

Think Globally, Act Locally



By David Powlison

You know the problem well.

On the one hand, our Lord gives us this living *Scripture* so full of glory and good sense. On the other hand, you have this living *person* sitting in front of you, a never-to-be-repeated mosaic of troubles and wonders. But a fundamental disconnect is happening.

The Word is alive with the love of God in Christ Jesus. He invades our darkness. His words are so clear. He vividly portrays the human struggle. The wise will of God is realistic and directly relevant. Grace arrived on a human scale. Truth comes in person, attached to names and places, to weather and food, to troubles and joys. God shows Himself operating in the midst of the worst and the best and all the muddling in the middle. You hear the 'he said, she said' in the pages of the Bible. The once-for-all arrived in now-for-you form. Scripture came as a timely text, adapted to the varied conditions and experiences of real people, because God is a timely Redeemer.

But this person is a dark tangle. Other voices besides God's configure his reality. He doesn't get it and he's going astray—"ignorant and wayward" in the pithy words of Hebrews 5:2. Therefore you "deal gently", because we are all so alike. You pick your way through confusion, distortion, such good intentions gone so bad, such good perceptions gone sour, disillusioned hopes, petty conceits next door to amazingly generous acts, and the quiet grind of

anguish and loneliness. What goes on inside him is too often malignant, graceless, frightened, sordid, or depressing. Perhaps he even says the right words. But on his lips they sound simplistic or abstract, shallow or sanctimonious, even brutal. Those words of life *ought* to be meaningful. But they seem voided of nutritional content. (Or maybe it's your own life that's going bad?)

This disconnect is the stuff of ministry. The Redeemer says and does one story; how we live is another story. So how do you bring truth to life? How do you apply the Word of God? How does His truth *inform* our honesty, and our honesty *engage* His truth?

You know the problem well. It's your problem. And mine, too. And when you try to help someone else, it smacks you in the face. You grope to bridge the disconnect. Perhaps you earnestly rehearse the right answers, but the Velcro hooks of the Word find no Velcro loops in a slippery soul. The sweet light has no effect on bitter darkness. The call to wise love collides with willfulness or fear. Perhaps you get discouraged, or frustrated, even disillusioned. Ministry is hard.

Sometimes we forget that there are *two* counselors talking in every human conversation, and often the "counselee" is the more persuasive and skilled counselor! He, after all, lives his story from the inside. He knows the ropes in his private culture. You are the stranger exploring

strange lands. Counselors are extremely vulnerable to disinformation: things that are true enough but steadily misleading. Even if you keep your wits about you, you feel your powerlessness in the face of an uncanny force field. The sufferer remains comfortless. The eel wriggles out of your hands. These disconnects occur *exactly* where help is most needed.

This, by the way, is not only a counseling and how-to-live-your-life problem. In technical terms, it is also *the* hermeneutical problem. How do you connect “far horizon” (interpreting Scripture) with “near horizon” (interpreting a life here and now)? How do you do that double exegesis—of both Word and person—from which *ministry* arises? After all, our Bibles portray *those* people who lived way over *there* and way back *then*. Their lives revealed the redemptive words and demonstrated the redeeming works. But how do tangled here and now stories rivet to God’s long ago, far away stories?

You know the problem well. You try to rev the engine of Scripture, but the gearshift seems stuck in neutral.

A Two-bit Answer to the Million Dollar Question

This article will consider one small part of the answer. It is an important part, however. Learning this has made a huge impact on how I live and counsel. In a nutshell, *connect one bit of Scripture to one bit of life*. In other words, always ask two questions of yourself and others: *What is your current struggle? What about God in Christ connects to this?*

What is your struggle? You might be facing sufferings and troubles of various kinds (James 1:2). You might be sinning—doing and thinking various troublesome things (James 3:16). Usually it’s a tangle of both. God talks exactly about these things. How does the one Savior enter *these* struggles? What does He say? How does He help? What will He change?

