



A SUMMARY OF THE COUNSELLING PROCESS

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(student notes)

Because of the expanse of time between the first week of class and this, the fifth week of class, it's necessary to start with a short review of what we learned during the first week of class under the questions, *Why biblical counselling?*, *What is biblical counselling?*, and *How does one do biblical counselling?*

Why *Biblical* Counselling?

The motto of the GSM Counselling Class:

We believe that a sufficient *God* has given us a sufficient *Christ*, a sufficient *Holy Spirit*, and a sufficient *Bible*: we will live out our confidence in them as we strive to grow in Christ and as we help others deal with life's deepest and most difficult emotional and spiritual problems.

In biblical counselling, all of the following should be clearly biblical:

- the attitude of the counsellor
- the definition of the problem
- the solution offered
- the means of motivating the counselee
- the process of implementation

What Is Biblical Counselling?

Definition:

Biblical counselling is using the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to God's people.

Expanded:

Biblical counselling applies the great theological truths, commands, and promises of the Bible to the problems of daily life so that people change more and more into conformity to the character of Christ, and thus live more

and more for His glory in the wisdom, righteousness, peace, stability, and strength of godly living.

Seven Theological Foundations of Biblical Counselling

- 1) The gospel is the foundation of biblical change.

Colossians 2:6. *Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him ...*

- 2) Change is always possible for believers.

Philippians 1:6. *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- 3) The word of God applied by the Spirit of God is the primary tool for change.

John 17:17. *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

Four ways to use the word of God in counseling:

2 Timothy 3:16. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.*

- 4) The *heart* is the place where real, long-lasting change takes place.

In Scripture, the *heart* is the place you think, consider, imagine, analyse, evaluate, feel, decide, and choose. The heart is *the mission control center of life*, the real you on the inside, your inner man.

Godliness starts there, in your minute-by-minute thinking:

Mark 7:21-22. *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.*

Romans 12:2. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...*

2 Corinthians 10:5. *... we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ ...*

5) God's plan for practical daily change is *put off/be renewed/put on*.

Put off:

Ephesians 4:22-24. ... *in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self...*

Five components of putting off *summarised*:

1. Identify your sin as sin.
2. Acknowledge personal responsibility for your sin.
3. Be willing to change.
4. Stop doing the sin (true repentance).
5. Organise your life in order to make it hard to do the sin again.

Be renewed:

Ephesians 4:23. ... *be renewed in the spirit of your mind ...*

To deal with sin, there must be a thorough-going reorientation of your thinking. There must be a change in the inner you—in the evaluating, analysing, desiring, and choosing part of you.

Put on:

Ephesians 4:24. *Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

God's *replacement* plan summed up:

Romans 12:21. *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Jay Adams:

There must be an equal and opposite, positive effort to put on new biblical ways in the place of the old ones discarded. (How to Help People Change, 172-73)

6) Sanctification is a joint, divine-human effort.

While regeneration, justification, conversion, and glorification are 100% the work of God, in contrast, *sanctification* is a joint effort between the

omnipotent God and frail, inept men and women—100% God's work and 100% man's work at the same time.

Philippians 2:12-13. *So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

- 7) Sanctification is a corporate project, requiring church life and input from other believers.

Hebrews 10:24-25. *... and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

How Does One Do Biblical Counselling?

An outline of the counselling process:

(Wayne Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counselling*, chaps. 10-16):

1. Involvement—building a relationship that facilitates change
2. Inspiration—inspiring with biblical hope
3. Investigation— gathering information about the person and his situation
4. Interpretation—placing that information in a biblical framework
5. Instruction—biblical teaching for the purpose of change
6. Inducement—motivating the counselee to change
7. Implementation—working change into the person's daily thinking and acting
8. Integration—making sure that new habits are solidly in place

Three questions that can guide any counselling situation:

1. What is your problem?
2. What does *God* say about your problem?
3. What does God say *to do* about your problem?

➤ **What is your problem?**

What you are looking for:

1. Ordinary sins

An experienced biblical counselor knows how to eliminate the unusual as he seeks to discover the essential, ordinary factors that lie behind the counselee's difficulties.

[Insight is] *the ability to isolate and identify the usual.* (Adams, *Insight and Creativity*, 29)

...[W]hen in doubt, expect to find ordinary humanness just below the surface, in the form of fear, anger, guilt, shame, jealousy, wants, despair over loss, physical weaknesses and other problems that are present in every person. (Ed Welch, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*, 15)

2. Patterns

As you gather data, especially look for sinful *patterns* of thinking and acting. Individual incidents may be important, but most of the time, a person comes for counselling because of patterns of foolish or sinful behaviour.

3. Specific information

It is important for counselors to check out the facts in detail; they must not settle for generalizations. They must work with specific, concrete (and when important, numerical) details. (Adams, *Insight and Creativity*, 46)

Questions to ask the counselee:

General:

- How did you become a Christian? What is your relationship with Christ like?
- What's the problem?
- What have you done about the problem up to this point?
- How do you believe that I, the counsellor, can help you with this problem?

Factual:

- What did you do?
- When did you do it?
- Where did you do it?
- Who was there?
- How many times did you do it?

Heart motivations:

- What were you feeling or thinking when you did it?

- What did you want?

➤ What does *God* say about your problem?

Having gathered a mass of information, you must interpret the facts that you have been given by the counselee, placing each piece of the puzzle in its appropriate place so that a biblical picture comes into focus.

The process of interpretation will usually be a process of *reinterpretation*, since most people do not view their problem from a biblical perspective when they come for counselling.

The process:

1. Identify the counselee's main problems.
2. Label each problem with the appropriate biblical name.
3. Identify key passages that you want to use to address the problem.
4. Prioritise the problems, deciding in which order to address them.
5. Explain your interpretation of the problems to the counselee, correcting your understanding of the situation based on his further input.

➤ What Does God Say *To Do* About Your Problem?

Although different problems require different solutions, what God always wants the person to do about his or her problem is implement His *put off/be renewed in your mind/put on* (replacement) plan for dealing with sin.

Ephesians 4:22-24:

- 1) *Put off*—What does the counselee need to stop doing or thinking?
- 2) *Be renewed in your mind*—How do the counselee's theology, values, attitudes, desires, motivations, and expectations need to change?
- 3) *Put on*—What is the equal and opposite good the counselee needs to start thinking and doing?

Counselling usually involves teaching a counselee a Christ-focused application of the following four points:

- to stop covering his past sinful thoughts and actions by repenting and asking forgiveness for them
- to limit his exposure to tempting situations
- to take control of his minute-by-minute thinking

- to acknowledge, stop, and replace his sinful actions with their godly opposites