

Wheelersburg Baptist Church
Morning Message on January 2, 2022
Biblical Counseling: Facilitating Growing in Grace
A consideration and application of II Peter 1:3-4

READ: II Peter 1, verses 1-11.

I Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

MAIN POINT: Our God has provided us with everything we need to live our lives for His glory, and He calls us to use what He has given us to help each other address their problems and grow in His grace for His glory.

OBJECTIVE: This morning, I have a two-fold objective. First, I want to encourage you by reminding you from II Peter about the sufficiency of God's provision to address the problems of this life. Our Lord has not left us here amidst problems, trials, and difficulties without complete and sufficient resources to live a godly life for His glory. Second, I am going to offer you an opportunity to invest your time and effort to learn how to use these resources to help others by participating in our fundamentals biblical counseling and discipleship training taking place beginning Monday January 17. We are also planning to provide some additional assistance for those who would like to seek certification with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. I also am asking for each of you to help us promote this year's training. I'll let you know specifically what you can do to get the word out.

With those two objectives in mind, here's a simple 4-point outline of where we are going this morning.

- I. A Brief History of ACBC
- II. The Story of Sallie: An amazing story of God's grace
- III. God's provision and purpose: An Exposition of II Peter 1:3-4
- IV. The Response: Participate, Pray, Promote

I. A Brief History of ACBC

Many of you know me. My name is Dave Beam, and I am a member, teacher and deacon at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. I have been a certified biblical counselor with ACBC for over 20 years and also serve as the director of our Biblical Counseling training ministry at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. As a certified training center with the Association of Biblical Counselors, WBC provides training for people like you who want to help others and perhaps pursue certification in biblical counseling.

The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) was founded in 1976. In the previous decade Jay Adams had created the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) as a center for the training of biblical counselors. As his model of biblical counseling developed it became clear that the biblical counseling movement needed more than training. It needed certification.

Certification is necessary because biblical counseling is a private ministry of the Word of God. In a public ministry of the Word, like preaching, one can evaluate the faithfulness of a minister publicly. Counseling happens in a private, one-on-one setting, and cannot be publicly evaluated in the same way. Certification is necessary to evaluate a counselor's faithfulness to the Bible.

Recognizing this crucial need, Jay Adams and the board of CCEF created an independent certifying organization to do this work. Originally named the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC), our association began using a three-part process of evaluation including training in the fundamentals of biblical counseling, testing in counseling and theology, and supervision to demonstrate counseling skill. This three-part certification process is still in use today.

Since 1976 ACBC has grown from a handful of certified counselors to membership in the thousands, making ACBC the oldest and largest biblical counseling certifying organization in the world.

II. The Story of Sallie: An amazing story of God's grace

With that introduction to ACBC, I want to tell a personal counseling story to provide a practical context for this morning's message. This is the story of Sallie, (I've changed her name) the daughter of one of my and Connie's friends. These friends have a daughter; I'm calling her Sallie. Sallie had recently married and relocated with her husband, Doug to the Cleveland area. Sallie and Doug had been married for about a year and she had just given birth to their first child.

I received a call from Sallie's father asking me for some help. He was aware that I did biblical counseling, and Sallie was really struggling. In fact, she had currently left her husband and moved back with her Mom and Dad. She was suffering a deep and debilitating depression. She did not want to leave her husband, but his job required him to stay in the Cleveland area. Sallie had not taken well to city life. She had grown up in rural Kentucky, and the confined populated apartment living was difficult for her. She said it was like living in a fishbowl. She had a new husband, a new baby, and a new place to live, and felt trapped, guilty, uneasy and unhappy. She had even considered taking her own life. Sallie's husband Doug was trying to be supportive, but was at a loss about what to do.

When my friend called, he shared what was happening. He told me that Sallie had seen a psychiatrist and was taking some antidepressant medication. She had also met with another Christian counselor to try to talk things out, but was still really struggling. That's when our friends called us and asked us to come speak with her. My wife Connie went and bought a couple of baby gifts and we headed over to meet Sallie. I had met Sallie a few times a few years back when she was a teenager, but we really didn't know each other. After praying with her, I asked her if she would be willing to share her situation, and she did. I listened.

