

# Introduction to Biblical Counseling

## Why Does God Allow Problems?

**Key Words:** Communication, Conduct, Core Beliefs

### I. INTRODUCTION

**Ask the group why they believe God allows problems to come into our lives. Do believers experience the same problems, conflicts as non believers? If so, why? If not, why not?**

**A. The number one question people tend to ask when a major problem or crisis strikes them personally or someone close to them is, “why”? // That’s a very normal response. It is one of the first issues addressed in both the Old and the New Testaments.**

1. The problem of physical or emotional pain and loss is the primary subject of one of the oldest books in the Old Testament. // Job is one of the best known examples of suffering recorded in scripture.
  - a. In the very first chapter Job loses everything; sons, daughters, sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, servants by enemies and supernatural events (1:13-19).
  - b. Then his three “friends” attempted to explain why Job’s losses all happened, which reflected their understanding of pain and loss at that time. They wrongfully laid the blame solely on Job because of alleged sin in his life (Job 4:7-9).
  - c. God’s purpose for Job’s losses was for him to experience a relationship with Him personally. That experience began his healing.
    - 1) Job 42:5, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear but now my eye sees You.”
  - d. Key question: “How much pain can you take and still trust God?”
2. The problem of pain and loss was also the subject of one of the first books written in the New Testament – James, the half brother of Jesus.
  - a. James 1:1-3, “James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. (2) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”

- 1) Believing Jews were scattered to the east in Babylon and Mesopotamia.
- b. James connects the purpose of pain and loss to personal character development.
3. Jesus' disciples reflected the same belief as Job's friends, that all physical and emotional pain is the result of and punishment for sin.
  - a. John 9:1-2, "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2) And His disciples asked Him saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind.'"
    - 1) The disciples faced a theological problem. They believed that sin directly caused all suffering, so a person born with a handicap had to be a result of sin. Their only options were that he sinned in his mother's womb (Ex. 18:4) or his parents sinned (Ex. 20:5). But how does a baby sin in his mother's womb?
    - 2) The predominant theme throughout the Old Testament was that if one obeyed, he was blessed. If he sinned, he was punished (CF. Deut. 11:26-28).
4. Jesus expanded their thinking and adds another reason for the pain and loss in addition to punishment for sin.
  - a. John 9:3, "Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'"
    - b. God wanted to reveal Himself personally in the middle of a very tragic situation like He did to Job. (CF 2 Cor. 12:9)
    - c. The apostle Paul came to realize that it was through suffering that he would have a deeper and more intimate knowledge and fellowship with God.
      - 1) The Apostle Paul expressed it this way: Phil 3:10, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."
      - 2) "Know Him" by personal experience (*gnoseos*).
5. Jesus refers to this third option (to glorify God) again of the purpose of pain and loss at the death of Lazarus: God's glory.
  - a. John 11:4, "When Jesus heard that, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'"
    - b. This statement is ironic. Jesus' power and obedience to the Father were displayed by the healing of Lazarus. But it was this event that ultimately

angered the Jews (Jn. 11:45-53) and led to His death, which was His true glory (Jn. 17:1).

6. Even Jesus asked the “why” question of His Father while in deep pain on the cross.
  - a. Mark 15:34, “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”
    - 1) “Why” (lit. “for what reason”) did You abandon Me?
    - 2) His Father abandoned Him in a judicial, not a relational sense because Jesus was bearing the curse of sin and God’s judgment on sin (II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). Jesus experienced the unfathomable horror of separation from God. The answer was simple, He was dying for sinners. (Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:8; I Peter 2:24; 3:18)
7. If you are bitter today over pain or loss, you may have failed to use your loss to deepen your understanding of God, and/or used it to deepen your character.

**B. (Ironically) The word, “problem” does not appear in the English King James Version of the Bible and only three times in the NASV and the NIV. // All three of those situations are in the book of Daniel.**

**What do you believe are the personal benefits to “problems,” conflicts or crises? Describe a personal event you experienced when you went through one yourself. What benefit did it have on others because you went through it?**

**C. (Ironically) God does not view tragedies, hurts, or losses as problems. // He calls them trials, tests, temptations, afflictions, tribulations or sufferings. He, instead, views them as opportunities for us to experience at least twelve positive benefits. Most people have removed God from their problem.**

1. Growth in personal character. (What character quality is this building in me?)
  - a. James 1: 1-3, “James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. (2) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.”
  - b. The word, “character” comes from a Latin word, an engraving tool. It literally means “to stamp and engrave through pressure. God is making (engraving) us to look like Christ (Rom. 8:29).

- c. God is more concerned that we develop Christ like character than just fix problems. This character development is the practical process of the doctrine of progressive sanctification.
- 2. Gain insights to His Word. (What insights am I learning from His Word as I go through this?)
  - a. Ps. 119:71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes."
- 3. Deepen our understanding of His ways. (What ways of God am I learning?)
  - a. Prov. 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."
  - b. Isaiah 55:8-9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. 9) "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."
- 4. Deepen our relationship with Him personally. (How is this experience deepening my relationship with God?) By interaction with God
  - a. Knowing about God is good and important. But knowing God personally is better. There is nothing that deepens that personal experience with Him more than to experience suffering with Him. The fellowship of suffering with Him is one of the deepest levels that one can experience Him.
  - b. Phil. 3:10, "That I may know Him (by personal experience) and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."
- 5. Illustrate to others how they should respond to pain and loss. (Who is going to benefit from my godly response?)
  - a. 2 Cor. 1:6, "Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."
  - b. (NLB) "So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer" (II Cor. 1:4).
  - c. Philippians 1:12-14
- 6. Glorify Him. (How am I glorifying God through this?)
  - a. John 9:3, "Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'"

