

# 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.

**1) 8/28: Unlocking God's Promise, by Pastor Bryan Hughes:** Have you ever wondered what God is doing in situations of life? Have you ever been confused about what He is accomplishing in your life? Why does God allow certain things to happen? Is there a passage of Scripture that addresses these questions specifically? These are just a few of the questions Pastor Bryan addresses in his first published book, *8/28: Unlocking God's Promise*. John MacArthur writes, "Romans 8:28 is one of the best-loved and most important promises in Scripture. Bryan Hughes does a wonderful job of unpacking the implications of that promise. This book—like the promise it expounds—is a real treasure."

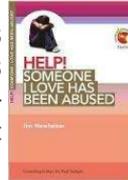


**2) Free Article: Love Speaks Many Languages Fluently, (by David Powlison):** You've probably heard of the Love Language craze that has swept through the American church and possibly you have even read the best selling book by Gary Chapman titled, "The Five Love Languages." This article critiques Gary Chapman's book, The Five Love Languages. Chapman gives advice on improving marriages by having spouses identify and respond to each other's preferred love language, but this actually centers on the self-centered nature of the individual desiring to change (manipulate?) the spouse's behavior. Powlison offers another alternative: "Jesus puts things in a different light: The love of Christ speaks a 'love language'—mercy to hellishly self-centered people..."

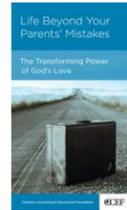


**3) What To Do When Your Marriage Goes Sour, (by Jay Adams):** An excellent pamphlet that provides a very challenging, encouraging, and helpful message for any married couple who have seen their marriage go sour. It's only a pamphlet but a great resource to help sort through love, commitment, problems in marriage, etc.

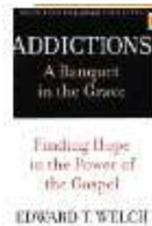
**4) HELP! Someone I Know Has Been Abused, (by Jim Newheiser):** Abuse is a growing problem. It is estimated that one in four women has been the victim of domestic violence and there is a growing awareness that men are often victims too. Those who have been abused need help, and the all-sufficient Word of God provides the wisdom we need to offer comfort, practical aid, and guidance to those who are hurting. This booklet does not deal with every aspect of abuse but discusses biblical principles that will apply to all situations.



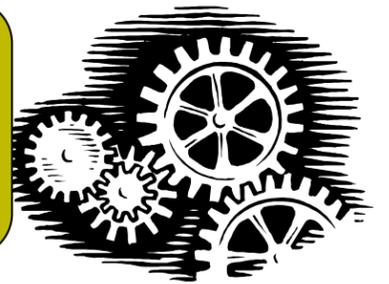
**5) Life Beyond your Parents' Mistakes, (by David Powlison):** What if your human parents were violent, deceptive, cold... or even just occasionally disappointing? Can their failures keep you from understanding God's love and having a growing relationship with your heavenly Father? Some say that you can't know God's love unless someone will stand in your parents' place, giving you a loving new image to use in relating to God. But is this true? David Powlison speaks compassionately to those who are disappointed by their human parents, and he uses God's Word to show that our parents' mistakes cannot stop us from knowing God and his unfailing love. Using case studies from his extensive counseling experience, Dr. Powlison explains how turning to God for mercy and help will transform your life and your relationships.



**6) Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave, by Ed Welch:** A very common problem in our world is "addiction." In fact, most people when they are honest would admit to be addicted to something at some point in their life. Some addictions (to alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc.) are horrific because of the damage they create in the person's life and the subsequent damage on others around the addicted person. In this excellent book, Dr. Ed Welch speaks to the heart of the issues surrounding addictions and then provides a practical application of the gospel of Christ to the person who is trying to break free from the addiction. This is an excellent resource to be sure.



**THE COG**  
COMMUNITY OF GRACE  
Biblical Counseling Ministry  
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(Last month we began a series on the "One Anothers" of the New Testament, seeking to compel every person who claims to be a Christian to take serious the commands of Scripture related to ministry to one another. This month we welcome Miss Jenni O'Brian as the author of this article on: "Bear One Another's Burdens.")

## Food for Thought

By Jenni O'Brian

Ah, spring in Montana...this usually means late season snowfall. This year it was a number of days into June when the water-saturated flakes fell. The hedges outside my window, very proudly displaying their new season's leaves, droop surprisingly low to the ground under the burden of the soggy June snow. It is nearly more than they can bear; the new foliage is clearly designed for rain that beads off, not this unseasonable load. Without assistance, these tender branches may meet their demise under the weight of solid white. We need not fear, however. The clouds soon part and the hot late-spring sun soon dissolves the wintery blanket, watering the thirsty soil, and the tender branches stand tall and proud once more.

