

**Back in the Counseling Room**

Back in the counseling room, Shaun and the counselor meet to address Shaun's objections. Shaun didn't bring his Bible so the counselor hands him a copy and says, "Shaun, the first reason why you ought to forgive Cal is because forgiveness is the most Christ-like act a person can do. You are never more like Christ than when you are extending forgiveness to those who have wronged you. What endears us to God is the fact that He has forgiven us." At that point, the counselor asks Shaun to read two very familiar passages: Ephesians 4:31-5:1 and Colossians 3:12-13. The counselor points out to Shaun that God actually talks about him (Shaun) in the verses read. The counselor helps Shaun see that in Ephesians 4:31, Paul uses two words that are translated anger and wrath. He explains that the word translated, "anger" refers to the slow, internal burn of anger, while the word that is translated "wrath" refers to the explosive type of anger. He notes that Shaun had the first kind of anger going on for quite some time, but then on that infamous day, Shaun then carried out wrath, as he spewed forth choice words and carried out physical acts of violence. The counselor directs Shaun's focus to the words "be put away from" and talks to him about how these vices of anger are to be put aside, cast off, put away. The counselor doesn't stop there. If he did, he would be merely practicing a form of behaviorism, so he continues by directing Shaun to re-read verse 32. The words, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another

even as God in Christ forgave you" echo off the shelves that line the wall of the counseling room as Shaun reads. These words are so rich and vital for this discussion. The counselor belabors the point of verse 32: "God in Christ forgave you," having Shaun read it several times. Let it soak in for a while. God forgave you. He explains to Shaun how God, who is holy, forgave him of his sin, and thus, for Shaun to forgive Cal is really being like God. That is why Paul continues with 5:1 (an unfortunate chapter break for sure) by saying, "Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children." It's an imperative, a command. Paul doesn't lay down a suggestion here. It's not like reading something from the Dale Carnegie pen, a suggesting how one can win friends and influence people. It's from the pages of holy writ, breathed out by God Himself through the pen of the Apostle Paul. Imitate God! Forgive! Do this because He has forgiven you.

**Homework**

The counselor stops the counsel for a minute and asks Shaun to write out Ephesians 4:31-5:1 on a 3X5 card. For the next thirty minutes the discussion centers on Shaun's sinfulness against God and how much God has forgiven him. Not once in the last thirty minutes, does the counselor mention Cal, for this is not really about Cal at all. It's about Christ and the practical implications of the gospel, directly applied to Shaun's calloused, hardened heart. But there is so much more for Shaun to see about why he should forgive. That's for the next time.

**TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING**

1. Introduction to Biblical Counseling, taught by Pastor Blake Shaw. Sunday, 9:00am to 10:15am, in Room 802, starting September 18.
2. Medical Issues in Counseling, taught by Dr. Dan and Pam Gannon. Tuesday nights, 6:00pm-8:30pm. This class is offered as a part of the Montana Bible College degree program and can be taken as an audit for a fee. Contact MBC at 586-3585 for more information.

**"It is not intelligence but intellectual pride that shuts people out of the kingdom. Intelligence is a gift of God, but when it is perverted by pride it becomes a barrier to God, because trust is in the gift rather than in the Giver." ~ John MacArthur**



**Food for Thought** BY PASTOR BLAKE SHAW

**A State of the Ministry Report**

We are now five years into having an official counseling ministry here at Grace Bible Church. Each year I assess this area of ministry and, certainly, after five years, it is appropriate to evaluate again and even share with you some highlights, quibbles, and concerns of our counseling ministry. As you can imagine, the counseling ministry is simultaneously one of the most joyful ministries in which to be involved and also one of the most heart-breaking ministries in which to be involved. I suppose very few things bring more joy than watching from the sidelines as God uses His Word, that you (the counselor) have ministered, to bring about amazing changes and healing in both individual lives and in relationships. At the same time, perhaps very few things are more heart breaking than to see the devastation in peoples' lives as they reap the consequences of their choices. It is further heart wrenching to watch these same people stiff-arm the counsel of God that is ministered by loving counselors. Counselors will tell you that there are times of great joy and times of great sorrow as they minister God's Word to hurting people.

