

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.

1. Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth, edited by James MacDonald, James Viars, Robert Kelleman, and David Powlison

Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling is a comprehensive guide that will equip God's people to use biblical truth to change lives. More than that, this book will increase people's confidence in the sufficiency and relevancy of God's Word to address real-life issues in a multitude of counseling situations. Readers of this book will: Understand clearly why they should embrace biblical counseling. Be encouraged to trust God's Word to provide rich insight for living in the midst of even the most difficult challenges. Enjoy the relevant, pastoral, and theological teaching they have come to appreciate from such noted authors as James MacDonald, John Piper, Mark Dever, and Elyse Fitzpatrick. The 28 chapters blend theological wisdom and practical expertise. The first half of the book emphasizes a practical theology of biblical counseling; the second half highlights a practical methodology of biblical counseling.

2. Good Mood, Bad Mood, Dr. Charles D. Hodges, M.D.

Depression and bipolar disorder are two of the most common diagnoses made in medicine today. In this book, Dr. Hodges examines whether it is an epidemic or if we have simply changed how we label depression. While medication is now the commonly accepted way to deal with pain and sadness, its promise has not been fulfilled. Dr. Charles Hodges shows us the importance of sadness, considers the help available, and directs us to the hope that God gives in His Word.

3. Comforts From Romans, by Elyse Fitzpatrick

Although we may go to bed at night believing the gospel, we wake up every morning needing to hear it again. Yet most of us don't have time to dive into a lengthy commentary on the book of Romans—the book Paul wrote in order to showcase the glorious riches of the gospel. Thankfully seasoned counselor and author Elyse Fitzpatrick makes the message of Romans readily accessible in 31 devotional-like chapters on what Martin Luther called “the very purest Gospel.” Perfect for even the busiest of us, Elyse helps us grasp the practicality of the gospel message and experience the deep comforts articulated in the book of Romans.

4. iSnooping on Your Kid, by R. Nicolas Black

In our increasingly wired world, your children have access to people, images, and media that you don't want them to experience. What's a concerned parent to do? What does wisdom look like when technology floods into your home bringing access to pornography and other Internet dangers? Providing extensive practical suggestions, Nicholas Black directs you in making a plan with your family for safety and clear boundaries on technology use. By reminding you of how Christ leads you to repentance and faithful living, he offers helpful advice on how you can help your children grow in purity, integrity, and dependence on Christ, as they navigate the world of technology.

5. This Little Church Stayed Home, by Gary Gilley

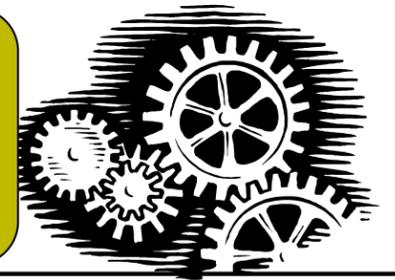
Many churches, riding the faddish waves of our times, have gone to market, but not all. Some churches are trying to stay home, that is, remain firmly grounded in the Scriptures. Still, the pressures mount, the temptations are repackaged, and the schemes of the world become more and more persuasive. In This Little Church Stayed Home, Dr. Gilley explores the manifold temptations of conservative churches to sell out to modern trends and innovations, including the present temptation towards mystical theology. Churches toying with new measures will be challenged to remain true to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith and to remain faithful to God's chosen means of converting sinners to himself: the good news of Jesus Christ. Pastors, seminary students, church leaders, and Christians who want God's Word to be paramount in their lives will find This Little Church Stayed Home a timely message to a Christian subculture fixated on marketing the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

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. Letters must be signed. Names can be withheld upon request. 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.