- b. John 11:4, "When Jesus heard that He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'"
  - c. Matt. 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
7. Correct wrong behavior. (What am I doing that is not pleasing to God?)
- a. I Cor. 11: 30-32 "For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31) For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32) But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."
  - b. Heb. 12: 3-13
  - c. Psalm 119:67,71 (King David learned this lesson the hard way.)
8. Prevent pride. (What are my areas of struggle with pride?)
- a. (Paul referring to his thorn in the flesh) 2 Cor. 12:7 "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure."
9. Learn obedience. (What lessons am I having to learn over and over?)
- a. (Christ's suffering) Heb. 5:8 "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."
  - b. Doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results is one definition of insanity.
10. Purify our faith. (What are the areas of my life where I can't trust God?)
- a. 1 Peter 1:6-7, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
  - b. Realize that only God is our ultimate source of help, strength and comfort. (2 Cor. 1:3)
  - c. 2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him..."
11. Reduce dependence on people, places or things. // What am I depending on in the place of God? i.e. relation addiction; codependence, idols).

- a. Phil. 4:19, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
- b. Judges 7:2 "And the Lord said to Gideon, 'The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me saying, 'my own hand has saved me.'"

12. Prepare you to help others. (Who is God wanting me to help?)

- a. 2 Cor. 1:4 "Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

**D. God does not waste any of the events of life you experience. // Yet, there is a purpose for everything. Nothing is an accident to God. In fact, you may hear people say in response to a major loss, "What a waste!" He controls events. They don't control Him. NOTHING ESCAPES HIS NOTICE. Nothing happens in a vacuum.**

**Describe an event you believe was a waste in your life. How did you come to view it differently? What scriptures were helpful to you?**

- 1. Rom 8:28, "And we know that all things work (fit) together for good (our benefit) to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."
- 2. Matt 10:30-31, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31) Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

**E. God definitely has a purpose for our "problems".**

- 1. Just like toothaches reveal decay that needs to be removed, often problems, conflict and trials are alerting us to needs He wants to meet for our benefit and His glory.
- 2. It is as important to help someone determine God's purpose for the problem (pain) as it is to reduce all the symptoms of the pain. The pain may just be a notifier of a need.
- 3. One of the most important factors in God's preparation for ministry is for the believer to see value and purpose in their pain.
- 4. Conflict can be a doorway to harmony.
- 5. Conflict reveals ineffective ways of getting our needs met.
- 6. Conflict creates an opportunity for understanding of each other so we can make positive adjustments.

- a. 1 Peter 3:7, “In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.
7. Conflict can educate regarding how to express love and how to be loved.

**How would life be if we did not have physical pain?  
What benefit does it serve? In what context would it be a gift?**

**F. God’s purpose for trials, tests is seen as much in the process of working them out as in the trial itself, and not just the end product of relief from pain. Biblical counseling in one facet of discipleship.**

1. James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall (or go through) into various trials, 3) (while) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4) But let patience have its perfect work, that (purpose) you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”
2. 1 Peter 1:6-7, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

**G. God’s purpose is not to fix problems but to lead counselees through them for their growth and His glory (II Cor. 12:7-9). Personal growth takes time. We do not fix trials!**

**Where do you think the concept of “fixing problems” comes from?  
What do people really expect when they are fixed?**

1. You do not fix trials, tests or temptations. You process them and you learn and grow through them. This was the personal experience of the Apostle Paul.
  - a. The Apostle Paul had a “problem,” a thorn in the flesh (physical) and it was inflicted by Satan (2 Cor. 12:7). He went to God. He was desperate. In fact, he went to God three times. (vs. 8) How did God address Paul’s “problem?” Did God “fix” it? If the “problem” was the thorn, no. If the “problem” was Paul’s response to the thorn, yes. The counsel God gave necessitated changing Paul’s core belief in his heart about the thorn. God connected the pain and the purpose for the pain. God’s counsel was two lines long.
    - 1) “My gracious favor is all you need.” (There will be no change.)
    - 2) “My power works best in your weakness.” (2 Cor.12:9).

- b. Paul needed two things to deal with his thorn; grace for the pain and purpose for the pain.
  - 1) “My grace is sufficient for you,” (vs. 9)
  - 2) “So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses (acknowledge my need publicly), so that the power of Christ may work through me.” (vs. 9b)
- 2. Project: Research the use of the words “endure, endurance, endured” in scripture and notice the context usually refers to a length of time.
  - a. Matt. 10:22, “And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.”
  - b. Heb. 12:3, “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”
  - c. 1 Cor 13:7, “...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”
- 3. The goal of Biblical counseling may not be the elimination of all symptoms of mental/emotional suffering. Our ultimate goal is holiness, not happiness; spiritual health, not just the absence of mental/emotional conflict (Tan. p. 37). Most people will say, “I just want to be happy.”

**H. We tend to create defense coping techniques (mechanisms) to avoid the process and to get relief from the pain and loss. Research has identified at least 40 defense mechanisms.**

**What defense mechanisms do you see people use? Which ones have you used? What were you attempting to avoid by using them? How were you able to stop using them?**

- 1. The human body has to defend itself against further injury and hurt when damaged.
  - a. ill. A cut finger develops a scab to ward off disease carrying germs. After the wound heals, the scab falls off.
- 2. The mind has its natural anesthetic to numb emotional or physical pain.
  - a. When we experience intense physical or mental pain, we faint. If we didn't, we could go crazy.
  - b. Insanity is one of nature's ways of helping troubled individuals find a less painful world in which they can exist and one with which they are more able to cope (Hughes, p. 65).