Counseling is hard work and it requires some long hours and sometimes inconveniences to a normal life, which is why many believers avoid it like the plague. Counseling requires much prayer, study, thought, time and attention. Added to this challenging ministry is the continuous self-questioning of the counselor's adequacy in counseling others. There is a constant wondering of whether he or she has counseled well. This is especially prevalent when counseling doesn't result in the desired outcome. This can lead to a perplexing self-doubt and questioning that asks if the counseling ministry is the right ministry for them.

Over the past year or two the counseling team has had an abundance of opportunities to counsel people in areas such as: marital conflict, communication, adultery, finances, reconciliation between parents and grown children, addictions, fear (of man and of circumstances), anxiety/worry, depression, pornography, cutting, gambling, same-sex attraction, anger, abuse, PTSD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, panic attacks, grief, etc. As you can see, it is no minor request when the counseling ministry asks for prayer.

**Lumps of Clay**

We are rejoicing in how God has used us, simple lumps of clay, to help others. We currently have a team of 14 counselors who actively counsel in an official capacity. However, what is truly awesome is that there are, I believe, hundreds of people at Grace Bible Church who offer counsel to other people every week. Actually, every person

who is a part of our church family offers counsel all the time. The primary question is always: "Is the counsel they offer biblical or not?" As part of the official counseling team of Grace Bible Church, the 14 counselors have gone through various levels of training and have offered to serve in an official role on the counseling team. These are volunteer counselors, which, from a pastor's perspective, is really such a blessing to see. Very few things in life are more encouraging to see than, as God's people, out of love for Him and others, give of their time and energy to walk with other people and counsel them from God's Word. Beyond the 14 people who serve as official counselors, we have a group of men and women who are being trained and who likewise help out in important roles as their schedule allows.

**Certification**

When we began an official counseling ministry we put forward the desire to work with an organization called The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). This organization has formal a certification process that equips people to provide biblical counsel to others. This certification process is intense and demanding. Our goal has been to work with ACBC to certify members of our local body. Currently there are six individuals at GBC who are ACBC certified. Our goal is to have at least six more ACBC certified counselors by 2018. One point needs to be made very clear: This team is NOT made up of people who are more godly than others. It is NOT made up of the super spiritual. It is NOT made up of people who have arrived. It is simply a team of people who have gone through the arduous process of certification.

**A Busy Past Year**

This past year the Counseling Committee (made up of five individuals) put forward a five-year game plan for where we would like to be by 2020. With the projection of having twelve certified biblical counselors by 2018, we desire to launch a counseling ministry that is open to the public. Counseling for people outside of Grace has already been available for the last five years, but the 2018 goal is to make it more official and publicized. Currently we have approximately 38 people receiving counseling. This total is made up mostly of couples, with about 7-12 of these being solo counselees. A handful of those who are solo counselees are people who are married but their spouse isn't in counseling with them. Approximately half of the people receiving counseling at this time are from outside of Grace.

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## Food for Thought [Continued from cover page]

### Discipleship, Community Group & You

We also have a waiting list, of usually one or two people, who want to receive counseling. Since biblical counseling is, in essence, a form of biblical discipleship, one of our anticipated goals is that all of our Community Group leaders will receive ongoing biblical counseling training so that they can become increasingly equipped to counsel (disciple) the members of their Community Group. It is our desire that when a person from within our Body is struggling or going through a trial they could be counseled and helped most by the people who they are already in weekly fellowship with through their Community Group. We also hope to strengthen our vetting process for people who express interest in being a part of our Counseling Team.

### More Training

For the purpose of equipping people for this ministry we continue to offer our annual Biblical Counseling

Conference, which is incredibly well attended, and also offer Sunday morning classes throughout the year. This fall, we'll be offering an "Introduction to Biblical Counseling" class on Sunday mornings and Dr. Dan and Pam Gannon will be teaching a Tuesday night class for Montana Bible College. That class is titled, "Medical Issues in Counseling." We highly recommend it to you.

### The Work Ahead

We have much work yet to do in the counseling ministry. Besides the busy counseling schedule and the continuous work to help more people be trained and pursue certification, we also have to give much more attention to continuing to help people within our church family understand true biblical counseling and to answer the plethora of questions, misunderstandings, and confusion about what is biblical counseling actually. With much to do in the days ahead, may God give us the grace to represent Him in a way that would glorify Him.