Just as those tender branches were carrying a load heavier than they were intended to bear, sometimes the weight of living in a fallen, sin-cursed world can be too much for God's children to bear. This is where you and I come in.

As Pastor Blake wrote last month, we are members of one another. We exist as members of the body of Christ, who is the Head of the church. The one-another commands of Scripture are for each of us as members to serve one another. And I'll bet that all of you reading this article are gifted in such a way as to fulfill a unique role in bearing the burden of another. Let's look at this command from Scripture a little closer.

Galatians 6:2 reads, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The amazing thing about the one another's in Scripture is that they are so simple, yet so profound. The Greek verb βασταζω (bastazo) means, "to bear, to carry, metaphorically to endure." <sup>1</sup>The Greek noun βαρος (baros) means, "a weight, burden, metaphorically and literally." <sup>2</sup>The words mean precisely what they say. Let's look at some biblical cross references to get a fuller picture of this command.



In Acts 20:35 Paul instructs the Ephesian elders to bear financial burdens of the weak. In 1Thessalonians 5:14 Paul instructs the church at Thessalonica to patiently uphold the spiritually weak brother. In Romans 15:1 we are instructed to bear with those with a weak conscience regarding lawful practices. We are to be patient and seek to edify, not to please ourselves. Finally, in James 2:8 we see a parallel instruction regarding fulfilling the law. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Bearing another's burdens is to be done impartially and with much mercy, not judgment, because mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).

I'm sure we can all think of someone we know going through a rough time right now. Perhaps this is due to illness, to being sinned against, or possibly due to his/her own sinful choices, or any number of causes. If you know of a need, you have a responsibility to respond (James 4:17). It could be as simple as stopping to pray with the person right then; you could snail mail or e-mail a note of encouragement; stop in and visit, maybe bring some groceries; watch their children for an afternoon; help prepare meals with them; help wash windows or clean their house; change the oil in their car; or mow their lawn. The possibilities are endless.

But please do me a favor, don't tell them, "Call me if there's anything I can do."

Call them and say, "I'm ready to serve you; could you use help with \_\_\_\_\_?"

1. G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, New York: T&T Clark, 2005, 78.
2. Ibid 76.



# The Counseling Zone *By Pastor Blake Shaw* (A Look at the Basics of Biblical Counseling—Part 2)

Last month we looked at the Good Samaritan and considered that the Good Samaritan provides an excellent example for us to follow. He got involved and his involvement was costly to him. He didn't just say to the man who had been robbed and was lying in the road beat and broken, "I'll be praying for you." Nor did he refer the man to someone else. He got personally involved. Thus, we used the Good Samaritan as a spring-board to talk about where all Biblical Counseling starts: with involvement. Basically, what that means is that Biblical Counseling begins with relationship where a true, caring, and honest relationship is developed between the person seeking the counsel and the person giving the counsel. But please understand that involvement, like that seen with the Good Samaritan, is always costly. That is why so few people in the church ever really get involved in people's lives. But it is also why Jesus spoke of dying to self, of picking up your cross, of laying up for your self treasures in heaven. He knew full well that involvement will always be very costly as is evidenced by what took place on the cross. Do you want to be like Jesus Christ? Then plan on being involved in people's lives.

Last month we ended our "Counseling Zone" article with the thought that one doesn't need a degree in Biblical Theology or a certification in Biblical Counseling or a license from the state of Montana to be involved in people's lives. And the objection raised was simply, "Surely, counseling someone requires more than just getting involved in the person's life. Certainly there are many counseling issues, aren't there, that require a professional?" So let me answer that question by stating this: "Biblical counseling is not just about being involved in the person's life. It moves beyond that to many other elements, but it

begins there. But don't buy into the lie that says that only psychologically trained professional counselors are competent to deal with serious problems." Oddly, our society has developed a great confidence in "experts." As a result of this, Americans have also adopted this idea that only the experts have given us the accurate interpretation of human needs and behavior. So you might be surprised to know that research actually confirms that most personal problems can be solved merely by talking with someone and by taking personal action. Did you catch that? Most personal problems can be solved merely by talking with someone and by taking personal action for one's own life. Because we believe in "the expert is needed for counseling" myth, we humans willingly pay \$90 to \$150 each week for a counseling session.

But let's be honest at this point. There are some very complicated problems that people have in their lives, aren't there? God might want you to be the person to help someone who has a huge struggle and a messy life.