- 1) Deut 28:28; 34, “The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. 34) So you shall be driven mad (insane) because of the sight which your eyes see.”
- c. Some may escape unbearable and intolerable life situations by fantasy (make believe) and denial.
3. But God never intended for us to merely cope with our trials but to embrace them and grow through them by using His biblical tools.
  - a. A nervous breakdown is in reality a coping breakdown because nerves do not break down but defense mechanisms do.
  - b. It is like the mental circuit breaker had to switch to “off” because of an overload of electricity (emotional and physical).

**Have you or someone you have known experienced a breakdown? What brought it about? What was done about it? Was any scriptural influence brought to bear on the situation and if so, what?**

- I. **God reveals His process to us to motivate us to cooperate with Him for our benefit and His glory (Matthew 5:16). Your task is to cooperate with God in what He is accomplishing in your life.**
  1. 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. 4) who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”
  2. Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
  3. Philippians 2:12b-13, “...work out your own salvation ( incorporate into everyday life) with fear and trembling. 13) For it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (to give you the ability and desire to do His will)
  4. James 1:1-3
- J. **One symptom of a person not cooperating with God’s preparation is the refusal to appropriately discuss present or past painful events. When we can’t talk about it, we are probably emotionally stuck at that point of pain. // Why?**
  1. We may not want to acknowledge a past truth or reality (i.e. dad was an alcoholic).
  2. We do not want to re-feel the past pain (fear, guilt, shame).

3. We may not want to assume a responsibility to deal with or correct something (confess a sin, ask forgiveness, make restitution).
4. We may not want to admit or acknowledge a past motive (selfishness, greed, pride).
5. This resistance to talk about a past event may be motivated out of fear, not stubbornness. It is the fear of a perceived potential loss.

**K. Your task is to help identify where the one seeking help is at (A), and where God wants them to be (B), then discover what the hindrances/obstacles are in the process of taking them by faith from where they are to where they ought to be. // (CF, You Can Work It Out)**

1. Peter explains one process.
  - a. I Peter 1:3-7, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4) to obtain (purpose) an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed (heaviness, sorrow, grief, pain; in passive voice) by various trials, 7) that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
2. Remember, this is a growth process, not a quick fix for immediate relief. God’s goal for pain and loss is not always relief. Most of the time it is for growth in character and in spirit.
  - a. (Remember) The growth process is more like an onion with layers  than a banana  that you only need to peel once and eat. There are different layers at each stage of life.
3. Realize every person processes at a different rate and in a different way. He may use any number of biblical tools at his disposal.
  - a. Biblical counselors do not all approach counseling the same way. They may use different verses and different approaches to accomplish the same goal.
4. Notice Jesus never dealt with (processed or healed) two people just alike.
5. The Apostle Paul used many “tools” to help others.
  - a. I Thess. 5:14, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

- b. Gal. 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."
- c. Rom. 14:1, "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to dispute over doubtful things."

**L. TRANSITION: What is God's purpose in the process? Why does God allow problems?**

**M. THE FIRST MAJOR TASK IS TO UNDERSTAND WHERE GOD WANTS A BELIEVER TO Be. // If you do not know where God wants a believer to be, your ability to help them will be quite limited. It is like you are restoring a wrecked car to its original condition. If you do not know what the original car looked like, you will not know how to restore it. One married couple who was able to identify where they were "at" and where they should "be" in one session commented, "We learned more in this one session than we did in months of counseling with others." Where, then, does God want us to be?**

## **REFLECT CHRIST-LIKENESS**

**II. It is God's will that we all reflect Christ-likeness in our culture and environment. It's not a matter of fixing problems. // Is the believer living a lifestyle that reflects the character image of Christ?**

**What do you think a Christ-like lifestyle looks like in practicality?**

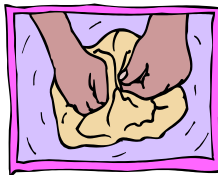
## **Life Long Plan**

**A. This Christ-like lifestyle is God's lifelong plan for all of us as believers. // Thoroughly understanding this Christ-like goal clears up confusion as to what needs to be done.**

1. Paul explains who is inside of the believer to accomplish this lifelong plan. It is a dual responsibility. We work; God works. It is like a two sided coin with different impressions on each side but it makes up one coin.
  - a. Phil. 2:12b-13, "...work out your salvation ( incorporate into everyday life) with fear and trembling 13) for it is God (the Holy Spirit) who is at work in you both to will and to work (energize) for His good pleasure (purpose)."
  - 1) It is to "work out," or put into practice in your everyday living (the salvation you already have), not to work for your salvation or justification (RCC). The Philippians were already "saints" (Phil. 1:1).

- a) Galatians 2:8-9, “for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup> and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”
  - b) Titus 3:5, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,”
- 2) The phrase, “work out” literally means “work down,” like kneading (mixing) dry flour into a lump of dough that contains too much moisture.

a) DRAWING



**Working Salvation into Daily Life**

- 3) It means to work the benefits of your salvation into your everyday life. Trials, tests or afflictions help you in that task.