## The Counseling Zone: A Journey into a Precious Word (Part 3) (Case study used by permission)

by Pastor Blake Shaw

### A True Need

Personally, the issue of forgiveness is one of the most precious doctrines that I have ever studied. Perhaps it is so because I'm a knucklehead and I am gripped by the fact that I desperately need forgiveness from our Lord. But, even though you might not be classified as a knucklehead, you need it as well. Yes, I used the word, "need." I can only speak for myself but I'm fairly certain we would all agree that having the need of forgiveness met is one of numerous things that we treasure about our Christian faith. Dig into the core of our Christian faith and you'll find the splendid doctrine of forgiveness. Scripture paints a bleak picture of humanity and our rebellion against our Creator (see Romans 3:10-21; Ephesians 2:1-3). And Scripture tells us of the glorious gospel-the good news that provides the remedy for that bleakness. For those of us who've embraced Christ as our Lord and Savior we now stand before a holy God, not as rebels, but as justified (declared righteous) and totally forgiven (Romans 3-5; Colossians 2:13). As we saw in the last edition of the COG, God is a God who is "ready to forgive" (Psalm 86:5). We've tasted of that forgiveness. We cling to that forgiveness for we are desperate for such.

### Why We Don't Forgive

The fact that God has forgiven us of our infinite debt should translate into us being eager and quick to forgive others when they have wronged us (Colossians 3:13). But oftentimes it doesn't. Perhaps we struggle to forgive others because we haven't truly embraced Christ. It's brutally hard, or impossible, for the natural man, even when religious, to grant forgiveness. Perhaps we struggle to forgive another person who has sought our forgiveness because we have forgotten the depths of our own depravity and

the extent of God's forgiveness of us. Perhaps, in our hurt, we've been blinded by anger that won't allow us to forgive. Our anger bleeds over into bitterness and we cry out for justice - a justice that won't happen in this life. But then again, if that is us and we want justice, we have forgotten the cross of Christ and how justice was served there on our behalf.

### Into the Counseling Room

If you recall, last month we were brought into the counseling room and allowed to sit on the sideline of a counseling situation and observe how a conflict and the pursuit of reconciliation unfolded. We observed two professing believers, Cal and Shaun, as they were counseled towards being reconciled. You may recall that both were part of the same church body at the time of the conflict and counseling session. They are not pew sitters but rather are actively involved in the life of the church. Cal was Shaun's boss and they had a conflict that erupted into a confrontation with Shaun exploding in anger and walking out the door of his workplace. In the counseling session we saw Cal humble himself and seek forgiveness from Shaun for his part in the conflict. But we left that session deeply troubled because Shaun not only didn't grant forgiveness to Cal, but he also refused to seek forgiveness for his part in the conflict. Cal and the counselor and we, the observers, walked away from that session deeply saddened that no reconciliation had truly taken place. We know Cal honored Christ. We know Cal had obeyed Romans 12:18 where he did his part to be at peace with Shaun. As observers we have a deepened respect for Cal. But what do we do with Shaun?

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## Q&A with Guest Writer: Julie Gossack

**Sometimes conservative Evangelicals avoid the topic of feelings and emotions and even go so far as to portray them as a bad thing. Could you address the issue of feelings and what role they play in our lives?**

This is the concluding installment of a 6-part series that has examined the definitions of the terms "feelings," "emotions," and "affections" as well four biblical principles of feelings: 1) feelings are a component of the heart from which we live, 2) feelings are not inherently wrong, 3) feelings can be sanctified, and 4) feelings must be directed by God's Word. This edition discusses biblical examples of people with godly emotions and also summarizes the topic. Please refer to previous editions of The COG for the complete series. You may also obtain the entire article, which is excerpted from *KARDIOLOGY 101: How to Guard Your Heart*, in the GBC Resource Center.

### Biblical Examples Godly Emotions

In addition to the four biblical principles of feelings, we are given examples in Scripture of godly people, such as David, Paul, Titus, and Epaphras, who displayed passionate, godly feelings. David authored many of the Psalms, in which he poured out his heart before God. These Psalms are rich with emotive language that includes joy, anger, fear, grief, sorrow, and unabashed worship and praise for God. These Psalms are recorded as the inspired Word of God for our edification and,

more explicitly than all the other books in the Bible, the Psalms are designed to awaken and shape our emotions in line with the instruction they give. What happens when you read and sing the Psalms the way they are intended to be read and sung is that your emotions and your mind are shaped by these psalms.