For example, perhaps there is a person you interact with who grew up in an abusive household, who is struggling with anorexia and is now going through a nasty divorce while at the same time battling a temptation to turn to some drug, such as alcohol. And they have a young child who is having problems in school and has been labeled with Attention Deficit Disorder. There are all kinds of factors in that one scenario that have to be dealt with aren't there? And the temptation with this complicated situation is to believe that somehow, you, as a person who loves Jesus Christ can't help such a person. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ah, but it will cost you something to be God's representative in this situation. Don't walk away

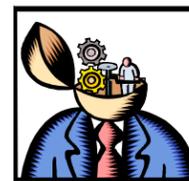
and tell yourself that you can't help this person. Did you know that the Bible is the book that addresses difficulties such as abuse, marriage problems, eating disorders, temptations to turn to a drug in the midst of sorrow, and ADD? You say, "Oh, come on. The Bible doesn't talk about anorexia or ADD." You are right in the sense that you can't find those words in the pages of Scripture. But get involved in the life of the person who is struggling and you will begin to see that underneath the veneer of psychological labels is the heart/mind of a person who is really no different than you, me, or anyone else on the planet. Yeah, that's right, when you begin to walk with the person and are truly involved in his/her life, you begin to see that the heart of the issue is the heart and who better to address that issue than God Himself. But you have to get involved.

So the next time you are interacting with someone and they share with you some struggle they are having, don't step away. Step towards the person, with great compassion, and get involved in their life. Don't start scrambling looking for a specialist. You are the specialist. Did it ever dawn on you that the specialists are the people who have the Spirit of God dwelling inside of them, who have the mind of Christ, who have the all-sufficient Word of God at their disposal, who have the All-knowing Holy Spirit working in, with, and through them, and who have access to the throne of Grace?

So you are involved in the person's life. They know you care. They understand that you want to walk with them and help them. They have seen your compassion and your willingness to speak truthfully to them. What do you do then? That's for next month's edition.



## Q: Is Depression Sin?



A: I am so grateful for this question because it allows me a chance to clear up much confusion about what we as Biblical Counselors believe when it comes to depression. So let me give it a shot.

Let me introduce you to Janet and Rob. Janet is a 31 year old mother of two who gave birth to a stillborn baby. Perhaps there is hardly any other experience in life that one can go through that is more emotional and heartbreaking. Miscarriages, stillborn births, babies dying, and actually death at any age is a powerful reminder of the effects of Adam's sin and the subsequent curse placed upon creation. The whole creation groans longing for the day of redemption, does it not? Twelve months after Janet gave birth to a lifeless baby, she is thought by many of her family and friends to be depressed. She has lost most motivation for doing things she once enjoyed. Her energy is gone. She wants to sleep continuously. At times she will send her husband and her living child out to enjoy activities that two years prior she would love to go do. She wonders often if she has depression and is now planning on going to her physician to talk about getting on an anti-depressant.

Meet Rob, a 37 year old businessman who is married and has 3 kids. Rob is a hard worker, working 70 hours a week and his family believes he is simply what they call, "a workaholic." Rob has been a driven man since the time he reached his teens. He excelled in sports, school, and pretty much anything and everything he attempted to do. Rob and his family are faithful in church attendance and they appear to be a very happy and solid family when you cross paths with them on Sunday. So you are shocked when you learn that Rob tried to take his life over the weekend and is now in the psychiatric hospital. Immediately people begin to wonder what Rob was so depressed about. Had his hard work driven him to this point? Rob had oftentimes in the past two or three months complained of headaches and recently had left work numerous times with such severe headaches that he wondered aloud if he perhaps had a brain tumor.

Do you think you know what is going on with these two individuals? You ready for the curve ball? Most people would look at these two scenarios and believe that Janet's depression is perhaps the result of responding wrongly to the loss of her baby. Perhaps Janet is still grieving and so she just needs time to work her way out of the pit of depression after such a tough situation. And others might say that the Biblical Counselor would at this point simply say that Janet needs to get over it, to consider it joy when she encounters a trial, because God is at work to produce in her endurance. As for Rob's situation, my guess is that most believers would automatically make the assumption that because of Rob's headaches and his subsequent suicidal attempt that he does have a brain tumor and that is the source of his "depression." You might be surprised.

The good Biblical Counselor when meeting with either of these two individuals would immediately have them get an in-depth physical exam. Proverbs 18:13, I believe, demands that we rule out any physiological issues that could be at the root of the depression before we dole out hasty answers.