Perhaps you’ve seen the ecology-minded bumper sticker that says, “Think globally. Act locally.” Keep the big picture in view, then do something constructive. The same principle operates in counseling ministry. Keep the big picture in view, then act on some detail. Get the whole Story on God. Get the whole story on this person. Know the themes both in Scripture and

in person. Then apply one relevant thing from our Redeemer to one significant scene in this person’s story. Bring one bit of Bible to one bit of life. You can’t say it all at once.

Charles Spurgeon put the principle in his inimitable way,

One bit of Bible prayed over, and bedewed with the Spirit, and made alive, though it be only a short sentence of six words, will profit you more than a hundred chapters without the Spirit.¹

One bit of Bible, bedewed with the Spirit, comes to life in one bit of life! You can’t deal with it all at once. Scripture never does. Ministry, like life, goes one step at a time.

Apply this first and foremost to your own life. The best advice I ever got on preaching was this: “Live your message for a week, a month, a lifetime. Then aim low. You’re sure to hit something.” The same thing applies to would-be counselors. What is your current struggle? How does God in Christ connect to you in this? You *can* give away what you *are* being given. What you give from out of your own life will be life-giving to others. When you are learning kindness from your Savior you will be able to teach unkind people. When you are learning to endure suffering well, you will be able to reach sufferers. It is the same with any other radiance of the Spirit: clarity, courage, humility, patience, joy, wisdom, gratitude, mercy, teachability, generosity, honesty. If you are unhesitatingly honest, you can help dishonest people.

Richard Baxter graphically named the alternative: “I confess I must speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my own soul. When I let my heart go cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused.”² As with preaching, so with counseling. In fact, the impact for good or ill occurs more instantaneously in counseling. People come vulnerable, with current struggles laid openly on the table. You cannot conceal your response.

¹ From *The Best of C. H. Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 218; cited in Anthony Ruspanti, ed., *Quoting Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 133f.

² Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), p. 61.

You don't have the luxury of planning even the next sentence to come out of your mouth. You immediately publish the distempers or radiances of your soul. You publish by the questions you ask (or don't ask), by how you listen (or don't really want to listen), by the interpretations you offer (or don't even think to offer), by the advice you give (or can't give), by the attitude you take towards people, towards problems, towards people with problems.

Let me make the case that one timely passage does three essential things. First, it *orients* this person to the moral landscape within which he lives, moves, and has his being: "The unfolding of Your words gives light" (Ps. 119:132). If someone tends to get lost in dark woods, the right road lost, then a good map and the light of dawn are extremely helpful! They don't actually get you anywhere, but they orient you. You see where you've gotten and where you need to get. It must be simple and concrete—something true, riveted to real life. Theological generalities, abstractions and intricacies don't do the job. General truths about yourself—your tendencies, typical patterns, themes that replay in your personal history—don't change you. You must be able to identify where your particular current struggle lies, what it means, what exactly is at stake, where to go. Where is the firefight between good and evil? Today, what is *your* particular battlefield? You must be able to trace the difference between truth and lies, clarity and confusion, hope and illusion, right and wrongs, insight and self-deception, true need and wild desires, love and self-serving, living faith and functional godlessness. Where do you need God's redemption and help? When you are disoriented in your current struggle, you don't even know your choices. You can't see the choice points. You can't choose. When your way is deep darkness, you don't know what makes you stumble. The right bit of Scripture—six words, two verses, one story—reorients you.

Second, a timely passage *brings Christ's grace and truth* to this person. Something that God is, says, and does must invade your life struggles, beckon you, teach you, master you. What about God in Christ do you need in your current struggle? The map-giver personally guides through dark woods. You need help, and the LORD is a very present help in trouble. You

can't make it without grace to help in your time of need. The people you counsel can't make it without help coming from the LORD who made heaven and earth. The first beatitude—essential poverty, need, and weakness—comes first for a reason. We need what God gives. We need our Father to give the Holy Spirit to us, that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that the love of God is poured out within us exactly when the heat is on. Augustine summarized the immediacy of grace this way: "Give what You command and command what You will." Some part of the good news of the Lord's redemptive purpose, will, and promise is absolutely necessary—right now. The Bible models how ministry and life focus on one thing at a time. A good theology book rightly asks, "Who is God?", and goes on to fill 400 pages with truths. But Psalm 121 cries out, "Where does my help come from?", and seizes on one necessary thing: "The LORD keeps me."

