

Gary Ricucci

SESSION 4 | GOD'S MEANS: GOD'S PEOPLE, THE CHURCH

I. INTRODUCTION

A church enjoying a faithful gospel-centered exposition of God's word is poised to provide a skillful and personal application of the gospel. Such a church will be growing up into maturity in Christ. (Eph. 4.11-16; Ro. 15.14-16a; Heb. 3.12-13; Heb. 10.23-25)

"The ministry of the word reproduces itself in the ministry of the people...This is what happens when the word of God as it were 'jumps' from the pulpit and starts running around our lives." *Sinclair Ferguson*

Broadly Defined: Biblical counseling occurs through the daily, Christ-centered, and *interpersonal care* within my various relationships, largely through personal conversations.

Narrowly Defined: Biblical counseling occurs in careful application of God's Word in the *concentrated discipleship* that all Christians need at various times. (The term "concentrated discipleship" comes from Steve Viars, *The Discipleship River. The Journal of Biblical Counseling. Spring 2002.*)

II. WHO

- A. **In order to effectively serve I must have a conviction from God's Word that a primary privilege of the body of Christ, and of each member of the local church in particular, is to share the Word of God with our brothers and sisters, in order to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, that they might become increasingly conformed to his image, for their good and his glory.**

From the Sovereign Grace Pastors College Biblical Counseling Course:

Taught by Andy Farmer (Phila., PA) and Pete Payne (Westminster, CO)

Biblical Counseling as defined by the *Biblical Counseling Coalition*¹

When people ask, "What makes biblical counseling truly biblical?" we unite to affirm:

"Biblical counseling occurs whenever and wherever God's people engage in conversations that are anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ and the Gospel, grounded in sound theology, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and prayer, directed toward sanctification, rooted in the life of the church, founded in love, attentive to heart issues, comprehensive in understanding, thorough in care, practical and relevant, and oriented toward outreach."

B. We are called to love, serve, care, and counsel (love > know > speak > do):

Ephesians 4:11-16	We are to be equipped to do the work of ministry
Philippians 1:9	We are to love with knowledge and discernment
Romans 15:14	We are able to instruct one another
Philippians 2:1-4	We are to look to the interests of others
Galatians 6:1	We are called to restore others
James 5:13-20	We are to pray for, confess to, and restore...others
Prov. 15:22; 11:14; 19:20	We need, and others need, wise counsel
2 Timothy 2:24-26	We must be able to teach
1 Thessalonians 5:14	We must grow in wisdom because a variety of needs requires a variety of counsel
Hebrews 10:24-25	We are to stir up to love and good works, we are to meet together, we are to encourage one another

III. WHY

A. In order to effectively serve I must make it my highest aim (for me and all others) through the power of the gospel, to know, glorify, and be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; assuring him or her of God's steadfast love, faithfulness, mercy, and grace.

B. We are called to fulfill God's goals

John 17:3 ...this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe,

2 Corinthians 5:9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

1 Corinthians 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

IV. HOW

- A. **In order to effectively serve I must recognize that I am as much in need of God and his grace, the Word and the Spirit, as the person I am counseling.**

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

James 4: 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

B. **Steps to Providing Care and Biblical Counsel**

1. **In order to know who I'm talking to, I must ask.** (Background, testimony, history, influence, experience, feelings, etc.) Listening to understand

Proverbs 20:5 The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

2. **In order to begin to know the problem, he or she must tell me.** (Even if his or her description or assessment is inaccurate, that too helps to identify a part of the problem)

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

3. **In order to provide answers, I must fully hear.** (Ask questions!)

Proverbs 18:13 If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

Ephesians 4:29...as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

4. **In order to speak with authority, I must speak the Scripture.** (This does not mean preaching, but rather graciously introducing the truth of God's Word.)

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is breathed of God and is profitable for teaching, correction, rebuke, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.*

5. **In order to bring hope, I must bring the gospel.** (Christ, and his finished work, have secured our complete salvation.)

Romans 8: 32 *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...*

2 Peter 1:3 *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,*

6. **In order to facilitate change, hope-filled, grace-filled doing must follow listening.** (Agree on a plan for application.)

James 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

James 1:25 *But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

7. **In order to grow, we (counselor and counselee) need others in the body of Christ.** (Who else can be involved for care, counsel, encouragement, and accountability?)

Ephesians 4:15 *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

V. WHEN AND WHERE

A. In order to serve effectively, I must actively and wholeheartedly participate as a member, with faith and faithfulness, in the specific local church in which the Holy Spirit has placed me, and joined me vitally to others, in the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:18)

B. Contexts for Care and Counsel

1. Informal (often spontaneous)

- a. Conversation – Sunday meeting
- b. Fellowship – Community Group
- c. Fellowship – Anywhere
- d. Hospitality

2. Semi-formal (scheduled and structured, but not necessarily designated)

- a. Community Group
- b. Man2Man
- c. One2One
- d. Ministry Teams

3. Formal

- a. Community Group
- b. b Man2Man
- c. One2One
- d. Designated Counseling (requested and assigned)

TO CONCLUDE (and REPEAT):

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Taught by Andy Farmer (Glen Mills, PA) and Pete Payne (Westminster, CO)**

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