

## Counseling with the Gospel

### Week 10

**Purpose of the Lesson** - The purpose of this lesson is to train believers to approach counseling through the lens of the gospel, developing the character and wisdom necessary to lead others to Christ as the only true source of change and hope.

Counseling is not merely about addressing problems; it is about addressing the heart. While people seek help for a wide range of struggles (relational conflict, anxiety, guilt, fear, or discouragement), Scripture makes clear that beneath these issues lies a deeper, universal problem: sin. If we misdiagnose the root problem, we will inevitably offer insufficient solutions. Biblical counseling, therefore, must begin where God begins, with a right understanding of man's condition before Him. Only when we see sin clearly can we rightly understand the necessity and sufficiency of the gospel. True and lasting change is not found in self-esteem or self-effort, but in repentance, faith, and a restored relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### I. Man's greatest problem is \_\_\_\_\_.

A. What are some of the issues that people need help with in counseling?

B. What kind of problems in a person's life are not a result of personal sin?

1. **Note:** Aside from organic issues that people can have that can produce mental instability, depression, and many other health complications, sin is the reason for the great many problems we all face.

C. What is sin? – \_\_\_\_\_

1. Scripture

- a. **1 John 3:4** — <sup>4</sup> *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.*
- b. **James 4:17** — <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*
- c. **1 John 5:17** — <sup>17</sup> *All unrighteousness is sin...*
- d. **Romans 14:23** — <sup>23</sup> *...for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

2. Sin is ultimately rebellion against the things of God. It is purposely and willingly disobeying God, and all sin is rooted in the soil of pride and selfishness.

D. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve lived in the paradise of God. What is the only thing that could have caused their paradise to be disrupted (Gen. 2:16-17)?

E. and they had no problems because there was no sin.

1. **In Genesis 6, mans sinfulness caused God to bring judgment upon the world.**
2. **In Genesis 18, mans sinfulness caused God to bring judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah**
3. Throughout the OT and NT, man's problem has always been a sin problem. A problem of rebelling against God.

F. Modern psychology has promoted low self-esteem as one of the greatest problems people have. They say that there are no "bad people", only people who think badly of themselves. Many in psychology teach that low self-esteem is a man's problem. That if a man thinks well enough of himself, he will be successful and do what is right.

1. In an article in Time Magazine by Charles Krauthammer entitled, “Education: Doing Bad and Feeling Good,” the study showed that on a standardized math test given to 13-year-olds in six countries, Koreans scored the highest on the tests and Americans the worst. What stood out was that when students from each country were asked if they were good at math, only 23% of Koreans said they were good at math, and 68% of Americans agreed that they were.<sup>1</sup>
    - a. What stands out to you from that article?
    - b. How can this also relate to man morally?
  2. Morally our culture is in the same boat – In a survey conducted in 1940, 11 percent of women and 20 percent of men agreed with the statement, “I am an important person.” In the 1990s, those figures jumped to 66 percent of women and 62 percent of men.<sup>2</sup>
  3. Ninety percent of people surveyed in a Gallup Poll say their own sense of self-esteem is robust and healthy. Incredibly, while the moral fabric of society is unraveling, self-esteem is thriving. (Adler et al., “Terrific,” 50.)<sup>3</sup>
  4. People today are told to “believe in yourself, trust in your ability! Your problem is you need to love yourself more”. This has come into the Churches as the Church has adopted the false teachings of secular Psychology over the Scriptures.
- G. Question: is there anywhere in the Bible we are taught to trust in ourselves?**
1. **Proverbs 28:26** — <sup>26</sup> *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.*
  2. **Instead of trusting in self, what are we called to do (Proverbs 3:5-6)?**
    - a. **Proverbs 3:5–6** — **5;** *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6; In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
- H.** Does God call man to feel good about themselves, or does He want people to recognize their utter helplessness and sin?
- I.** Often people are completely unaware of their root problem of sin and need of the Gospel.
1. **Who I was before I was saved:**
    - a. I was born as a sinner (Romans 5:12).
    - b. I was unrighteous (Romans 3:10).
    - c. I was without any goodness on my own (Romans 3:12).
    - d. I was unable to please God (Romans 8:7-8).
    - e. I was a slave to sin (John 8:34).
    - f. I was a child of the devil (John 8:44).
    - g. I was dead in my sins (Ephesians 2:1).
    - h. I was condemned as a sinner (John 3:18).
    - i. I was under God’s wrath (John 8:36).
    - j. I was an enemy of God (Romans 5:10).
    - k. I was without any hope (Ephesians 2:12).
  2. Should that biblical description encourage self-esteem or humility and repentance?

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “Education: Doing Bad and Feeling Good,” Time (5 February 1990): 70.

<sup>2</sup> Cheryl Russell, “Predictions for the Baby Boom,” *The Boomer Report* (15 September 1993): 4.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *MacArthur Pastor’s Library on Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 65.

## II. The Gospel Is Man's Hope

### A. Genesis 3:6-13

1. What were some consequences that resulted from their sin in the garden? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is it essential to understand at the root of man's problems in life is sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### B. If sin is man's greatest problem, what is man's greatest need (John 3:16-17)? \_\_\_\_\_

1. When Adam and Eve were ashamed and hiding in the garden, did they realize redemption was their greatest need?
2. How did Adam and Eve seek to cover their nakedness (shame/guilt)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the "fig leaves" that man tries to use today to cover their shame and guilt? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What did God do to cover their nakedness according to Genesis 3:21? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. For God to give them coats of skin, what had to happen? What does this picture?
6. What is the greatest thing that we can offer someone when we counsel with them?
7. If man will not listen to truth, they will be instructed by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. What kind of emotional, mental, and physical struggles do you think the prodigal son had when he was in the "far country"?
  - b. What was the greatest need the prodigal son had? \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Man's great deception.