Sallie shared the recent changes in her life and also disclosed a vivid description of her thoughts and feelings. She described a hopeless feeling of being trapped in a marriage with someone she loved but didn't really understand her. She was finding it difficult to care about anything, or anyone, or even life itself. She said anti-depressant she was taking just sort of numbed her feelings, and she was filled with thoughts of self-loathing and guilt. She was embarrassed about how irresponsible she was being, and how she was causing so much anxiety, pain and sorrow for her husband and her parents. She looked up at one point in the conversation and told me that even when she tried to do good things, she felt that those efforts were insincere, that she was unworthy, and felt evil, black and dark. The Christian counselor had tried to assure her that she was basically a good person, that God loved her, that her guilt was misplaced and that it was the depression that was causing her negative thoughts. He encouraged her to journal and focus on what she was thankful for and to try to focus on the blessings of her life. Sallie told me that no one seemed to understand the depth of her depression and guilt.

After listening, I reflected her story and thoughts, and then told her I was going to offer some counsel that might be a bit shocking. I told her that the Scripture described her situation, and her thoughts that she was a wicked and terrible person was accurate. I showed her from the Bible that her guilt and low opinion of herself was valid, that in fact, she was even worse than what she was describing.

Perhaps you are a bit uneasy and shocked that I would respond in such a way to a depressed, suicidal suffering young mother. Maybe such a response sounds unloving, unkind, unreasonable, and definitely a dangerous thing to say.

Here's how she responded. Through a few tears, she thanked me. She told me that I was the first person that believed her and took her problem seriously. I smiled and explained that the Word of God that had accurately described her condition, also offered the remedy. I proceeded to share the gospel with her. Through some more questions and conversation, what Sallie came to

recognize is that she really did not know the Lord. Though she had been reared in a Christian home and had been baptized and professed faith in Christ, she had never really put her faith and trust in Jesus. She had been depending on her parent's beliefs and faith. These difficult life circumstances had shown her that she had no true faith and trust in Christ for her life. I helped Sallie see that the blackness and darkness she was feeling and seeing in herself is what Jesus took on the cross in behalf of sinners. I let her know that guilt and shame was a consequence of her sin, that in fact we all enter this world as sinners and in need of salvation and reconciliation with God. I helped her see from the Scriptures that if she would confess her sin and selfishness to the Lord, and ask Him to forgive her for her selfishness, that He would forgive her and replace her sin with His righteousness.

Sallie had hope for the first time. I gave her some reading assignments, and Connie prayed with her left. A couple of weeks after our visit, we received a call from Sallie's mom letting us know that Sallie had come to know the Lord. She was still struggling, but now had hope. She was feeling a bit better. Connie and I went back, and met her husband Doug. He would visit on weekends. He was glad that his wife was doing better, and wanted to know what had caused the change.

Doug was an agnostic. He knew very little about Christianity, and had only been in a Universalist liberal church a couple of times. He had never had much interest in spiritual matters. But now he was quite curious. Doug eventually came to know the Lord, and both Doug and Sallie (now with two children) are together and serving the Lord.

I took the time to share this story as a demonstration of the sufficiency and the power of the gospel to address the deepest emotional issues of this life. The Lord has given us a superior and sufficient revelation to address the problems of this life. In that last 40 years or so, there has been an exciting return of the church to its calling for the care for souls. It is tragic when God's people are sent to secular systems and professionals to help them with the problems of their lives. And it is also disappointing that believers refer to and turn to the counsel, philosophies and systems of the world when dealing with issues like anxiety, fear, anger, grief, loss, worry, and relationship issue. My burden this morning is to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, those with like faith and who know the Scripture and have the Holy Spirit, that you can learn how to step up to this responsibility of helping people that are struggling with life's problems.

III. God's provision and purpose: An Exposition of II Peter 1:3-4

Now I want to look closely at a couple of verses in II Peter. God truly has provided everything we need to address the problems of this life, through His sufficient Word. First, for context, let's take a quick overview of the whole letter.

Verse 1 tells us that the Apostle Peter is the human author of this letter. He identifies himself as a humble servant of Jesus with the same faith and righteousness that those he is writing to possess. He also identifies himself as an apostle, which speaks to his authority, being an eyewitness and close companion of Jesus Christ. He is appealing to his authority as an Apostle as he provides strong warnings and rebukes concerning false prophets and teachers. We also see

in verse 1 that this letter is addressed to true believers that have the same saving faith as Peter. In chapter 1 verses 13-15 we see the overall purpose of the letter.

