

# Resources for Life Change

(Resources are available in the Grace Resource Center):

The Grace Resource Center has many new resources available for you. From Bibles, to parenting books, to marriage and family books, to books on issues in Biblical Counseling, to children's books, to books about Christian living and theology, the Resource Center provides a whole variety of very helpful resources for you. Stop by the Resource Center today, before and after all church services.

**Leaving Your Family Behind (related to military persons):** As you face deployment, you need more than sympathy and gratitude. You need hope and guidance for yourself and those you love. Jesus Christ experienced the pain of separation when he left heaven for earth, and he understands what you are facing. You can trust him to help in your time of need. Rob Green shares timely biblical guidance for the soon-to-be-deployed on trusting God's deliverance, cultivating a deep spiritual life now, and making the most of the time before you leave. His counsel will help to prepare you and your family for the challenges ahead.

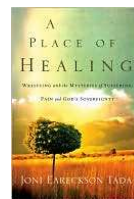


**Reuniting After Military Deployment:** Your excitement at the prospect of reunion is tempered with anxiety. You have heard the stories of divorce, discouragement, and depression. Will your account be any different? Rob Green assures you that successful reunification is possible because of the help found in Jesus Christ. Green offers practical advice for seeking to understand your spouse's struggles, reevaluating schedules and responsibilities, and using your new family time with purpose. By taking steps to intentionally transition out of "deployment mode" and back into the unity God has given you as husband and wife, you can rebuild a family that is stronger than ever.

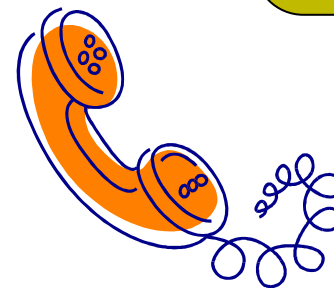
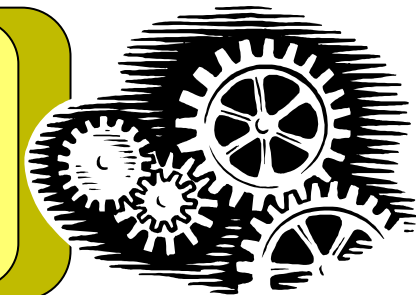
**When Crisis Hits:** When life falls apart, we feel deep confusion. Our emotions may shatter no matter how strong we have been. Our minds fill with unanswered and painful questions like the following: "Why me?" "What did I do to deserve this?" "Is there any hope for my future?" "Do I even have a future?" Jack Miller writes as a cancer survivor to others whose lives have fallen apart, and he offers the hope and peace that come from trusting in God for your future. Turning to Christ when crisis hits will fill your life with purpose and joy even in the toughest times.

**Praying For the Next Generation:** What kind of legacy do you want to leave for your children? Sally Michael encourages you to consider the spiritual inheritance you can give to the next generation through your faithful prayers. In this booklet, she equips you with a method for using Scripture to pray for your child.

**A Place of Healing, by Joni Eareckson Tada:** In this eloquent account of her current struggle with physical pain, Joni Eareckson Tada offers her perspective on divine healing, God's purposes, and what it means to live with joy. Over four decades ago, a diving accident left Joni a quadriplegic. Today, she faces a new battle: unrelenting pain. The ongoing urgency of this season in her life has caused Joni to return to foundational questions about suffering and God's will. A Place of Healing is not an ivory-tower treatise on suffering. It's an intimate look into the life of a mature woman of God. Whether readers are enduring physical pain, financial loss, or relational grief, Joni invites them to process their suffering with her. Together, they will navigate the distance between God's magnificent yes and heartbreaking no—and find new hope for thriving in-between.