Third, a timely passage *invites change*. In the Bible's vivid picture, we "turn" to our Father, Savior, and Comforter. Oriented to our current struggle, and embracing what God says, we come to Him. He works in us to one end: change. Faith works through love—here and now. The central dynamic of the Christian life is a FROM...TO... movement. "Repentance is not merely the start of the Christian life; it is the Christian life."³ Faith does new transactions and conversations with God. Love does new actions and choices on the stage of life. When God calls, you listen. When He promises, you trust and talk back to Him from need. When He loves, you love. When He commands, you obey. You aim your life in a new direction by the power of the Holy Spirit who works with you. In every case, you turn.

These are the purposes of the whole Bible, the whole mission of our Redeemer. But a timely text brings truth down to consumable size. Think of it this way. When you get to know a person well, you come to know both the panorama and the details. But change walks out in the details.

³ Joel Beeke, "William Perkins on Predestination, Preaching, and Conversion," in Peter Lillback, ed., *The Practical Calvinist*, (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications), p. 204.

The patterns, themes, and tendencies are like the view from the observation deck of the Empire State Building. From one hundred floors up, everything spreads serenely before you. But the action and noise of life happens at the corner of 5th Avenue & 34th Street and takes the Lincoln Tunnel home to Hoboken. Our lives work as stories, in a running series of scenes. Like a novel or movie, big themes work out in small scenes. This is how God has made it to be. This is how He works. This is something that would-be counselors often don't get. It is something that preachers who do not counsel—and counsel well—often don't understand. When you counsel (or preach) in great and good generalities, people will nod, but they rarely change. They rarely *really* change. Jesus works for a turn-the-world-upside-down reorientation and redirection. Ministry needs to know the big picture, but it always takes the elevator down to "G." Get involved on the corner. Talk into the traffic noise. Drive over to

outcome I go broke!" (Teri is very self-aware about her tendencies, piercingly insightful about others, and has a pithy wit when she opens up.) Ditto when her boyfriend pressured her for sex: win-win meant lose. Teri makes herself inconspicuous in her small group at church, acting the agreeable chameleon. She's afraid to be honest even when she talks with you (whether you are her friend, counselor, or pastor), afraid to really express how deeply she struggles with bitterness, anxiety, despair, loneliness, jealousy, guilt, and fantasy. Of course her tendencies come into play towards you: you're yet another person whose approval can be won or lost. Teri is skilled at reading people, good at telling them what they want to hear, good at doing what they want her to do. She can easily feed you a steady and plausible stream of disinformation. Both the dark jungle of her inner world and the bland civility of her outer manner express an obsessive people-pleasing.

And, of course, some of the same themes

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Hoboken at rush hour. Change actually takes place in the watershed moments, choice points, and decisive incidents of everyday life.

So what does this look like while you're actually talking with someone? What does it mean for what you give a person to take away into the week ahead?

