

# **Our Joyful Commitment to Biblical Counseling**

Sunday AM Message

July 30, 2023

Galatians 6:1-5

## **I. THE INTRODUCTION**

- a. How I was introduced to BC: The story of my Father and his depression
- b. This morning, we want to answer three sets of questions in the context of looking closely at Galatians 6:1-5:
  1. What is Biblical counseling and how is it distinct from other forms of counseling?
  2. Why is WBC joyfully committed to Biblical counseling?
  3. How can you get counseling for yourself and others, and how can you participate in the ministry of counseling and personal discipleship?

## **II. THE DEFINITION**

- a. What is Biblical Counseling?

Biblical Counseling is obeying the command to come along-side brothers and sisters in Christ to help bear their burdens so that they can be restored to spiritual strength and function in life and the church for the glory of God. Typically, the counselor listens to understand the person and discern the problem, then provides Biblical instruction and accountability on how to respond and address the problem. The goal is to help bear the burden by bringing hope and restoration to spiritual health so the counselee can again bear their own responsibilities and serve others for the glory of God.
- b. How is Biblical Counseling distinct from other forms of counseling?
  - The goal and source of hope: To be God's kind of person
  - How problems are defined: Problems are rooted in our sinful nature
  - The role of Holy Scripture: The Bible alone is sufficient and provides all that we need to address the trials and problems of this life.
  - The qualifications and role of the counselor: The qualified counselor is a mature believer that expresses the love of Christ through the ministry of involvement and teaching the Word of God.
  - The qualifications and role of the counselee: The counselee must also be a believer and disciple of Jesus Christ, willing to follow the authority and instruction from the Word of God.
  - The role of the local church: The local church supports the counseling process by providing practical accountability, support and help to the counselee. They also administer any appropriate church discipline.

### III. THE EXPOSITION

Galatians 5:25-6:5

*<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. <sup>1</sup>Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. <sup>5</sup>For each will have to bear his own load.*

- a. The Context of Galatians – Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians to warn them not to pervert the gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. John MacArthur provides a 3-part outline of the letter in his study Bible. Chapters 1 and 2 is the personal section, where Paul as the preacher of justification provides his apostolic chastening, credentials and confidence. In chapters 3 and 4, the doctrinal section, the apostle provides detailed instruction and principles of justification, and finally in chapters 5 and 6, the practical section, he gives the responsibilities and privileges of justification for the believer. This morning we are considering a passage from the center of that third, practical section of the letter.
- b. The central idea of our passage: Spiritual believers are commanded to seek to restore struggling believers who are slipping and failing under life's burdens and temptations. This is a practical application of Christ's command to love one another.

Before we begin to look at chapter 6, I want to look carefully at Galatians 5:25 and 26 where we understand the process of people getting caught in sin and in need of restoration.

*<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Believers are commanded to keep in step with the Spirit. When they fail to do this, they can become conceited, start provoking one another, and then envying one another. These verses reveal a pattern of deterioration and downward fall into spiritual dysfunction. Paul warns us that if we persist in yielding to our fleshly thoughts and desires and get out of step with the Spirit, we will become conceited, and then try to convince ourselves and others that we are better than what we truly are. When other's don't approve of our behavior, and our conscience continues to accuse us, we begin to think that we are not getting what we deserve, from the Lord, from others, and even from ourselves. It's called self-pity and depression. Think of Cain's response when God rejected his sacrifice. He became downcast, and then his bitterness and jealousy of his brother Able ended in the first murder.

Do you see the pattern? Have you ever been there? It often begins with an off-handed comment or lack of consideration from your spouse or friend. Someone ignores or mistreats you. You start to feel unappreciated and misunderstood. Or maybe you are having a difficult time in your life, and you feel like God is distant and putting too much on you. You become confused about why things never seem to work the way you want them to. As this head trash collects, you start neglecting the Scripture and grow distant and cold toward the people and things of the Lord.