THE COG COMMUNITY OF GRACE Biblical Counseling Ministry

Edition #19 — April 2013



Biblical Counseling - Turning to God's Word for the Answers to Life's Problems Biblical Counseling Conference July 25-27, 2013 at Grace Bible Church

Some Topics Covered:

- Why Counsel: Every Member's Role
- What Makes Biblical Counseling Biblical?
- Shyness and Social Anxiety
- Dealing with Suicide
- Killing Pride
- Prayer: Tapping Into the Real Power for Change
- Medical Issues in Counseling
- Handling Abuse Cases
- Desperate Parents Make the Best Parents
- Romans 8:28
- Understanding Grace and Repentance
- How To Make Sure Your Counseling Doesn't Produce a Pharisee

Speakers:

**Brad Bigney, Rob Green,
Aaron Sironi, Chris Moles,
Bryan Hughes, Brad Wright,
Dan & Pam Gannon**

Registrations Forms are available at the Grace Bible Church office, at the Resource Center or you can register online at: <http://gbcmt.org/ministries/biblical-counseling/the-conference> ~ Early Registration Deadline is April 30th, 2013.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CONFESS YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER (PART 2)

(Last month's article stated that the April article would be on praying for one another. Due to some scheduling conflicts, that article will be published in May, not April.)

We humans are a funny lot, aren't we? In fact, let me bring this closer to home and say, "We Christians are a funny lot." Funny, not in the sense of humorous-although many of us can be fairly funny, but funny as in "odd." Funny thing is we often don't see our oddity. I would like to pursue this topic a little further.

Last month I wrote about the biblical command that says we are to confess our sins to one another. After the article published it dawned on me that the command will probably never be practiced by the majority of believers. In fact, in discussions that followed the publishing of that article, it became a reality that most believers are very hesitant to follow that one simple command. The core reasons for why many believers would never venture into the arena of confessing sins to one another are many.

For example, perhaps the sin of pride is what holds one back from sharing with another believer their battle with some sin. It is terribly humbling to say to a fellow believer, "You know this week, I struggled with anger, with my pride, with lust, with jealousy, with my competitiveness, with anxiety, etc." Pride holds us back from being honest with one another.

Perhaps it is apathy that holds one back from confessing sins to another. Perhaps it is that we just don't care. It could be that we tend to believe that lie that our sin doesn't affect others since it is an internal sin, or a private sin, so we just don't see the need to put it out there for someone else to notice.

Or perhaps it is a lack of trusting others that keeps us from sharing our lives. We may have been burned in the past by some professing believer with whom we did actually share a part of our life and that person spread the news, gossiped about us, or worse yet, twisted what we said into a web of lies in order to destroy us. That happens, and thus, as I stated last

Pastor Blake Shaw

time, wisdom and discernment is needed when it comes to confessing your sin to others. But the flip side is that we have built up a self-protection that holds us back from being honest with one another and being willing to confess our sins to one another. Because of that self-protection we miss opportunities to be a blessing and an encouragement to others around us.

Perhaps we don't confess our sins to one another because we are Americans. You know, we are the independent types. To confess my sin to another can often lead to the humbling admission that perhaps I need others to help me deal with that sin. I need encouragement, admonishment, counsel, accountability, etc. This relates back to the issue of pride. Like the person who had physical problems and had to humble himself to ask for help with some very basic activities, so too, when it comes to confessing our sins to one another, we might find ourselves in the humbling position of having to ask for help from others.

Or perhaps we have become conformed to this world and just like there is a breakdown in relationships in the world, possibly there is a breakdown in relationships within the church. It is like we have erected privacy fences between ourselves. This shouldn't surprise us. Paul said that in the last days, people will love themselves and because of self-love people will experience a breakdown in relationships (see 2 Timothy 3:1-8). People will be without natural affection. People will be irreconcilable. People will be revilers. People will be malicious gossips. People will be unloving. People will be brutal. So it shouldn't surprise us when people, who live in this world, are conformed to this world. I've studied people for many years. The one thing I have noticed is the trend in the church to avoid others. If you don't believe me take note of how many people struggle with looking you in the eyes and greeting you in the hallways of the church. Take note of how many people make a bee-line for the exit when the church service is completed. We have a fundamental problem within Christendom which is not healthy.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Continued from cover page —

Perhaps we don't confess our sins to one another because of religiosity. You remember that religious group in Jesus' day, the most religious group that walked the streets of Jerusalem? Yeah, that group. Jesus never spoke harsher words to anyone like He did those religious dudes (see Matthew 23). Externally they looked like they had it all together. For them, their religion was a show. The outside was all cleaned up. But internally they were rotted to the core and the core was also rotten. We perhaps are no better. Perhaps our faith has become a religious show. You know how it is: we can fight with family members on our way to church and get out of the car and become a different person in a heartbeat. With our chameleon like covering, there is little chance that we will open up our life to share about what it truly going on.