A case study

Teri gets easily intimidated by people. She's shy, often feeling insecure and tongue-tied in social situations. She fears disapproval, rejection, and abandonment by others. The press of such fears can be paralyzing. In general, to avoid social pain, she's overly compliant as she negotiates her way through life. This theme threads through every relationship. Teri gets cowed by her mom, manipulated by her boyfriend, bullied by her boss, and taken advantage of by coworkers. She used to be an easy mark for salesmen—and she's learned to simply avoid such conversations. "They angle for money; I angle for approval; in any win-win

play out in her relationship with God. A people pleaser lives for "my achievement in the eyes of others." God is yet another person that Teri is nervous about pleasing. She's deep down afraid of failing and being rejected by Him. Her Christianity is rather dutiful, joyless, formal, and haunted. She wears the clumsy armor of Christianity, not the lively weaponry of God. Her fear is not a wide-awake, liberating fear of the LORD. It's a furtive fearfulness about a capricious god who brings no gospel. She treats God with the same compliant superficiality that characterizes other relationships. There's not much real give and take anywhere in her life. It's easy to describe Teri's typical *modus operandi*, isn't it? Just ask her mom, her boss, any of her old high school gang, ex-boyfriends, or the numerous psychotherapists she's seen over the years. You yourself could probably add lots more details because you either know a Teri or have some Teri in you!

What's really going on with Teri? Why is she like this?

First, it is relevant that she lives in a world of other people who are often judgmental, manipulative, opinionated, and predatory. We live among sinners. It's difficult to live among people who consult self-interest first and foremost, expunging the real God's person and will from their universe. Teri lives out her life on a significant stage of "trials and temptations." The routine troubles and overwhelming hardships, the provocations and exacerbations, these pressures typically bring out the worst in her. Others' wrongs too easily disciple her into similar evils. If her boyfriend pressures her to sleep with him, what will she do? Others' wrongs too easily tempt her to retaliate with evil for evil. If her boyfriend drops her, will she be consumed with hatred, fantasies of vengeance, suicidal shame? But redemption steps into exactly this world. Here's where Christ and Scripture operate. Her sufferings are the God-arranged context within which the Holy Spirit is bent on remaking her. He aims to teach her to return good for evil: e.g., courageous and loving honesty, sexual purity, a purposeful life, forgiveness received and given.

Second, Teri's drift in core loyalties gets expressed in her outer behavior, thought life, and emotions. "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." She becomes disoriented. She compulsively misdirects her functional worship. Her preoccupation with the opinions of others and pressing felt-need for their approval consistently drown out concern for the Lord's opinion and sense of need for His approval and mercy. This unholy preoccupation hijacks glad trust in His real mercies to her. She lives deafened to His call to honesty and constructive action in real-time relationships. The Bible names her problem: "fear of man" is the usurper. Teri's compulsive anti-repentance and anti-faith are a typically human sin. Turning *from* God, she orients herself *to* other people's opinions and desires. Her anxiety, bitterness, immorality, and the rest arise for straightforward reasons.

Third, God also names the deeper solution: "grace in Christ." Jesus lived in the same kind of world as Teri. He faced the same kinds of people, who did the same kinds of things. He sympathizes with her weakness. He understands her current struggle with sins and

sufferings. He can help her. He was tempted like Teri, and yet remains without sin. He died for the real Teri who typically fails when tempted. He is truly tenderhearted towards her. He gives mercy and grace to actually help her in her time of need. He deals gently with her ignorance and waywardness. He teaches her to obey Him in new, constructive ways of living.

To identify Teri's sufferings, sins and Savior is not particularly difficult for anyone attuned to biblical categories. (Her mom, boss, friends, and therapists can name her "patterns." But they cannot name them for what they are, or name the Person who is the solution.) In fact, Teri already knows enough of the Bible and herself to know these general truths. Sort of. But not really. Truth has no traction. Empire State Building perspectives fly over the top of her life. General truth never rivets to specific life. Truth doesn't get down into the gridlock in the Lincoln Tunnel.

When you know all these things, you know the panorama versions of both Teri and Scripture. You know the "patterns" inside and out. Perhaps you yourself have done a topical Bible study on "fear of man," and have wrestled it through in your own life. You carefully read *When People are Big and God is Small*. You taught a Sunday school on the topic. Perhaps you've done a book study of Hebrews, and seen everything about Christ that gives solid reasons for God's people to embrace the "word of encouragement." Perhaps you studied some fine commentaries. Maybe you even preached a series of twelve sermons on "High Priest Forever" working through the letter. The church has those on tape. Should you have Teri do those studies, read those books, and listen to those tapes? Perhaps. At the right time, any of the above could be very, very helpful. But nine times out of ten (even 99 out of a 100?) I'd *begin* at a different place. I'd want to make some sense of things before she tried to study. And when she does some of those studies, I'd labor hard to make sure that she always gets to that place where timely text meets current struggle.