**How have you observed believers failing to put into daily practice their faith in Christ? Why do you think this happens? What do you think they tell themselves that allows them to do this? What is the hardest part of the Christian life for you personally to put into practice? What has motivated you to do it? What has been the biggest hindrance in accomplishing it?**

- 4) God hates compartmental lifestyles, where there may be one lifestyle at church and a completely different one at home. Therefore, one of the reasons God allows “problems” is to motivate us to incorporate the benefits of our salvation into every aspect of our life.
  - 5) There is a tendency to confuse listening to God’s Word and obeying God’s Word (CF James 1:22-25). God only blesses (benefits) the doers, not listeners or learners.
2. The Apostle Paul explained how long God is going to carry out His plan to develop Christ-like character in you.
- a. Phil. 1:6, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

- 1) “Confident” (perfect tense): Paul was settled or confident earlier and still is that God will continue to work to completion (of Christ-likeness) until the day of Christ Jesus when believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
- b. No one really arrives at Christ-likeness (Phil 3:12) until they either go to be with Jesus or He comes for them at the rapture (I Thess. 4:13-18).
3. We naturally do not develop a lifestyle that does depend on God for its day-to-day maintenance. As long as we believe we have other options (like a plan B) we will turn to them first. King Asa illustrated this reality.
  - a. II Chron. 16:7-10, “And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: “Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. <sup>8</sup>Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand. <sup>9</sup>For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those whose heart is loyal to Him*. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.” <sup>10</sup>Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for *he was* enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people at that time.”
  - b. Drawing:
 

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          graph TD
            1[1. Baasha] --> 2[2. Asa]
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  - c. Asa turned his guilt into anger toward the prophet who was delivering God’s message (vs 10).

## Outsiders View

### B. This Christlike lifestyle was obvious to outsiders in the first century.

**What practical value is it to non believers to observe believers living out in their everyday life what they profess they believe? What usually happens when believers fail to do it? How has a failure of someone to act in a Christ-like manner impacted you personally?**

1. Early Christians were called “followers of the way” (Acts 9:2) before they were called Christians (Acts 11:26).
2. Jesus was called “the way” (John 14:6).

- a. He was the way for salvation and the way to live after salvation.
- 3. Jesus clearly stated one way to show that we are followers of His.
  - a. Jn. 13:35, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
  - b. I Cor. 13:1-8 (God clearly defined what He meant by love)

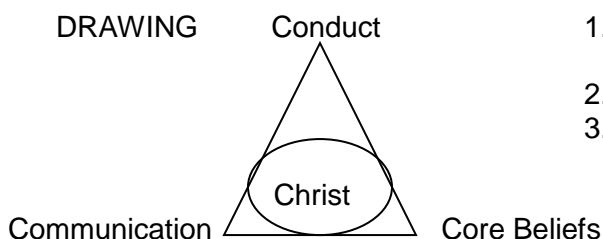
## Predestined Goal

### C. God's lifestyle plan for believers was a predestined goal even before creation. // This is not a new idea.

- 1. The Apostle Paul explained how long ago God designed His plan to develop Christ-like character in us.
  - a. Rom. 8:29, "For whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed (engraved) to the image of his son."
    - 1) "Foreknew" does not mean God was aware of a person, but it means a meaningful relationship with a person based on God's choice in eternity before creation. (BKC, NT, p.474) "He chose us in Him before the creation of the world." (Eph. 1:4) But it was more than just establishing a relationship. We were predetermined to be conformed (engraved) into the image (character) of Jesus Christ. What does that look like in everyday life?
    - 2) "Image" Character: "To stamp and engrave through pressure." God is stamping or engraving His image on our lives.
    - 3) "Conformed," having the same form as another," not externally or physically. Satan would desire that we be pressed into the mold of secular society and focus on outward conformity to society, not inward conformity to Christ (Rom. 12:2) and His character.

## Three Key Areas

### D. There are at least three main areas God wants to reflect Christ's character in our lives.



- 1. Communication: words, tone of voice
- 2. Conduct: habits, behaviors
- 3. Core Beliefs: attitudes, values

1. Our life is like a triangle. When Christ comes into our life at salvation, our life is like a circle inside of a triangle. He wants to round off the sharp areas of our lives: our conduct, our communication, and our core belief system (of the heart).
2. One of the main purposes of biblical counseling is to mentor, disciple, coach a person to correct these areas in his life where he falls short of reflecting God's character. God does not focus on fixing people, but conforming people.
  - a. Gal. 4:19, "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." (Lit. "take on the form of" in at least these three areas)
3. Just knowing there is an ultimate predestined goal is important to us as people helpers. We know what God is ultimately trying to accomplish in their lives.
  - a. Aristotle said, "Like archers, we stand a far greater chance of hitting the target if we can see it." (Hughes, Helping, p. 18) If we know what we are aiming for and can see it, we are more apt to achieve it.

## 1) DRAWING



- b. Selwyn Hughes states, "When we lose sight of the goal, we tend to focus on the parts or details of the crisis, like the airplane pilot who announced to his passengers, 'I'm afraid we are lost, but cheer up, wherever we are going, we are making good time.'" (Hughes, Helping, p. 18)

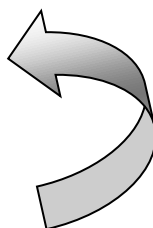
**Why do you think most counseling accomplishes very little lasting change?**

- c. Failure to know and understand God's ultimate goal explains why pastors and their workers do not know what to do in a crisis situation. They don't know the goal or destination that this crisis is designed to accomplish.
- d. It is a sad reality that not everyone want to be where God wants them to be. They will start off from the "At" position and head toward the "Be" direction and stop and turn right back to where they were "At."

## 1) DRAWING

**AT**

Their present condition

**BE**

God's Goal

- 2) Not every person really wants to be where God wants them to be. They want the benefits without the work and making the change. Failure to change will result in what they have always had. Remember the definition of insanity: “Doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.”