Janet comes back from her physical exam and found out she has a problem with her thyroid. Treatments with medications have been started and she is already beginning to feel better and get some of her energy back.

But what do we do with Rob's situation? Blood tests are run, body scans are taken, and he is given a clear bill of health. The medical doctors, teamed up with the psychiatrist, both conclude that he may be struggling with depression and they prescribe an anti-depressant drug to stabilize him. So Rob returns to the Biblical Counselor to be counseled. Here's what comes

out in the data gathering (which a good counselor always does). Rob has not slept very well for months. He has struggled with the stress of his job, but also, in the counseling session, Rob sheepishly confesses to a long-standing adulterous relationship he has had with a woman at work. Over the past several months, his marriage has struggled, and the woman he has been in sin with recently divorced her husband of 15 years and subsequently told Rob that he needed to make a decision between her and his wife and if he stayed with his wife she was going to go public with the news. Rob believed that at that point his only option was to end his life. Now you can understand headaches and the suicide attempt much more clearly, huh?

Here are two separate scenarios that offer input into our question of whether depression is sin. When we begin to look at this issue, we have to rule out all organic possibilities to the depression because there are specific physiological causes to depression, such as thyroid problems. A brain tumor can also cause depression. Drugs and side effects of drugs can also lead to depression. Blood tests and scans can reveal if there is an organic problem. We know from Scripture that some forms of depression have a physiological basis. Consider the godly man, Elijah. He despaired for his life. He was physically exhausted having just run from the wicked Jezebel. He ran over a hundred miles. He was hungry and tired and he begged God to take his life. God's answer to Elijah was not, "Hey there Elijah, you're in sin buddy. Get your life right." Actually he had him sleep and sleep he did. He also fed him food, delivered in the beaks of some birds. To be sure, Elijah's initial reaction that led him to go on this run was one of fear for his own life, but Elijah wasn't depressed when he began his marathon run. So we know that there are physiological elements to some forms of depression. Elijah provides us with an interesting case study so we can see the role that the physical, mental, and spiritual play in some forms of depression.

But what do we do if the blood is drawn, the lab test results are in, the scans are completed and there is nothing physiologically wrong? Where do we go? Most medical personnel, out of a desire to help the person have a life worth living offer anti-depressants. But what do we, as Biblical Counselors, do? We begin to look at the data we have gathered related to how a person thinks, how they react/respond to life's situations, or perhaps what things they are doing in life that lead to the state of depression. This is perhaps where the question that we are dealing with originated because we also know that some depression is simply caused by the person's wrong choices in life. We know, for example, that King David himself was depressed after he committed adultery, promoted deception, and had a man killed as part of the cover-up. Psalm 32 gives us a gripping picture of David's depression in the aftermath of that event. As Biblical Counselors, once we rule out the organic element we then begin to proceed with our counseling, taking God's all-sufficient Word and seeking to help the depressed person establish a solid and consistent walk with Christ. We then help them learn new habits of thinking and responding to life's situations. In doing this, we have to address sin. So no, depression is not sin. The data though will help us determine whether sin is at the root of depression.

One last point to consider: For Janet, there could, understandably be wrong thinking and responding that happen in the aftermath of this great tragedy. So the Biblical Counselor could begin to counsel her on how to grieve, but not as those without any hope. The Biblical Counselor could also begin to show Janet biblically, that even in the midst of an organically caused depression, she has the incredible opportunity to please Jesus Christ, to experience the amazing grace of the Lord in the midst of the weakness and struggle, and she has ample opportunities for her circumstances to turn out for the furtherance of the gospel.



### Counselor's Corner

**Do You: Struggle with peer pressure? Are you over-committed? Do you "need" something from other people? Is self-esteem a critical concern for you? Are you fearful you might be exposed as an impostor/a fraud? Do you second guess many decisions out of concern of what others might think? Do you feel empty or meaningless? Do you get easily embarrassed? Do you ever lie? Are you jealous of other people? Do other people "drive" you crazy or make you depressed? Do you avoid people? If you are on a diet, what motivates you to do so? Do you compare yourself to others? Do you struggle with praying in front of a group? Do you struggle to talk to others about your faith? Does public speaking scare you?**

**If you answered, "Yes" to any of these questions, then you struggle with the fear of man. So what are some good resources to read that might help you develop a Biblical understanding of how to deal with the fear of man?**

1. From Pride to Humility, by Stuart Scott
2. Christ and Your Problems, by Jay Adams
3. Pleasing People, by Lou Priolo
4. When People Are Big and God Is Small, by Ed Welch
5. What Do You Think of Me? Why Do I Care?, by Ed Welch

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