Where did Teri and I begin? We looked at both the significant bit of her life and the relevant bit of Bible. We talked through both simultaneously. This article can't capture all the interplay of life and Scripture. It won't capture

the conversation of counselor and counseled. But I can at least point to where we camped out.

One Bit of Life

After talking it over, we chose to address the workplace scene first. A coworker manipulates Teri into doing extra work, and she can't/doesn't/won't say "No." Why did we choose this scene?

First, it's the simplest of the many similar scenarios with boyfriend, mother, and church. It's relatively single-stranded and self-contained. Also it comes up regularly, almost daily. Teri only sees her parents on holidays; she and her boyfriend broke up recently; she sees people at church once or twice a week.

Second, the workplace is significant. A meaningful skirmish in *The Great War* can take place in the secretary pool on Friday afternoon. Teri can work out her faith concretely: think globally and act locally. In counseling ministry I'm always looking for the "laboratory of change." What is the small stage on which huge things about God and about herself are playing

One Bit of Bible

No one hands you a prescription card saying, "Use this verse." If 100 Christians sought to help Teri handle her workplace more faithfully, they might work from seventy-five different passages—and have good reasons in each case. I chose to work with a passage from the book of Hebrews:

He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." So that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5b-6)

Why did I choose this particular passage to minister to Teri? Answering this helps us understand why the other seventy-four passages might be equally helpful. It also helps you become more self-conscious about why you choose the passages you do.

First, I've often worked with it. I *know* it from the inside. I know what it means. I know how it works. I know how it connects both to people and to the wider context of God's

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out right now?

Third, Teri's motivated to begin here. It's her current struggle. She's frustrated with herself. She knows she's being duped, but still can't seem to help it. Troubles with parents and boyfriends have been deeper and more defeating. The struggle at work doesn't seem as overwhelming or insoluble as those other arenas for failure. To grow here would be a small but significant step in the right direction.

Fourth, the God-substitute that routinely hijacks Teri's heart does so specifically in this small setting. For truth to retake the controls here will send ripples—tsunamis—through her other relationships. To work through how and why she's manipulated at work is to grapple with the sin pattern that plays out everywhere else. The basic insights, truths, skills, strategies, and pitfalls generalize elsewhere.

revelation. I've seen how the dynamic it portrays works out into real life. I've seen how it adapts to different people facing various troubles.

Second, it's short and to the point. It's memorable. Teri can wrap her mind around it. These words take her by the hand and lead her home. God says and does something wonderful and necessary; she says and does something radical and life-changing. She can climb inside this interchange.

Third, it's about Teri's problem. She faces a bully and skilled manipulator. These words directly address people who feel threatened by others. They communicate the courage of faith that is the opposite of fear. Her situation is not exactly the same as the original hearers: financial loss or prison (the first readers of Hebrews); possible death and defeat in war (the people who first heard God make this specific

promise, Deut. 31:6); being surrounded by hateful people (the first person to talk to God using these exact words, Ps. 118:6). But the text is *intended* by God to wear her personalizations. Teri and I use Hebrews 13:5-6 in exactly the same way that the pastor who wrote Hebrews used the two Old Testament bits of Bible to speak to his people's current struggle.