Indeed, David, as displayed by his writings in the Psalms, was a great example of a passionate lover of God who employed his feelings as a venue for worship.

The Apostle Paul was also a man of great passion and emotion. Like David, his writings display this passion. The New Testament records his affection in statements such as: *out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears. . . that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you* (II Corinthians 2:4), *But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you. . . you have become dear to us* (I Thessalonians 2:7-8), and *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy* (II Corinthians 11:2). These are but a few examples of Paul's emotion; Scripture is replete with them.

Two other examples of believers who manifested godly emotions are Titus and Epaphras. II Corinthians 7:15 records Titus' overflowing love for fellow believers in that "his affections are great" for them. Epaphras, who ministered alongside Paul, is recorded as "laboring fervently" in prayer and having a "great zeal" for the believers in Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:12-13).

In addition to these encouraging examples of saints who displayed godly emotions, Scripture also gives negative examples of those who hardened their hearts, become unaffected, unmoved, and past feeling. The group of Israelites that Moses led from Egypt were condemned for having hard hearts (Hebrews 3:15-19). The Gentiles, as recorded in Ephesians, were also condemned for their hard hearts, being "past feeling" and unmoved by biblical truth (Ephesians 4:18-19). Further, Scripture admonishes believers to "encourage one another daily" lest the deceitfulness of sin harden our hearts with an "evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:12-13). As Jonathan Edwards says,

It is an evidence that true religion, or holiness of heart, lies very much in the affection of the heart, that the Scripture place the sin of the heart very much in hardness of heart. Now by a hard heart, it is plainly meant an unaffected heart, or a heart not easy to be moved with virtuous affections. . .

Scripture doesn't leave us to wonder what God thinks about feelings. God values passionate devotion and worship from the whole heart, which includes our feelings.

### Clearing the Confusion

Oftentimes we are unsure how to think about feelings and emotions. Yet, Scripture has much to say on the topic. Seeking God's Word on this topic can clear the confusion we may have. Feelings should rightly be viewed as just another venue for glorifying God. Bruce Ware suggests that "emotions have as much potential for good as for ill in that they can also stir one up toward holiness or compassion or faithfulness." Sam Williams says that, "emotions are designed . . . just as much as any of our capacities, to respond to God's Word and Spirit and are crucial for a wholehearted response to Him and others." Further, Williams says,

The properly functioning Christian soul requires passions and affections that are properly trained, that cares about the things that God cares about. Christian virtues and values require a mature emotional life.

Jonathan Edwards, in light of the biblical truth concerning emotions said,

I should think myself in the way of my duty to raise the affections of my hearers as high as possibly I can, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with.

Edwards also said that,

...although to true religion there must indeed be something else besides affection; yet true religion consists so much in the affection, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has not religious affection, is in the state of spiritual death, and is wholly destitute of the powerful, quickening, saving influences of the Spirit of God upon his heart.

Edwards had it right. The heart redeemed by the truth of the Gospel will indeed produce redeemed feelings of worship and adoration of the Lord.

Certainly our emotions will not be fully redeemed until heaven when we are completely transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:49; Romans 8:29; I John 3:2). Yet in the meantime, we can be diligent cardiologists who guard our hearts from sinful thoughts, sinful desires, and sinful emotions. This is in keeping with the exhortation from the Apostle Paul: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31, emphasis added).

- 1 Reinke, Tony, "What the Psalms Do" <<http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/what-the-psalms-do>> 14 Ap 2014.
- 2 <[http://www.jesus.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/books/others/edwards\\_religious\\_affections.pdf](http://www.jesus.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/books/others/edwards_religious_affections.pdf)> 25 Jul 2013.
- 3 Ware, Bruce, "An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God." Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, December 1986, 446.
- 4 Williams, Sam, "Toward a Theology of Emotion" <<http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/resources/toward-a-theology-of-emotion>> 29 Jun 2013.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 <[http://www.jesus.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/books/others/edwards\\_religious\\_affections.pdf](http://www.jesus.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/books/others/edwards_religious_affections.pdf)> 25 Jul 2013.
- 7 Ibid.