1. Is it possible for someone to think they are saved but are really lost?
2. What will happen to someone who is trying to live the Christian life who thinks they are saved, but who are actually not saved?
3. What is it possible that a Biblical counselor can give all kinds of biblical guidance to someone who is actually not a true believer?
4. What can be a great danger if someone hears all the right truth, thinks they are saved, but gets disillusioned with the Christian's life because they could just never seem to understand the Bible, desire to read, pray, love God, love others, etc.

## III. Counseling with the Gospel

- ### A. If you had to meet with someone impromptu this week who was reaching out to you for help, and they were struggle with some issues that were very intense. You have never seen clear evidence that they are a Christian, but the person thinks they are a "Christian". The person will be focused on the problem they are facing, but what should you focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

### B. How to lay the foundation of salvation in your counseling session.

1. Before you meet with them make sure you spend time in prayer.

2. Often, you may not know if the person is truly saved or not. That is something that God, through His Word, will have to reveal to them. The Biblical Counselor will seek to hold the mirror of God's Word up to them and allow it to reveal their true condition.
3. When you meet with them, begin with questions such as:
  - a. What has brought you to meet with me today?
  - b. What has been on your heart?
  - c. What are some of the struggles you feel you have been facing?
4. NOTE: Sometimes they will dump on you, other times they will be slow to open up; be patient and listen to them thoroughly.
5. **As you are listening to them, what are key elements you should be listening for that may reveal they are saved or not?**
6. If the person is focused on their problem, but you sense they may not fully understand the Gospel and may not be saved, how can you transition from their problem to the Gospel?
  - a. **Key transition:** "You have shared a lot of things that have been on your heart, and those will all need to really the most important step to take is salvation; tell me when did you truly repent of your sins, turn from your sins, fully surrender your life to Jesus Christ – and began to see a lasting change in your life?"
  - b. "Do you think it could be possible that the reason you are struggling could be that your relationship with God is not where it needs to be? If our vertical life is not right with God, how do you think that can affect our horizontal relationships with people and problems?"
  - c. What is a good transitional question to ask to see if they are truly saved or not? \_\_\_\_\_

**C. How to respond when the person is not sure of their salvation, or you are not sure of their salvation due to a lack of real evidence in their life.**

**1. Key passages & questions to reveal their true spiritual condition.**

- a. **Matthew 7:21–23** — <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"
- b. What truth is Jesus teaching in verse 21?
- c. According to Jesus, is it possible to call upon the Lord and not be saved?
- d. Who did Jesus say will enter heaven? \_\_\_\_\_

- e. What do you learn from Jesus in verses 17-20?
- i. **Matthew 7:17–20** — <sup>17</sup> *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*
  - ii. **Question: What do the fruits of your life say about you?**
    - a) Do the fruits/actions of your life evidence you are a true genuine follower of Jesus Christ?
    - b) If the fruits of your life do not evidence you are a true believer, what should you do?
    - c) Is Jesus more concerned with a prayer you prayed or the lasting fruit of your life?
- f. **What do you learn from the follower verses?**
- i. **1 John 2:3–5** — <sup>3</sup> *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup> But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.*
  - ii. Is your life defined by obedience to God or disobedience to God?
  - iii. If it is defined by disobedience, what does that reveal about your salvation?
- g. **Luke 14:25–33** — <sup>25</sup> *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—<sup>29</sup> lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. <sup>33</sup> So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*
- i. In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus taught that in order to be a true disciple (a true Christian), we must be willing to:
    - a) Love Jesus more than our \_\_\_\_\_(v.26).
    - b) Love Jesus more than our own \_\_\_\_\_(v.27).
    - c) Love Jesus more than our \_\_\_\_\_(v.33).

**D. When the person recognizes they need Christ, walk them through the Gospel.**

1. Before a person will ever truly get saved, what do they have to first realize about themselves?
2. What is a verse that defines what sin is? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is a verse that tells us that we have all sinned? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is a verse that describes what the consequence of sin is? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Name a verse in the Bible that tell us what the payment for sin is: \_\_\_\_\_
- E. The following outlines 3 necessary truths that must be found in a sinner's life in order for them to be saved, they must believe, repent, and confess Christ as Lord. Give a verse to support each.
1. You must Believe - \_\_\_\_\_
  2. You must Repent of your sins - \_\_\_\_\_
  3. You must confess Christ as your Savior & Lord - \_\_\_\_\_

### Conclusion

Biblical counseling is ultimately a gospel ministry. It aims not merely to relieve symptoms but to lead people to Christ, the only true source of hope and transformation. While practical wisdom and biblical instruction are important, they must always be anchored in the message of salvation. Apart from Christ, there can be no lasting change; but in Christ, there is forgiveness, new life, and power to walk in obedience. As counselors, we are called to faithfully point others to Christ. Through prayer, patience, and truth grounded in the Word, the biblical counselor trusts that God alone can open hearts and bring about genuine change. Our goal is not simply to help people feel better, but to see them reconciled to God and growing in Christlikeness.

### Bibliography

- Krauthammer, Charles. "Education: Doing Bad and Feeling Good." *Time*, February 5, 1990.
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