Fourth, in compact form this passage contains the three core ingredients of the change dynamic: orientation, promise, and response. These words *orient* Teri within her current struggle. We carefully traced out the moral landscape: If fear of man, then cowardice; but if faith, then courage. Teri put it something like this: "On the one hand, when I erase God, I become terrified of what people can do to me. My over-compliance demonstrates when fear of man rules me. I feel alone and overwhelmed. On the other hand, when I remember, it means everything that God Himself is with me right now. I'm not alone. If He promises to help me, then the whole situation is different. I'm different, too, when I remember. So it makes perfect sense to say 'No' firmly but graciously." The *promise* of God meets Teri in Hebrews 13:5. God invades her workplace with key aspects of His mercy: "The fact that God Himself is talking (*He Himself* has said'), and what He actually says about His love (*I am with you; I will never leave you.*), speak right into my current struggles. He directly talks to me when I feel the sense of threat." Finally, Hebrews 13:6 invites Teri to *turn* and walk out the response: "He leads me out of my typical sins. When I believe the lie, I wimp out. When I believe the truth and trust Him, I stand up to people. God demonstrates the response of faith that I can make. This is so specific. It's as though He's holding my hand, walking me through what faith and courage think like and feel like and act like."

Fifth, I myself have lived this passage. That matters a great deal in ministry. I've needed Hebrews 13:5-6 and found it true, bedewed with the Spirit. In 1979, I went to Uganda right after the overthrow of Idi Amin. Our team worked helping orphans, doing street preaching, and training pastors. Kampala was in anarchy. Gun battles took place every night outside. Gangs of armed looters shot it out with each other and

with soldiers (who were little more than uniformed looters). One evening, we watched an innocent man rushing home five minutes after curfew, stopped by soldiers, pleading for his life, gunned down, his body kicked into a ditch. We had no defense should violent men choose to break in. We were afraid. And the orientation-promise-and-response of Hebrews 13:5-6 wove into my life. God said, "I will never leave you." I learned to say with all my heart, "You are my helper. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?," and then to walk out the implications. On many occasions in subsequent years (always more mundane!), this dynamic of orientation, gospel, and response became my own. So when Teri and I talk about Hebrews 13, I communicate first-hand knowledge, not religious-sounding theories attached to Bible verses.

A Final Word

A bit of Teri's life and a bit of God's self-revelation came together. The good will of Christ got personalized into the particulars Teri faced that week. She and I first talked about all this on a Tuesday (the third or fourth time we'd gotten together). Teri didn't dare try anything different on Wednesday and Thursday—but the wheels were turning inside, and friends were praying for her. Friday she took a deep breath, asked God for help, and said, "No, I can't do that. I've got other work I need to finish today." The coworker blew up at her. But later that afternoon they had a good talk for about five minutes right before leaving work. Then on Monday, the coworker was friendlier, even opened up with Teri, confiding some personal problems. A bully-doormat relationship changed in the direction of a give and take relationship. The lights came on in Teri's world, and she started to shine.

Of course, she still had a long ways to go. We all do. But Teri began walking in the right direction. Over the months that followed, she continued to make significant, courageous choices. She forgave her mother. She expressed love to her mother more forthrightly, more mercifully, and more generously than she ever had. She was more resistant and less resentful when her mother tried the familiar manipulations. Teri demonstrated real wisdom

in the way she thought through a major family crisis. She stepped up and helped the family come to a decision, rather than just staying in the background. She became much more constructively involved in her church. She even went back to talk with her former fiancé, and they had an honest reconciliation (person with person, not girlfriend with boyfriend). Even her demeanor changed. Her confusion, anxiety, and depression were gradually replaced by an increasing clarity, resolve, purpose, and joy.

You know the problem of the disconnect all too well. May God give you the joys of the reconnect.

Life in a dry and weary land is hard, uncertain, and dangerous. In the Scripture, the barren wilderness is a real place of trouble, the setting for many vivid stories. The wilderness is also a metaphor for life's varied troubles on the Christian journey—the place God meets us,

people. The truth of Christ fundamentally alters how church members treat each other when conflict arises.

