biblical case against a counselee for his sin. But if the counselor served simply as the prosecuting attorney, his job would be miserable and disheartening. He uses the Word not only to knock counselees prostrate before the holy God they have offended, but also to put them back on their feet.”¹⁷
- 3. Repentance occurs only after they have received an understanding of the Gospel, and have seen their complete and utter failure to adhere to the perfect standard found within.
- 4. Adams “Repentance is a rethinking of one’s behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. It is coming to a different opinion or viewpoint, one so different that it calls for different thought patterns and a different lifestyle.”¹⁸
 - a. Adams “Repentance is more than regret, even godly regret. Although all true repentance involves regret for having offended God, that emotional side of the process is neither the sum total of repentance nor always manifest to others. In the Scriptures, the evidence of repentance is not regret, but ‘fruit’ resulting from and appropriate to repentance.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 120.

¹⁶ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 125-126.

¹⁷ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 139.

¹⁸ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 142.

¹⁹ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 143.

ACBC Counseling - Question 19

- b. **2 Corinthians 7:9-10** *As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*
- c. Repentance encompasses the following:²⁰
 - 1) Confessing of sin to God and to others (the outward expression of godly grief).
 - i. **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
 - ii. **James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*
 - iii. **Proverbs 28:13** *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*
 - 2) Seeking forgiveness (the first step taken to remedy the situation).
 - i. **Luke 17:3** *Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," you must forgive him*
 - ii. **Matthew 18:23-35** *Unforgiving Servant*
 - 3) Forsaking the sinful way (the next remedial step).
 - i. **Ephesians 4:22-24** *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*
 - 4) Beginning an alternate way of life that is pleasing to God (the last corrective step).
 - i. **Luke 9:23** *And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

²⁰ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 144.

5. **Reconciliation & Restoration**

- a. Adams “A frequently neglected but greatly important aspect of forgiveness and correction is the formal reinstatement or restoration of a repentant believer.”²¹
 - 1) **2 Corinthians 2:5-8** *Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.*
 - 2) **Matthew 5:23-26** *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*
- b. Adams “Upon the counselee’s repentance, the counselor should immediately give assurances that in his sight nothing stands between the repentant party and himself any longer and that he, for one, intends to act on that basis. Any other parties involved in the counseling session should be encouraged to make a similar reaffirmation of their love. The Counselor must do all he can to help the repentant sinner ‘stand up straight again.’ . . . The restoration of a believer is so important that unless it occurs the entire course of his future life can be adversely affected.”²²
 - 1) **2 Corinthians 5:18-20** *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

E. **Disciplined Training in Righteousness: Holy Spirit Driven Progressive Sanctification**

1. **Hebrews 12:5b-6** *My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*

²¹ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 160.

²² Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 165.

2. Why is this step important? My counselee has heard the gospel message, recommitted his life to Christ, earnestly acknowledged his sinfulness, confessed it, and sought forgiveness and reconciliation from both God and his wife, and it was received. By all accounts, it appears that everything that has brought them into the counseling room have resolved. There are more couples that need help. Why waste any more precious time in the counseling room?
- a. The typical Christian walk can be summed up in the story from Greek mythology of Sisyphus, continually pushing a stone uphill for eternity, only to have it roll back down again, never seeming to make any progress. Speaking about this continual up and down struggle, Adams saying, “What is the problem? Of course, stunted sanctification can have numerous causes. But a principle problem is a lack of ‘disciplined training in righteousness.’”²³
 - b. The righteousness we are talking about is not a works-based righteousness, like the Pharisees, but a righteousness that flows from a regenerated heart, changed by the Holy Spirit, producing His fruit for the glory of God. It’s a sincere desire to deny oneself, to take up his cross daily, and to follow Christ.²⁴
 - 1) **Ephesians 4:11-14** *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*
 - 2) **Hebrews 5:11-14** *About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*
 - 3) **Ephesians 4:17-32** *Put off / Put On Principle*
 - 4) **John 1:14** *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

²³ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 172.

²⁴ Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*, 177.

IV. **Summary**

A. How do you write this question?

1. Our strategy as Biblical counselors is to go after our counselees heart. Our main objective is to give them the gospel and to usher them into a saving relationship with Christ. Without this, any counsel we provide teaches our counselees to trust in themselves for strength and denies our need for Christ. We accomplish this by giving them the Gospel.
2. Once they have heard the Gospel, we can confront their sin issues. In this case, Tim's lack of self-control, selfishness, and sinful anger. This is accomplished by teaching him what the Bible says about these areas and contrasting that with how he has behaved. Remember to allow the Word of God to do the lion's share of convicting our counselees.
3. Confession and forgiveness of sin is the next step. Once they are able to see truth, that they have sinned against God and any other individual, they can repent and seek forgiveness and reconciliation for their sins.
4. Next, we use the Scriptures to show them that they are no longer slaves to their sinful nature, that they are a new creation. As such, they are to deny their sinful flesh, and it's desires, and to put off their old manner of life, and to put on righteousness.
5. Finally, before you graduate the counselee, you need to establish a pattern of disciplined training in righteousness. This takes some time to develop, but lasting change needs to take hold and become the norm. This involves a culture of self-denial, continual submission to the law of God, and the presence of spiritual fruit in their lives.

V. **Suggested Reading**

- A. **Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within: Straight Talk about the Power and Defeat of Sin.***
- B. **Jay Adams, *How To Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process.***