## God’s Christ-like Plan

- E. This lifestyle plan to be like Christ clarifies what the end product is to look like. (Image) // (the “Be” position) What does it mean (or look like) to be like Christ (beard, sandals, long hair)? Before you can influence or change you have to decide what you are trying to change. Enormous influence can be made by considering changing a few vital behaviors. Discover a few vital behaviors, change those, then most other problems topple like a house of cards. It is to be reflected in these three key areas: communication, conduct and core beliefs (heart). All problems in living come from at least one of these three areas.**

## CHRIST-LIKE COMMUNICATION

1. Communication in the words we say. // (Words only represent 7% of communication. Body language and tone of voice represent 93% of communication.)
  - a. Destructive words need to be replaced with constructive words
    - 1) Eph. 4:29, “Let no unwholesome (destructive, lit. “rotten”) words proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good (beneficial) for edification (constructive) according to the (their) need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

### a) DRAWING



- 2) The word edification means “to build up.” The primary material for construction in biblical times was rock or brick. To build up means to view your words like a brick that you are going to place into someone’s life for the purpose of erecting a beautiful building. Our choice is either to



randomly throw a brick to hurt or destroy them; or to strategically place a brick to build a person up.

- 3) Every one of us are what we are today because of the words that were or were not spoken to us.
  - a) Words spoken: "You crazy idiot!" vs. "That was a great job!"
  - b) Words not spoken: "I love you." "Good job!"
  - c) Former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton told a story about her father, who never affirmed her as a child. When she was in high school, she brought home a straight-A report card. She showed it to her dad, hoping for a word of commendation. Instead, he said, "Well, you must be attending an easy school." Thirty five years later the remark still burns in Mrs. Clinton's mind. His thoughtless response may have represented nothing more than a casual quip, but it created a point of pain that has endured to this day. (Washington Post, 3 April 1993,p. C1.)
- 4) Active hurts are caused from painful (rotten) spoken words. Passive hurts result from appropriate words that were not spoken.
  - a) Satan's goal is to use words or the absence of words to either kill, steal or destroy people (John 10:10).

**Share how you were greatly encouraged by someone's words and how it made a difference in your life. Also share how specific negative words impacted you and what you had to do to overcome their negative control. What words did you not hear that hurt you?**

- b. Yelling needs to be replaced with calm speaking // (Yelling is not a fruit of the Spirit, neither is screaming. It is an angry communication style that is used to control, to change, or to manipulate someone's behavior).
  - 1) Col. 4:6, "Let your speech always be with grace (favor, respect, value) seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."
  - 2) James 1:19-20, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20) for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."
  - 3) Prov. 15:1, "A soft answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger."
- c. Criticism needs to be replaced with praise, affirmation.

- 1) Criticism is usually rooted in anger.
  - 2) Gal. 5:15, "But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another" (relational cannibalism).
- d. Complaining needs to be replaced with gratefulness
- 1) Phil. 2:14, "Do all things without grumbling."
  - 2) I Thess. 5:18, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
- e. Adopt basic communication rules.
- 1) Do not interrupt, talk over, cut off each other, but choose to focus on listening and understanding what is actually being said (James 1:19).
  - 2) Do not call each other hurtful names, but choose words that build each other up (Eph. 4:29; Gal. 5:15).
  - 3) Do not hop around from one issue to another, but focus on one issue at a time.
  - 4) Avoid outbursts of anger as a means of communication, but remain under control of the Holy Spirit (James 1:20; Gal. 5:16-20).
  - 5) Avoid the use of physical signs of disgust, rejection and shame (i.e. rolling the eyes, sighing, hands on hips, frowning, throwing up your hands and pointing the finger).
  - 6) Do not withdraw, pout or use the silent treatment (Matt. 18:15).
  - 7) Do not walk away from an important discussion without verbal assurance that you will return in a reasonable time and continue the discussion.
  - 8) Absolutely no physical attacking, shoving, biting, poking or throwing things or physically restraining another adult.
  - 9) Do not push each other's hot buttons or bring up each other's past to use in the present.
  - 10) Agree on the communication rules before an argument.

**What communication rules do you have?  
How did you develop them? What rules would you add?  
What rule has been the most effective one you have used?**

## CHRIST-LIKE ACTIONS

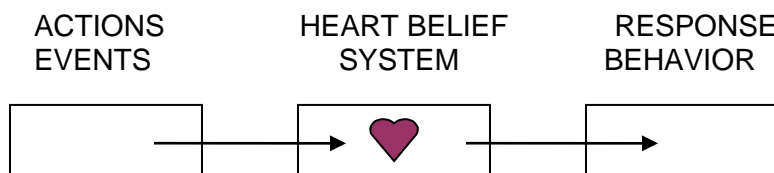
2. In the actions (conduct) we display.
  - a. Worldly lifestyle needs to be replaced with biblical lifestyle (sacrificial).
    - 1) Eph. 5:1-2, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2) and walk (live) in love, (how) just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."
    - 2) Rom. 12:2, "And do not be conformed to (the pattern of) this world (secular), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (biblically), that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
      - a) "Transformed" like metamorphosis, change from the inside out, like a caterpillar → cocoon → butterfly.
    - 3) I John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16) For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17) And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."
      - a) "World" (cosmos) here refers to an entity that is at war with God. This world system (culture) is competing for the believers' love, devotion and focus.
      - b) "If anyone loves the world" ... you cannot love a system that hates God while claiming to love God (CF, James 4:4).
      - c) "But is of the world" ... The world's system has totally factored God out the formation of their values and goals. France prides itself on being a secular society, void of any religious influence, as do many other European countries.
  - b. Rejecting needs to be replaced with accepting as valuable
    - 1) Rom. 14:1, "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions."
    - 2) Rom. 15:7, "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God" (with unlimited grace and mercy).
    - 3) Acceptance is not approval of wrong behavior; it is granting respect, worth and value for who believers are in Christ. Newborns in Christ need a lot of acceptance while they mature through a lot of wrong patterns of conduct, communication and faulty core beliefs.