Perhaps we have what I call the "Porcupine Disease." Imagine, if you will, two porcupines on a cold, cold night. They pull close together to keep warm but then their quills begin to poke into

each other and thus, they begin to pull away. Back and forth they go. Not a very restful night at that point, huh? We Christians can be just like that. We live separate lives until some tragedy comes along then we pull together. Or we are challenged to care for one another and share our lives with one another and so we get close. But things get real uncomfortable when we are close to one another. People begin to rub each other the wrong way. People's weird quirks begin to "poke those around them..." We have personality clashes and so we pull away from another person. And we know that if we are close to a person and they open up their life to us and confess their sin things might just get a little uncomfortable.

I'm not sure if there are other reasons why we, as believers, and members of God's family don't confess our sins to one another. But I do wrestle with how we can engineer a culture that truly cares for one another to such a degree that we demonstrate care and concern for one another; a culture where we are not afraid of one another; a culture where we know we have each other's back; a culture where we know where we can turn when sin has its claw ripping us apart. Such a culture begins with you...with me. Care to have a visit?

The Counseling Zone By Pastor Blake Shaw

(A Look at the Basics of Biblical Counseling—Part 9)

It has been several months now since we addressed the basic elements of Biblical Counseling so let's return to that subject. What we have seen thus far is that all counseling begins with what is called, "Involvement." Involvement is the building of relationships with the person who seeks counsel. Involvement is, in essence, building rapport into the person's life. Remember, not everyone who comes in for counseling trusts you the counselor. So the counselor must work hard to help the person understand that they are cared for. Secondly, we saw that we must do investigation. We must hear the story before we provide an answer, otherwise, as Proverbs 18:13 says, we practice folly and shame. So in the investigation phase, we must work hard to ask good questions and find out what the issues are. We hear the person's story. We explore various aspects of the person's life and the reasons for which they come in for counseling. Once we have gathered data, we interpret the data in order to nail down the specific issues for which we are going to give counsel. It does no good to have a lot of data but we don't take the time to sift through the data to determine what the real issues are in the person's life. One element that must be included in every counseling session is "Inspiration." Or, in other words, provide the person with biblical hope. The person must know when they leave the appointment that God is at work, that He is the One who can bring order out of the chaos in their life. The last time I wrote about the basic elements of Biblical Counseling we considered Instruction. Instruction is an awesome element and is one of those features that will distinguish the biblical counselor from every other form of counseling. With Instruction, the Biblical Counselor opens up God's all-sufficient Word and helps the person see God's answer for their problem. This takes work. It takes studying outside of the counseling room. But what a joy it is when the person finds Christ and begins to see with biblical eyes.

Let's venture into another basic element of true Biblical Counseling. This key element is what I would call, "Inducement." (Or, if the word inducement makes you think of pregnant ladies going into labor, we could use the word, "Incitement"). When I use the word "inducement" or "incitement" I mean that as the biblical counselor I am attempting to persuade, motivate, and influence the counselee to make certain commitments or decisions that will facilitate life change. All throughout Scripture there are examples of people who either were called to make a decision to go God's way or actually made that decision on their own. For example, if you read Luke 15:11-18, you find the Prodigal Son, eating pig food, broken, lonely, and giving up. But then he came to his senses and he realized that he could go back to his father. So he made the decision to return to his home and to offer to function, not as a son, but as the lowest of the slaves on his father's farm. He made the decision to do the right thing. Another example of inducement/incitement is found in Exodus 32. The Israelites had rebelled against God while Moses was on Mt. Sinai. They had Aaron build a golden calf and they began to worship it. The Israelite camp was a chaotic mixture of immorality, drunkenness, and idol worship. Then Moses arrived on the scene. In verse 26 he says, "...Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!" That is a picture of inducement/incitement to go God's way. Another illustration is found in Job 31:1 where we see that Job made a covenant with his eyes to not have his

eyes gaze upon a woman. He refers to a covenant he made with his eyes to maintain purity. In Romans 12:1, Paul states, "I beseech you therefore brethren..." That statement is called to go God's way.