## THE COG COMMUNITY OF GRACE Biblical Counseling Ministry Edition #7 — March 2012



### Tough Phone Calls and Evaluation Time

By Pastor Blake Shaw

The woman on the other end of the line verbally unloaded about you-me-us; the people who make up the church body here at Grace Bible Church. A professing believer herself, her short stint at Grace was tainted by an experience that left her indelibly bitter, angry, and with nothing good to say about the church. At the time she attended GBC, a loved one had passed away in a tragic accident and in the aftermath, as she struggled for months and years, a "lone voice" of someone supposedly in leadership at the time, had encouraged her to move on and to let her loved one go. As she battled anger at God, at life, and others, the same "lone voice" confronted her numerous times about her anger and told her she needed to change. So she did change. She moved on, out of the church and into a life of hopeless despair. Her thoughts about us as a church were poignant, powerful, and yes, they stung. My first thought as I heard a recount of this story were, "Certainly, this couldn't be true. Perhaps she simply thought the counsel was coming from a leader but it wasn't someone truly representative of us." At the same time I wondered if perhaps there was some truth tucked into the crevices of her venting statements. She spoke of the church being empty of "grace." She spoke of the church as being judgmental. She spoke of the church as filled with hypocrites who live one way during the week and look totally different on Sunday. Each statement spewed forth with a tinge of anger and bitterness. The attack was not at me personally but, well, it was at me. When the sheep are attacked it is a personal thing to the heart of the shepherd.

What do we do with this situation? What is your initial reaction to this woman's pronouncement about us? Would you take offense? Would you hear her out and ask more questions? Would you blow her off and think, "Ah yes, another person who loves their sin and hates truth so, of course, Grace is a bad place"?

This situation provides us moments where words in response don't come easy. You feel sad for what the person has gone through, yet there's a sense in which you want to take a stand for your church family. You know, possibly even from personal experience, that losing a loved one can be a very hard thing to walk through. You know that everyone responds differently to tragedy. You also know that not everyone says the right words in those awkward moments when one tries to comfort someone who is going through a time of sorrow or grief. You also know that it is true that life does continue and that as it continues there is a time to move on with living a responsible life. And you know there are times of great sorrow for believers, yet you also know that as believers we sorrow, but we sorrow as those who have hope. And you also know that there is much more to this situation than what is exclaimed from the other end of the phone line. You are tempted in numerous ways. Perhaps you are tempted to try to dole out a quick answer. Then you remind yourself of Proverbs 18:13 that for a person who gives an answer before he hears it,

it is folly and shame to him. So you want to avoid folly. You want to avoid flippantly tossing out an answer that you believe fits the situation, but you also know that to do so is potentially a shameful act. You also know that there are always two sides to every situation. Proverbs 18:17 tells us that one person's side of the story sounds good until the other side has a chance to question him. In other words, whenever there are two or more people involved in a conflict, if you only get one side of the story, it is prudent to hear the other side. Any temptation you face to think less of your church family has to be tempered by the wisdom of the Proverbs above. We know we can't undo the past. We also know that what happened 15 to 25 years ago happened prior to or before many who are currently at GBC were even a part of the church. There is a need for great discernment in situations such as these.

I'm not the kind of person who likes to let things like this slide. I know there is only so much that can be done about this incident that happened decades ago. Yet it is situations like this that drive me to ask questions and stimulate discussion so that we can perhaps avoid repeating history. Isn't that what we are supposed to do with history? If we don't learn from it, we are doomed to repeat it. So perhaps it is only appropriate that we take a look at some basic questions that you and I both need to think through. You ready? I'll give you a handful and let you start thinking about these issues.

1. What tragedy have you gone through in life?
2. How might God want to use that experience in your own life to prepare you to walk with someone else?
3. In light of the above incident, what do we do with suffering? When someone suffers how do we truly help?
4. How long should one grieve? The world says that there is a "grieving process" that all go through. Is that true?
5. How should our time of sorrow and grief differ from the world? Should it? Does it?
6. Is it okay for one to be angry at God?
7. What does "grace" look like in a practical way in helping a person (like the woman on the phone) who is in the midst of grief and sorrow?
8. Is there a time to "let go" and "move on" and if so, what does that look like?
9. How does one help a person who is in the clutches of anger, bitterness, or even hatred deal with it and find reconciliation?
10. Do you personally feel equipped to counsel someone who sees bitterness, anger, and hatred in their heart and sincerely wants to change?