- c. Revenge needs to be replaced with forgiveness.
  - 1) Rom. 12:19, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."
  - a) Revenge is very, very Biblical but it is in God's circle of responsibility to take it.
  - 2) Eph. 4:32, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."
- d. Selfishness needs to be replaced with giving.
  - 1) Phil. 2:21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus."
  - 2) 2 Cor. 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."
  - 3) Acts 20:35, "I (Paul) have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
- e. Abusive behavior needs to be replaced with loving actions. (Abuse is never to be tolerated. Revenge is God's responsibility. Rom 12:19).
  - 1) Eph. 4:31-32, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. 32) Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." (NLB)
  - 2) I John 4:7-8, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8) He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."
- f. Immorality is to be replaced with holiness. (62% of men are into pornography)
  - 1) I Thess. 4:3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification (personal holiness); that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality."
  - 2) Eph. 1:4, "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love."
  - 3) The goal of Christian living is not happiness but holiness. Holiness is not how high you climb, but how straight you walk when you hit the bottom.
    - a) I Peter 1:15. "As He who called you is holy, you also, be holy in all your conduct."

**If someone was to evaluate your behavior, what conclusion would they come to about your relationship with Christ? Why is behavior a frame around your words? Of the two, which is more important, behavior or words? Why? (CF, I Jn. 3:18; I Peter 3:1)**

## CHRIST-LIKE CORE BELIEFS of the HEART

3. Core beliefs in the attitudes (thoughts) we convey. // All behavior issues originate from the core belief system, the heart; not from situations that enter our lives. We do not experience a situation; then merely respond. The event first goes through the core belief system which controls the response.



- a. Lords (controllers, bossy, dominant, entitlements) needs to be replaced with a servant's heart.
  - 1) Christ's attitude is to be our norm. (Phil. 2:5-8) "Having this attitude (mind) in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus...He emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant and...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death..."
  - 2) Matt. 20:28, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
    - a) ILL.: Husbands are to have an attitude of a servant-leader, not a boss or employer. All of his entitlements (rights) are to be laid at the cross.
 

(1) Eph. 5:25-32
- b. Pride needs to be replaced with humility.
  - 1) James 4:6, "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"
  - 2) 1 Peter 5:6, "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor."
- c. Jealousy needs to be replaced with security in Christ. (Jealousy is a fear of being replaced.)

- 1) Jealousy is a fear of being replaced.
  - 2) When your ultimate security is anchored in your personal relationship with Christ, you do not have to fear being replaced in a human relationship. Nothing separates you from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:38-39).
- d. Anger needs to be replaced with peace.
- 1) James 1:19-20, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20) for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."
- e. Covetous needs to be replaced with contentment.
- 1) Phil. 4:11-12, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."
  - 2) I Tim. 6:8, "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content."
- f. Cold (distant, withdrawn) needs to be replaced with a warm, loving heart.
- 1) I Cor. 13:1-13
  - 2) Cold, withdrawing by a spouse is one of the four predictors the marriage is going to fail.
- g. Harshness needs to be replaced with gentleness.
- 1) Eph. 4:31-32, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.  
<sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
  - 2) Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- h. Perfectionism (fear-based) needs to be replaced with peaceful acceptance and balance.
- 1) Perfectionism is motivated by three basic fears: fear of discovery of a flaw, fear of rejection, fear of abandonment.
  - 2) Gal. 3:1-3, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2) This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the words of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3)

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

- i. Deceitfulness needs to be replaced with open honesty and truth. // All lasting relationships are based on truth.
  - 1) I John 1:5-7, "This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.  
<sup>6</sup> So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth.  
<sup>7</sup> But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin."
- j. Norm Wright: "What causes a major crisis to become a restrictive, crippling, eternal tragedy rather than a growth-producing experience in spite of pain? Our attitude."

**What core beliefs have you had to change since becoming a believer? What did you have to go through to change them? What negative beliefs do you still struggle with? What steps have you taken to change them?**

**F. This lifestyle plan to be like Christ clarifies for us why God allows problems or challenges to come into our lives. //This brings us back to the number one question a person in crisis asks, "Why?"**

- 1. A crisis (conflict) can reveal our misbeliefs or lies in our heart belief system of the heart we tell ourselves about God, self or others.
  - a. We may not live what we believe from day to day but we will always live out what we believe in a crisis.
    - 1) ill.: A president of a conservative Bible college taught all the senior theology classes with an emphasis on the sovereignty of God. He strongly believed God was going to give the college, meeting on a decommissioned air force base, the base chapel. Instead, it was given to a church. He had a total mental, emotional breakdown and became very bitter. That crisis revealed the true belief of the heart. He could not trust God with that decision. The crisis did not create the unbelief, it revealed it.
  - b. It often takes a test or crisis to help us develop our theology and stretch our faith (trust).
    - 1) I Peter 1:6-7, "In this (living hope) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials. 7) That