The next slip occurs as you start provoking others by justifying your disappointments and self-pity and even blaming them. You are distant, grumpy, and defensive. You now have a victim story that you have been mistreated and no one understands. You become more angry, provocative and irritating to others. You've lost your joy. You stop considering other's feelings and interests and become more self-centered. A root of bitterness grabs hold of your heart. When you see other people's happiness, you are jealous of their success. When you see their prosperity and blessing, you feel pain and anger instead of rejoicing with them. Now you are caught; in depression, self-pity, anger and pride. You are trapped in the misery of your transgressions, neglecting your responsibilities, and have become a burden to others. You need help. You need to be restored.

I may be speaking to you right now. This may be the warning you need. If you recognize that you are on that road, I urge you to get some help.

The truth is that believers do struggle and become caught in their sin. If we love and care about them, we will go after them. If we love Christ and His body, we will learn how to do this work of spiritual restoration for the sake of Christ and His people.

Fear, anxiety, depression, guilt, confusion, doubts, discouragement, and sadness. The Lord wants to use us to set each other free. This is why we are joyfully committed to Biblical Counseling at WBC. We understand that this is God's ordained means of bringing restoration to those He loves.

At this point in our study, I want to take a side road to add some clarifying comments from a verse in I Thessalonians. The full counsel of the Scripture teaches us that there are reasons other than being caught by personal transgression that present a need for counseling. Turn to I Thessalonians 5:14.

*And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*

Within this simple command from the apostle Paul, he identifies three categories of struggling believers: the idle, the fainthearted, and the weak. Each category needs a different type of counsel. The Galatian passage focusses on the believer who has become caught by his own personal transgression. This verse in I Thessalonians teaches us that believers struggle for many reasons.

The first group Paul addresses is the idle person. The word idle means disorderly, irregular, and neglectful. Idle people are failing to fulfil their God-given responsibilities, not working, not bearing their own burdens, and taking advantage of others. In the Thessalonian church, they

had become a problem and a burden by not working to take care of their basic needs. These folks, just like the person caught in transgression in Galatia, need to be warned. The Greek word for warn is *noutheteo* which means to put into the mind. The idle person is not thinking right. His disordered thinking has led to improper action and neglect. What he needs is someone to help him wake up and see that he is sinning so he can confess his shortcomings, repent of his irresponsibility, and be restored to spiritual wellness and usefulness in the church.

Paul mentions two other types of struggling people who need help, the fainthearted and the weak. Fainthearted people don't need to be rebuked and warned, they need words of comfort and encouragement. The word fainthearted means "little souled". When a believer becomes burdened and discouraged, it often leads to anxiety and worry and other failings. These folks need someone to minister words of encouragement and comfort to help restore their confidence and joy in the Lord.

The last category Paul addresses is the weak person. This is someone who has lost their strength, maybe through a physical illness, or the loss of a loved one, or some other difficult life circumstance. The weak person needs someone to lean on, someone to help them with their circumstances, someone to comfort and assure them that they are not alone and there are brothers and sisters to help them through their difficulty.

Paul concludes by saying that all of this needs to be administered to others with patience and longsuffering. All targeted discipleship and ministry is a form of Biblical counseling, which is helping to bear the heavy burdens of others and fulfill the commandment of Christ to love one another. A church that practices Biblical Counseling is a church where members practice speaking lifegiving truth from Scripture into people's lives and offer practical help and encouragement to one another as we all face the problems of life. This is why we are joyful about our commitment to Biblical Counseling.

Now turn back to Galatians 6. The command here is to restore the one who has been caught in their transgression.

*6:1<sup>1</sup>Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness*

The word "restore" means to mend, repair, and make useful again. It was a term used to describe the mending of damaged fishing nets. The work of Biblical Counseling is using the Scripture to repair spiritual brokenness so members of the body can become useful again. We also learn from this verse who qualifies to do this work of restoration. "You who are spiritual". That means they must first be a justified believer. Only justified believers have the Spirit of God. They must also be keeping in step with the Spirit. In other words, spiritually healthy. It is a believer who consistently displays the fruit of Spirit, notably the fruit of gentleness. A gentle person is submitted to God's dealings and agenda with him, and sees himself as a servant. It is a person who seeks to encourage and serve others for their benefit and God's glory. They have learned to speak the truth in love, even when it is uncomfortable. They know the truth (the Scriptures) and have developed the spiritual maturity and wisdom to communicate that truth in a clear, effective, and loving context.