**What follows are a number of testimonies from those who attended the Biblical Counseling Training conference in Lafayette, Indiana, in February. Last month we featured a handful of testimonies and so we offer several more.**

I want to express my deep appreciation for being able to attend Track 3 of the conference in Lafayette and thank the Biblical Counseling Leadership at Grace Bible Church for their gracious and generous invite. I find that the emphasis of each track is always centered on the Personhood of God, His Word, and the hearts of His people which reveal their true selves, sometimes godly and sometimes ungodly. The tracks have a progression and I have benefited and grown spiritually because of them, both personally and in my relationships with others. I'm on the path of learning more about biblical counseling and how God and His Word are sufficient to give us principles not only to live by but also provide the way to repent, change and live our lives for Him. This year, as in past years, I was taught much from each speaker and I couldn't pick a favorite--they're all gifted and so well prepared. One subject I learned about was *"Helping Those Who Parent Alone"* by Randy Patten and it touched my heart because I know women in that quagmire of struggle. Another meaningful one was *"The Role of the Holy Spirit in Counseling"* by Mark Dutton. He began with the indwelling of the Spirit at salvation and covered the many attributes of the Holy Spirit and how we, as counselors, can help people come to know Him through the Scriptures and all that He gives us as God's children. Some of those attributes are His comfort, power, strength, and ability to change--to be more like Christ. It was a trip to remember and to use--within myself and with others who seek help and change in their lives. I desire to be an instrument in His hands.

**Philippians 3:7-9a** *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him"*

The highlight for me of this year's counseling conference was hearing Brad Bigney from Grace Fellowship Church in Florence, KY talking about *"Passion for Christ – The Missing Ingredient in Our Fight Against Sin"*. The focus of the talk was the idea of being so totally satisfied by the goodness, beauty and holiness of God that you were ruined for desiring anything else.

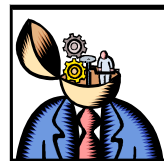
As for being "ruined!" Honestly...I felt **ruined** by his talk. I felt like my shriveled, wretched heart was being weighed in God's scales and found desperately wanting. I found myself crying out "Oh, God! Oh, God, have mercy on me – a sinner" and thinking "am I even saved, if I find so weak a response in my heart to so great a Savior and so precious a salvation?" I am so grateful that salvation is all of God and not of me!

So how do we eradicate sin? The sad fact is, sinful pleasures...are still pleasures. It is true that they never quite live up to the promises they offer; the pleasure is temporary and quickly replaced by feelings of guilt, shame and hunger for more. But at the time, they can still be pleasures. And therein is the power of sin that we find so hard to shake.

But how much greater is the power of God – who spoke the universe into being by His Word? How beautiful those wounds? How tender and undefiled is His love for us?

When we **properly** meditate on Who God is and what He has done for us, like the Apostle Paul we WILL say "I count all things loss in view of" (or compared to) "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord". The world's riches, its sinful pleasures, even the good pleasures that God designed for us to enjoy in this world become like rubbish. And not because they have no value, but because Christ and the value of knowing Christ is so much greater than anything and everything else! When the joy of knowing Christ and worshipping Him reaches full measure in our hearts and there is room for nothing else, then and only then will sin fail to draw us away from Him. **Be ruined for Christ!** Daily! Moment by moment **"until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ"** Eph 4:13

~Matthew



The conference was great in many ways. We enjoyed just being away from our busy schedules and just focusing on learning and diving into God's word. This was our 4th year going, and we decided to do track one again. It was great review and we were once again challenged by the content.

For me (Justine), one of the best evening topic options that I went to was on *Unfulfilled Longings*, taught by Brent Aucion's wife. I found it not only practical in my life personally, but also very practical in helping the young women in high school. I loved how she kept turning us back to Scripture, and reminding us that we won't be completely satisfied by anything in this world, only being with Christ in heaven will completely satisfy us. Such a good reminder for me as life gets so busy, I can get caught up in finding satisfaction in something here, but I can look forward to the day that I am completely satisfied in Christ, when I am with Him in Heaven.