the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

- 2) Vs. 6 – “Peter encouraged his readers to put their knowledge into practice. Their response to the tremendous theological truths taught so far should be that they would **greatly rejoice**. Knowledge alone cannot produce the great joy of experiential security and freedom from fear in the face of persecution. God’s sovereignty needs to be coupled with human responsibility. Christians are responsible to respond in faith. Faith turns sound doctrine into sound practice. Faith acts on what we believe and produces conduct that corresponds to that belief.
  - 3) Vs. 7 - “These various trials have two results: a) they refine or purify one’s faith – much as **gold is refined by fire** when its dross is removed, and b) trials prove the reality of one’s **faith**. Stress deepens and strengthens a Christian’s faith and lets its reality be displayed. The Greek word *dokimazo-menou*, rendered **proved genuine**, means “to test for the purpose of approving.”
2. A crisis may reveal a need in the walk (life) that needs to be strengthened, corrected or reinforced in our communication, conduct or core beliefs.
    - a. James 4:1-3, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? (crisis point “A”) Is not the source your pleasures (selfishness, lack of self-control) that wage war in your members? 2) You lust and do not have so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain (frustrated desires) so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
    - b. Quarrels and conflicts revealed many things.
      - 1) Selfishness (inner sensual lusts, pride)
      - 2) Lack of self-control (hedonism, the pleasure goal of life)
      - 3) Unsatisfied lust for things
      - 4) Murderous actions (hatred)
      - 5) Envy
      - 6) Unsatisfied desires
      - 7) Fighting and quarreling to get what you want
      - 8) Selfish prayers (to squander on yourself)



- c. We may not know we had a need if we did not have a problem or conflict. André Crouch expressed this perspective in his song,

### Through It All

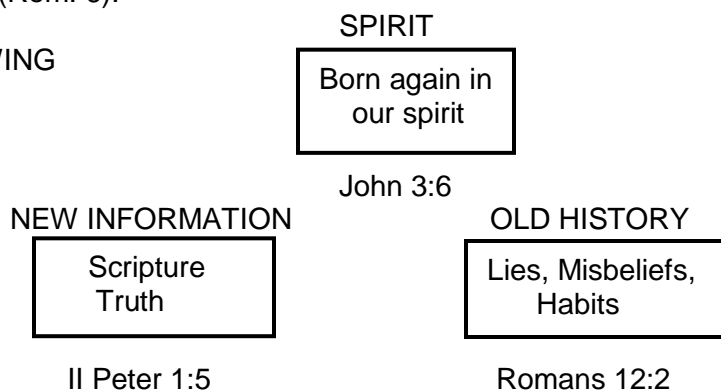
I've had many tears and sorrow;  
 I've had questions for tomorrow;  
 There've been times I didn't know right from wrong.  
 But in every situation  
 God gave blessed consolation  
 That my trials come to only make me strong.

I thank God for the mountains  
 And I thank Him for the valleys,  
 I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.  
 For if I'd never had a problem,  
 I wouldn't know that He could solve them,  
 I'd never know what faith in God could do.

Through it all, through it all  
 Oh I've learned to trust in Jesus,  
 I've learned to trust in God,  
 Through it all, through it all  
 I've learned to depend upon His Word.

- d. Heb. 14:4-11, God's discipline is for the purpose of correcting direction in our lives for our benefit and God's glory.
3. A crisis or trial may help indicate what information box in your mind you are living from or what old mental tapes you are playing.
- a. We are born again in our spirit (John 3:6) but we are not born again in our mind. So we can be born again (in our spirit) and live out of our old thinking patterns in our mind (i.e. James 4:1-3). Therefore, we change as we correct our thinking by renewing our mind (Rom. 12:2). As we add new information (II Pet. 1:5), we are able to live out of our new information box of scriptural beliefs. It is now a choice as to which information box we are going to live from (Rom. 6).

- b. DRAWING



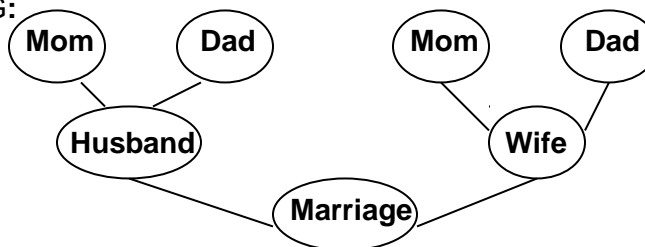
- c. Matt. 15:18-19, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart (core belief system), and they defile a man. 19) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
- d. Because the heart (core belief system) directs our words, attitudes and behavior, it must be changed by God through His Word alone.
- 1) Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."
4. A crisis can reveal generational wounds coming down to us from our birth family.
- a. We may act out our birth family wounds and patterns in our present relationships and think they are normal. A conflict or problem can call our attention to them and that they need to be changed.
- b. Early wounds as a child/youth can show themselves in unreasonable displays of anger in adulthood (fear, jealousy). If a person has accumulated anger and is stuck at a level of "9", it only takes a level "1" hurt to cause an angry reaction at a level of "10". Overreaction is usually an accumulative reaction.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

Stuck at level "9" - A hurt on a level of "one" can drive you to a "ten."

- c. People who see a level "10" of anger when the offense was a level "1", often wonder why the person so over-reacted. They didn't. It was an accumulative reaction from the past.
- d. Abandonment issues in child/youth can show themselves in irrational fears in adulthood and show up in people who are noted to be controllers. Control of people, places and things is done out of fear, not faith. This fear came down generationally and affects present day relationships.

1) DRAWING:

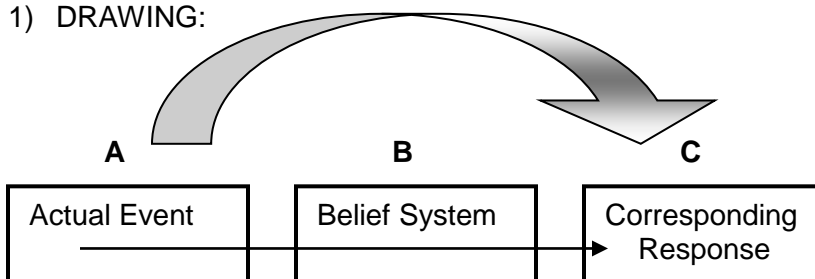


- e. Generational wounds and habits often show up in our relationships, especially in marriages and in parenting patterns.