So the natural question is: "What kinds of commitments should the biblical counselor seek to induce/incite the counselee to make?" Here are several commitments we look for: 1) To make the Bible their final authority. Since we believe the Bible has the answers and that it is our Creator's word to us, we want to get the counselee to make the same commitment. It is interesting that in Isaiah's day, the people of Israel had a problem with running to the specialists of the day for input, counsel, direction, etc. They ran to the mediums and spiritists, individuals who had no life in them. Isaiah, in chapter 8, challenges the people to instead consult their God. In counseling, we too are challenging our counselee to consult God, not the godless system of psychology. 2) To trust and rely on Christ alone, not self or other people, for the grace and resources needed to make the changes God wants them to make. For far too long, the person has been relying upon self or others and they haven't found the answers. We challenge them to embrace Christ and His all-sufficient grace to deal with the problems in life. 3) To accept full responsibility for all that is unbiblical in their life. We look at their motives, their thoughts, their actions, their feelings, and we want the person to take full responsibility for anything that is unbiblical. It is human nature to seek ways to blame others or blame circumstances for how we think, feel, and do. But in order for the person to have hope, they must embrace their responsibility. 4) To view sin as God views it, which is a monumental issue because our world has developed a whole system of labels that we can slap on almost any sin we deal with. So we re-label things all the time, using biblical labels. We call sin, sin. With good data gatherings we can arrive at a biblical label for what is at the core of the problem. And so we use biblical labels and we compel the person to view sin just as God views it. That is, by the way, the only way that a person can truly confess his sin. He must view sin as God views sin; and 5) To be concerned about internal sin as well as external sin. We aren't just dealing with external sins or behavior. We are dealing with what is going on in the heart of the person. Many people end up in counseling because of behavior and it is easy to simply want to deal with behavior and miss the root of the problem. So when we induce/incite the person to go God's way, we want them to understand that for true change to happen, they must be willing to deal with what is going on in their thinking and in their worship.

Next time, we'll consider several more elements to this issue of inducement. Until then, let's consider several things for our own lives: 1) Is the Bible really our final authority? 2) Do we trust and rely on Christ alone, or have we turned to broken cisterns that can't hold water? 3) Do we take full responsibility for our own life or do we try to blame others and circumstances for why we do what we do? 4) Do we view sin as God views it? Perhaps we need to ponder again the cross of Christ and consider how God poured out His wrath on His Son for us. The cross tells us exactly how God views sin. And 5) Are we as concerned about what is going on internally as we are with our external sin?

Question:

Several months ago, we were given a question that has several parts to it. In the editions of the COG in December and January, we dealt with the first aspect of the question. Last month, Dr. Dan Gannon addressed the oft-asked-question: "Is it okay to take anti-depressant drugs?" This month I want to step back into the discussion about whether Biblical Counseling is anti-science or not. The question put forward is, "How do you respond to the charge that Biblical Counseling is 'Anti-science'?"

This is the third part of an answer to a question that was put forward late last year, and so, there is one point that needs to be reiterated here, so please forgive one point of redundancy.

The truth is that biblical counselors are actually very much pro-science. We are anti-junk science, but, science that is done well, that is done for the glory of God, and is true science, we are very much in favor of. Thus, when it comes to psychology, biblical counseling would divide psychology into two camps and would say that one camp, known as Descriptive psychology, is scientific, whereas, the other camp, known as Prescriptive psychology, is not scientific, nor can it ever be.

As stated in previous articles, biblical counseling really has no problem with any psychology that falls under the banner of Descriptive psychology, for this psychology is merely the study of reactions, responses, actions, and thoughts given to various stimuli within a study. Descriptive psychology is fascinating and could be considered helpful in understanding various elements of human life. There are many fascinating studies that have taken place within Descriptive psychology. For example many under this banner of research are educated in neurology and so there are many studies on the brain function, on nerve endings, etc. Granted, most of those studies are done by individuals who come from a naturalistic, evolutionary worldview, but the studies generate much data about how the brain functions, brain structure, etc.

Prescriptive psychology, on the other hand, is where the problem comes in. Prescriptive psychology is basically where psychology not only determines what the core problems are in humans but also determines the remedy, the treatment if you will, to the problems. Now, if psychology were truly scientific as people want to claim, then there would not be over 250 different theories of how to treat human problems. Anytime you have that many different theories as to what people's problems are and how to take care of the problem, you have to wonder how scientific that really is. For example, Sigmund Freud had his take on what the causes of mankind's ills were.