For Justin, I was made aware of areas that I need growth in, such as giving hope for change, and also just being able to use Scripture to instruct. It's easy to just talk with someone about a sin in their lives, but harder to take the next step of instruction from God's Word. That requires a high level of familiarity with Scripture, and I was surprised and convicted that I would not be able to direct someone to a specific passage to address a given issue.

We sure hope to go again and be challenged in new ways!

~Justin & Justine

Hey Blake, wow, that Biblical Counseling Training Conference in Lafayette was amazing. I am praising God for the way He is working in my heart and life through going through these trainings. This year, I was convicted by one of the counseling sessions that we got to view. God allowed me to see myself in their conflict in a way that I had not been able to see before. Although, I had repented and confessed my sinful anger and disrespect toward Kelly years ago, I was seeing how my behavior and attitude back then could be used for harm in our children's lives. So, when I returned, I specifically confessed my sins to them and to Kelly and asked them to forgive me. I also expressed to them that I hoped that my lack of love and unity with their Dad had not harmed them or caused them to feel unsafe or unloved. I wanted them to know that how I had acted was not honoring to Jesus and was a poor representation of how He treats us. They so freely forgave and I am praying that God will even use this confession to stir in their hearts a desire to know and love Jesus more. We so need our Savior.

Another way that God used the teaching there was the session on sin...can't exactly remember by who, but he was talking about how just by being human (and inheriting our sin nature) we all have a natural tendency to react to our own sin being exposed by pointing at the other person...and I can't explain it, but when he did the hand motion of pointing at another person, I was convicted about how back during the first several years of our marriage, when we would have conflict, I never really really owned all of my sin when I would confess it, there was always deep inside my heart a feeling that he perfectly described when he was demonstrating how all humans act (shifting the blame to the other person). It was powerful because I could see my sin in a really clear way, but it was weird just because of the generic way it was addressed. Yet, it so specifically pierced my conscience. I am so thankful to our LORD for that. I also asked God and Kelly for forgiveness on that too.

Anyway, there were so many things that God used to show me things on His perspective on the local body here at GBC and in our family and in my walk with Him that I have difficulty putting it into words. I really have a desire for our body at Grace to really live our lives with one another...not hiding the sins we struggle with and not trying to hide the hurts we wrestle with and not being honest about the state of our family relationships/conflicts. I desire our body to live in genuine honesty with one another. You know, like **authentic people**. I believe that would be so freeing and healthy and powerful for the cause of the gospel, for our good, and for God's glory.

Also, I am very interested in the advocate ministry, so if you think you can use me in serving somehow in that, I am available. I am very excited to get this spiritual growth/Biblical counseling idea going in our church body/in the Gallatin Valley. I propose several things related to "Soul Care in the Church." I was challenged by Garrett Higbee's suggestion when I asked him how we could get the environment in our church to be more honest, transparent...uh...authentic. Actually, the first thing he told me was *"it starts with you"* (and he pointed at me). He said as we are authentic with people, it spreads and it is contagious. He challenged me to think about how I can help others move from "helloship to fellowship."

~Stacy

## Q: Pastor Blake, where is the counseling ministry at Grace headed?

A: As I stated last month, I love this question and it is one that needs to be answered with more space than provided here but we are taking a few issues of The COG to attempt to clarify this issue. Here's a recap of what I stated last month: First, we, as a church family, have to become truly committed to making disciples, not just overseas but right here in the Gallatin Valley. Secondly, those who attend church services at Grace on a regular basis should go through the membership class and truly commit to Grace as a church family. Thirdly, if you are a member of Grace you need to understand that you are expected to serve and grow because God expects you to serve and grow. If truth be told, a church of 1600 people should turn this valley upside down for Christ. Fourthly, if you are a believer in Christ you are to play some role in the biblical counseling ministry. I know all of the objections, but God's Word is very clear on this issue. Body life, as taught in the Word of God is very specific about what believers are to do. Fifthly, let me repeat one paragraph from last month: "The ideal picture is where every member of Grace Bible Church is involved in a discipleship relationship where they find encouragement, help, admonishment, accountability, etc., from those in their discipleship relationship. It is my personal belief that if every member were humbly submitted to another person or to others in the church body in discipleship relationships, no member of Grace would ever need "counseling" as we understand counseling. All I'm really talking about there is body life as presented in the pages of Scripture. Study out the concept of body life, the local church, and the 'one anothers' of the New Testament, and you will find that what I have stated is not too idealistic."