Ministry is a simple joy when others want to be honest, to grow, to change. But often ministry gets complicated, difficult, and burdensome—just like people. Moses had a complicated ministry with burdensome people. So did Jesus. In fact, Jesus still has a difficult ministry with His burdensome people! William Smith reflects on a deeply personal, family experience in "I've Had It with You! Learning to Be Tender when People are Tough."

Many people live in a private wasteland—with the haunting, defeating, and depressing effects of their past sins. Pastor and counselors frequently encounter this problem—and, of course, you may also struggle first hand (1 Cor. 10:13). In "Redeeming the Bad Memories of Your Worst Failures" Robert Jones offers wise and sensible medicine. A poisonous memory replays events with the wrong interpretation attached. But as God's gracious and true

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walks with us, grows us. This theme threads through this entire issue of JBC.

Jeff Newman sounds the keynote in "Dependence in the Wilderness: Living Out of Psalm 63". He unpacks how David found life and hope when he was a fugitive in the desert. Newman then shows how Psalm 63 points to Jesus' response to life-threatening troubles and temptations. Finally, he works the psalm into the practicalities of our lives and guides us to personal application.

Churches often flounder when internal conflict disrupts ministry—God's quarreling, grumbling people. One core goal of JBC is to develop the church's role in effective counseling ministry—to remake His people in the midst of the wilderness so that we reflect the glory of God's perfect peace. Ken Sande's "Transforming Your Church: Cultivating a Culture of Peace" describes a crucial characteristic of churches that comprehend just how God's purposes work out among His

reinterpretation takes hold, the memory and what it means, and how it affects your life, begin to change.

The Israelites were meant to hike through the desert for a couple of weeks and enter the Promised Land. But adversity quickly brought out grumbling and complaining. Their motives were revealed: sins of unbelief and craving that drained away faith in God. In "Motives: Why Do I Do the Things I Do?" Edward Welch helps us look at life the way God looks at life, through the eyes of His two great commandments. God watches how you operate in two directions simultaneously: "Who do you love?" and "How do you love?" Your heart, soul, mind, inner man, spirit, conscience, eyes, and ears are always focused on something. Your hands, feet, tongue, members, and manner of life always live out those things that master you. So, your thought process, behaviors, and emotions always express motives; and your motives always find expression in thinking, acting, and feeling.

One of the hardest things to capture about biblical counseling (or any form of counseling, for that matter) is the “process.” The “he said, she said” of any living conversation is unscripted, unrepeatable, and defies complete analysis. Bringing Scripture into the conversation requires thoughtfulness and care. But to overhear a conversation can helpfully communicate a feel for the wise art of counseling another. How can a counselor step into the troubles, uncertainties, and wanderings of another person? Listen in on Timothy Lane’s counseling session, “Walking the Razor’s Edge of Truth and Love in Personal Ministry,” in his annotated transcription.

The Internet brings the howling wilderness right into our homes and offices. Melissa Partain’s “Sex and Cyberspace” explores an unprecedented variation on sin. Cybersexuality did not exist before the creation of the Internet. Of course, immorality is as “natural” as ever, but it’s never been so easy, so invasive, so pervasive, and so private.

Immorality doesn’t need to make the effort to arrange liaison or to visit a magazine shop or massage parlor. It can and does arise wherever there are computers, including church offices and Bible college dorms. The perpetrator might be a housewife entering an online chatroom, a businessman supposedly writing up the day’s orders, or a teenager curious about spam email. But Christ’s living truth engages, redeems, and leads us away from danger.

The Israelites feared they would die. They doubted the Lord would save them. Jesus’ disciples feared they would drown in the rough seas. They doubted the Lord cared. In “Jesus’ Way of Caring” John Bettler preaches the story recorded in Mark 4:35-41. Jesus gave the answer to that fear. He calmed the storm and saved their lives. But their experience of fear also earned them a reproof: “Why are you afraid? How is that you have no faith?” Then a second more intense experience of fear arose! It expressed something of the essential nature of faith encountering the real Christ.