I think it right, as long as I am in the body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

Peter is about to be martyred. He is likely in a prison awaiting execution as he writes his final words to these people he deeply cared for. His purpose was to remind them of their identity, calling, and resources in Christ so they would make their calling and election sure. Peter is admonishing them to make every effort to continue to tap into the sufficient provision in Christ so that they will continue to grow strong by practicing Christian virtues, such as knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly kindness, and the hallmark virtue of Christian love. This, by the way, is the agenda of Biblical Counseling, to help people grow in Christian virtue as they face life's problems and challenges.

In the latter part of chapter 1 Peter writes of his personal experience as a witness of Christ's transfiguration and the voice of the Father's commendation of the Son at His baptism, and then he states that we have even a more certain word of revelation in the God-breathed Scriptures.

In chapter 2 he warns them of false teachers and prophets that will always attack the church. In chapter 3, he reminds them of the promise of Christ's soon return and refutes the scoffers and arrogance of the false teachers, assuring his readers that Christ will indeed come on His own timetable, and that those who have not repented and who are living ungodly lives will face judgement and destruction. He ends the letter in chapter 3 by encouraging them (in verse 18) to make their calling and election sure by continuing to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This final admonishment defines the goal of Biblical Counseling, to help God's people grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the context of the full letter, let's take a few minutes to take a closer look at II Peter 1:3-4. I believe that in this passage, we find the answer to this question, "What has the Lord given to us to deal with the challenges of the life?"

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

So what has our Lord given us to deal with life's problems and issues? Verse 3 says that He has given us everything we need to live a godly life. We have everything we need to fulfill God's will for us, which is that we would reflect and display His glory and excellence in this world.

Our heavenly Father has promised, provided, and delivered a full and complete redemption and salvation. His divine power comes to us in the person of the Holy Spirit that we receive when we are born again into His family. Verse 4 says that we have become partakers of the divine nature, intimate companions with deity, friends of God, coworkers and companions with the sovereign Creator and sustainer of the universe. We have been and are being daily delivered from the corruption of this world that is here because of sin. We have been rescued from the decay and destruction that is at work and will culminate in God's judgment. All these realities

and benefits are absolute assurances because they are promised to us by a God who cannot lie and is faithful to His promises.

All of these provisions come to us as a free underserved gift when God grants us faith and repentance, and we are legally declared righteous and forgiven before God. It is based solely on the work and sacrifice of His Son. At that moment of justification, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and thereby have the full power of Christ within us to live a God honoring life.

Biblical Counseling is the application of God's all sufficient provision of His Word coupled with the power of the Holy Spirit. God's word alone has the power to reach to the depths of the thoughts and intent of the human heart. Depression, anxiety, rage, anger, loneliness, hurt, discouragement, overwhelm, worry, fear, confusion, doubt, guilt, addictions, lusts, and hopelessness. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

For believers, only counsel that is driven by the primacy of God's agenda and purpose for His child is valid. All other so-called solutions at best are deficient to address the root of the problem, and at worse are deceptive substitutes for what is really needed. Secular psychology is built on the pursuit of maximizing self-esteem and human potential. Biblical Counseling is built on the pursuit of maximizing the honor and glory of God. Secular psychology seeks to find ways for people to cope and improve their quality of life. Biblical counseling seeks spiritual transformation through trust and faith in God, and obedience to His revelation. The goal of Biblical Counseling is godliness, the humility of self, and exultation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sallie left the psychiatrist with medication to deal with the symptoms of her depression. She left the Christian psychologist with a deficient counsel to try to think of herself and her circumstances differently to relieve her guilt and melancholy. She left Biblical Counseling with a clear understanding of her true problem, which is her separation and alienation from God, and the need to be forgiven and reconciled to her Creator. She left with the good news that God sent His Son into this world to rescue sinners from their depravity and sin, and He provides forgiveness, cleansing, and a right standing before Him to all who will repent and turn from their sins and ask Him for mercy.

Beloved, we have a superior Word and solution for people's problems. I invite you to consider coming this January to receive some training and instruction on how to use the sufficient Word of God to help people solve their problems, grow in the grace of the Lord, and live for the glory and honor of God.

Our God has provided us with everything we need to live our lives for His glory, and He calls us to use what He has given us to help each other address their problems and grow in His grace for His glory.

IV. The Response: Participate, pray, and promote

- a. Participate – come and learn; come and review
- b. Pray – for others to come, for God to call for counselors
- c. Promote – flyers, cards, brochures, face book shares