Humility is essential. Paul states that the counselor must *“Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”* A qualified counselor recognizes and avoids the potential temptations associated with restoration work. He understands risks associated with personal ministry, and practices appropriate levels of intimacy and involvement by putting appropriate boundaries in place. For example, young women are to be counseled by older women, and young men by older men.

Godly counselors are careful to keep in step with the Spirit, and not become impressed with their own wisdom and talent. Biblical restoration is the work of the Spirit. Biblical counselors are just facilitators. They get the joy and blessing of being a vessel God uses to restore wayward brothers and sisters by bringing them the Scriptures. The word of God and the Spirit of God are the true agents of supernatural change. This is why prayer is essential in Biblical Counseling. Ego and pride short-circuit the process, because the Lord will not empower and bless any ministry performed for the glory of someone other than Himself.

This brings us to verse 2, which says <sup>2</sup>*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

This verse gives us the purpose and foundation for spiritual restoration, which is the fulfillment of the law of Christ. As we bear another’s burden and help carry heavy weights of trouble, hardship, and sorrow, we are expressing the grace and the love of Christ that He has shown to us. The practice of Biblical counseling is a picture of the gospel.

That brings us to verses 3 through 5.

<sup>3</sup>*For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* <sup>4</sup>*But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.*

<sup>5</sup>*For each will have to bear his own load.*

In these verses, Paul finishes this admonition with a clear mandate for us to be sure that we fulfill the legitimate reason for restoration, which is everyone bearing their own load. The goal of Biblical counseling is for members of the body to be restored spiritual health so they can function in the body of Christ. The goal is to bring them back in step with the Spirit and displaying a love for God and others.

We must beware of turning counseling into a man-centered pursuit of self-fulfillment, which is self-deception, self-worship, and idolatry. Such erroneous thinking and practice alienate people from the grace and blessing of the Lord. Deficient man-centered counseling has the counter-productive goal of helping people feel better about themselves by learning to downplay their guilt, forgive themselves, and promote their own idolatrous desires and agendas. The godly restoration of a believer results in them bearing their own responsibilities and then serving others sacrificially. It is never God’s intention to stimulate a sense of self-worth, but rather an obedience to the call for service and self-denial. The goal of restoring believers is the exaltation of God through a full submission to His will. As a child of God, we experience vitality, joy, and wholeness as we grow in our obedience, devotion, and love for God and learn to love our neighbors as ourselves. This restoration is an expression of the progressive sanctification of believers, and it is why we rejoice in our commitment to Biblical Counseling at WBC.

#### IV. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WBC

- a. At WBC, Biblical Counseling is not a peripheral ministry. If you are a healthy spiritual believer, you are competent to counsel others. Personal encouragement and discipleship using the Scriptures pervades all our ministry activities. That is why we provide counseling training at the beginning of every year available to every member of the church. We agree with the apostle Paul, who states in Romans 15:14 that <sup>14</sup> *I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.*
- b. We rely on Scripture alone to define our problems and counsel. Legitimate Biblical Counseling rests on the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures to address all the issues of life. II Peter 1:3-4 states <sup>3</sup> *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,* <sup>4</sup> *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.* We reject secular and worldly systems of counseling as adequate and appropriate to address our problems. God has provided a sufficient Word for our lives in the Holy Scriptures.
- c. If you are struggling with life issues such as addictions, family struggles, besetting sins, overwhelm, uncontrolled anger, anxiety, fear, doubt, or depression, speak with one of the pastors or your deacon to get some help. Our counseling ministry is here first and foremost for our members. You can be set free to glorify God in your current circumstances and be restored to spiritual health and vitality. Don't let your pride keep you from getting help. God resists the proud and gives grace to humble people.
- d. Finally, pray and ask the Lord how He might want to use you in the ministry of spiritual encouragement, discipleship, and restoration. Seriously consider participating in our counseling and discipleship training that we offer each year.

Closing Hymn #283 – We Are God's People