Q&A with Pastor Blake Shaw

Freud was no dummy. But at some point, based upon his evolutionary background, he developed his theory about what causes problems and then a corresponding answer to those problems. But there is no way one can truly test the id, ego, superego, etc. Everything is loaded with subjectivity. Then you can take B.F. Skinner, perhaps the most "scientific" of the Father's of Modern Psychology. Skinner had little use for Freud because he saw Freud as doing junk science. Skinner, another brilliant man, focused on Behaviorism. Skinner too, left out God; he held to the idea that one can change the nature of man, but to do so, you have to change his environment. Thus, God isn't needed. Under Skinnerian thought, the idea is to change the behavior. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with changing behavior if the behavior is hurting others, or even oneself. But under a Skinnerian philosophy, the change of behavior is brought about by rewards and punishment. I won't belabor the point other than to say that many of us in the church have practiced behaviorism. Almost all parents I have met have fallen prey to the Skinner approach. You can change the behavior of a child perhaps but if the heart doesn't change, the root cause of the behavior is still there. But at least, on the surface, Skinner was scientific in his approach.

The bottom line is this: Prescriptive psychology and biblical counseling collide. They collide because they offer two different prescribed reasons for the problems humans suffer and two different answers for those problems.

One has to ask the question then, "Where does this accusation come from?" From the data I have gathered, it seems to have grown out of the perpetual debate about two different issues: 1) the use of psycho-tropic drugs, and 2) whether mental illness exists. For years biblical counselors have been asked their perspective on the use of medications to treat things such as depression, anxiety, Attention Deficit Disorder (and the corresponding Hyperactivity Disorder), etc. When it comes to the use of psychotropic Dr. Dan Gannon wrote an excellent article for last month's edition of the COG. For our sake in this article, let me broach the subject of the existence of mental illness. We'll carry this over into next month's edition.

There is little doubt that the concept of mental illness has been a front page headline discussion over recent months. Tragedies, such as the school shooting in Connecticut or the theater shooting in Colorado has brought to the forefront of the national discussion, the issue of mental illness. I have been asked several times recently what my thoughts are on the issue of mental illness. So let me state my view and then try to do some clean-up work. I do NOT believe there is

such a thing as mental illness, as understood and defined by the psychological world. Here's why.

First, for their view, the psychological world has a starting point of evolutionary theory, believing that humans are merely evolved animals. Thus, the person who goes ballistic and shoots up a school or a theater is, under their view, merely a physical body made up of atoms, nerves, etc. So from their perspective such a person is mentally ill. He has a brain problem—a sickness if you will. Yes, his thinking is messed up, but for them the problem is an illness in the mind. That is why the psychological answer for such a person is to provide medications and cognitive/behavioral counseling. The trend today is bio-psychiatry where people are given medications as treatment for their supposed mental illness.

Second, even the secular world can't agree on the theory of mental illness. For example, Thomas Szasz, a psychiatrist who passed away in 2012, wrote a book titled *The Myth of Mental Illness*. The book, and subsequent articles written by Szasz and others showed a problem within the psychiatric world because there was not a unified view point on mental illness. Not only that but there has even been a problem within the psychiatric world in coming up with a consistent and agreed upon definition of the mind.

Third, as a biblical counselor I would see the brain and the mind as two different things. The brain is a physical organ, and as such, it can be diseased. We know that the brain can have tumors, can be damaged, and can experience deterioration, as seen in Alzheimer's Disease. But the mind is not a physical organ and so, it cannot be diseased, as we understand disease. The brain is a vehicle for the expression of the mind but the two must not be confused.

Fourth, as a biblical counselor, I would set forth the idea that the better way to view the young man who shot up the school or the man who shot up the theater is to consider them to be mentally depraved. Once we give the label of "mentally depraved" there is hope for that person because Christ died for our depravity. Christ is all about taking the depraved person and seeing that person begin to change in their thinking, their motives, their desires, their plans, their worship, and their actions. Yes, it takes work. Radical change needs to take place in the person's life, to be sure. But mentally depravity, unlike mental illness can be dealt with by Christ and His Word.

Next month, I'll seek to develop this issue more as I am sure I have merely stuck the mental stick into the proverbial hornets nest and stirred it up.