The next group of people that we want to discuss and consider in relation to where the counseling ministry is headed is "People in other churches" who need counseling.

We know several things about people, our community, and the counseling world. We know that living life in this sin-cursed, fallen world is very hard. We know that each of us are really not that much different from the person sitting next to us. We also know that the temptations that one faces are "common to man" so what one struggles with, there are many others who struggle with the same. We know that there are many struggling and hurting people all around us. We know that most people want help but help to most people does not usually mean the same thing as how God defines "help". We know that some people want to change but, reality is, most people resist change. In reality, many people are resistant to change into the person God created them to be. We also know that people, both inside and outside the church, are disciplined with a consumer-type mentality. Additionally, while some people really do want change, they usually want that change immediately, as opposed to patiently enduring day-in and day-out process of sanctification. We also know that people don't like the consequences of their bad choices. When it comes to "other churches" we also know that in the greater Bozeman area not every church is truly likeminded when it comes to the issues of counseling. Although there are numerous churches in the valley that have good people in the congregation, ones who have a genuine love for Jesus Christ, when it comes to the sufficiency and authority of God's Word in the counseling realm, many of these same churches compromise the most basic theological premise. In other words, their doctrinal statement reads one way, but in practice things seem to be different.

# Q&A

Our ultimate goal in relation to others churches is two fold: 1) That we would have a large group of churches who would all come together and truly embrace true biblical counseling. Praise God that several churches are on-board with this philosophy. 2) That many other pastors/leaders would take on the role of shepherding their flock, which includes counseling. Our goal is not to do the counseling for other pastors. Many pastors and leaders want to refer people in their congregation to an outside counselor, whether that is to some counseling entity in the community, or even to another church. There are several reasons for this: Some pastors do this because they are concerned that they don't have the ability to counsel tough cases. They feel ill-equipped. They have bought the lie that says, "We need specialists to counsel people." Still other pastors do this because they are lazy and don't want to do the work of counseling. They understand that counseling can be exhausting work and can be very costly. We certainly understand that it is much easier to refer a person with a difficult situation to a professional counselor or a church across town that offers counseling. Still other pastors don't believe it is their responsibility to counsel. They believe that their job is to prepare sermons, lead Bible studies, or to function like a CEO, but counseling is best left to someone outside of their office. There are other pastors in churches with great doctrinal statements but when it comes to counseling, they, their staff, and their congregation all believe that psychology is needed in order to provide true help to other people. All of these types of pastors are right here in the Bozeman area. So our goal is try to compel such shepherds to begin to counsel, to shepherd their people. If they need training, there is ample opportunity to be trained, and if we can be a part of that training, it would be a delight to do so. We are all too aware of the fact that some pastors will not want to be trained, for whatever reason. Clearly we know that the road ahead in this regard will be a long and arduous task.

Almost every week we are getting requests for counseling from people who are in other churches. Imagine, though, if we had ten churches, rather than just three, whose leaders and church body were all committed to true biblical counseling, working together to help others. It becomes a powerful force and a phenomenal testimony of Christ's power to change lives and to bring hope.

Our prayer is that we would see the whole group of conservative evangelical churches all make a commitment to practice true biblical counseling and come together to accomplish this. The process to get there is a huge undertaking. It is going to take time. By God's grace we'll possibly get there in the months and years ahead.

Next month we'll deal with the fourth category as it relates to where our counseling ministry is headed.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:** The Community of Grace Biblical Counseling Ministry and the editor of the monthly newsletter welcome letters from the readers. Letters may be edited if the editorial team deems it necessary to do so to fit the space allowed or due to unbiblical communication practices. We encourage the reader to write with edification in mind. If you have a question about counseling that you would like to ask for future publications feel free to submit those questions to Pastor Blake Shaw.