**What hurtful generational patterns have come down from your grandparents and parents and are now causing you difficulty in your present relationships?**

5. A crisis will reveal the meaning we put on the events of life in our core belief system.
  - a. When we experience something in life, we think that we go straight from the event to a reaction (A to C). The truth is, every event is filtered through our core belief system (our heart, B), then we respond. That is why it is not as important what happens to you (James 1:1-3) as the meaning you put on it. Many of those meanings come from lies we believe about ourselves, others or God. We place meaning or value on those things. Things are only as important as we want them to be. The “issue” is rarely the “issue”.

1) DRAWING:



- b. Once the core belief lie is revealed, it then can be renounced. Then replace the lie with the truth and choose from that day forward to yield your mind to truth.
  - 1) Romans 6 explains how and why believers can now yield or present their bodies (which includes the brain) as a tool to do the next right thing. They are no longer addicted, dependent, or controlled by sinful urges.

**What lies have you discovered about yourself, God or others as a result of a conflict you experienced? How did you go about replacing the lie? What difference did it make in you and your relationship?**

6. We are not only to be living a lifestyle that reflects Christ but also growing daily to become more like Christ.

## GROWING IN CHRIST-LIKENESS

### III. Growing in a lifestyle like Christ

#### A. God desires that we grow up in His grace to be complete and mature in Christ.

1. We are encouraged to mature in many passages of scripture.
  - a. Eph. 4:13, "Until we attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man..."
    - 1) "Mature": // Having reached its end; finished, mature, complete (Abbot Smith, p.442)
    - 2) "Complete": // In all spiritual aspects
  - b. I Peter 1:3-7
  - c. Gal. 4:19
  - d. James 1:2-4
2. "If you want to become more like Jesus, I can't imagine any better thing to do than to get married. Being married forces you to face some character issues you'd never have to face otherwise" (Sacred Marriage, Gary Thomas, p. 21).
3. Maturing is not a spiritual gift nor is it a by-product of salvation. It is something we must work at our whole lives (adapted, Friesan, p.27).
  - a. Raising one's maturity level greatly increases the possibility of having a satisfactory marriage, great parenting and family leadership skills (ibid).

#### B. God is grieved by long term spiritual infancy (both spiritually and emotionally).

1. Spiritual babies are expected to grow.
  - a. Heb. 5:12, "For though by this time you ought to be a teacher, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" // (i.e. blind, short-sighted and stumbling, I Peter 1:10).
    - 1) Solid food gives strength for adult challenges that liquid diets do not give.
2. The Apostle Paul expressed his frustration with spiritual immaturity in those who should have been more mature by now.
  - a. I Cor. 3:1-3, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2) I fed you with milk and not with

solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it , and even now you are still not able; 3) for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

- b. They lacked the tools and the maturity to deal with problems, so God allowed the conflict to arise to show the need and to urge them to grow up, or to alert them to their selfishness.
3. Adult infants will always be needy adults and are unable to meet the needs of others. They are unable to care for themselves emotionally and spiritually. They can't appropriately receive important information from others that would be helpful to them. They fail to ask for what they need because they dysfunctionally believe If you really cared for them, you would figure out what they needed. They do not grow therefore they remain emotionally and spiritually handicapped (adapted, Friesen pp. 20,21).
4. Spiritual babies are not allowed to have major leadership roles in the church.
  - a. I Tim. 3:6, "Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride, he fall into the same condemnation as the devil."
  - b. "Novice" or recent convert (Greek neophyton; "neophyte"). Because his rapid advancement into a leadership position might fill him with pride and conceit, he would then experience the same kind of judgment that Satan incurred as a result of his pride (BKC, NT p. 737).

**In what ways have you been hurt by an immature person in leadership? How did you respond? What did it do to your faith?**

**C. God designs challenging times (trials) as an opportunity to grow in our faith and to correct misbeliefs of our hearts // about ourselves, God, others. Also, they are designed to develop (engrave) our Christ-like character and prepare us to help others.**

1. Jesus tested His disciples to expand and refine their faith and to instruct them.
  - a. Philip – John 6:5b-6, "Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?' And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do" (but Philip did not).
  - b. His tests were never designed to tempt us to do evil.
  - c. James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."
2. God tested King Hezekiah to reveal to the king his real heart.

- a. II Chron. 32:31, “However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.”
- 3. God tested His nation Israel in order to benefit them.
  - a. Deut. 8:16, “Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end.”

**D. God desires us to reflect Christ back to others while we are growing in our spiritual lives.**

- 1. Jesus commanded we reflect Christ back to others.
  - a. “Let your light (life) so shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify you Father Who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).
- 2. Jesus defined how it is to look.
  - a. “By this (standard) all men will know (see) that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35) // (CF, I Cor. 13).
  - b. “Maturity will be most clearly visible in the way people relate to each other” (Crabb, Understanding, p. 195).

**E. The task of counseling is identical to the task of the church in promoting maturity (Crabb, Understanding, p.195).**

**F. Why does God allow problems? To grow us into spiritual maturity and reflect Christ’s character in our conduct, communication and core beliefs.**

**IV. Summary Keys**

- A. Realize the positive benefits of “problems.”**
- B. Focus on the process of working them through.**
- C. Refuse to use coping techniques that avoid solutions.**
- D. Cooperate with God in the process.**
- E. Admit where you are and where you ought to be.**
- F. Picture your goal of living, growing, and reflecting a lifestyle like God.**
- G. Reflect Christ in your communication, conduct and core beliefs.**
- H. Use a crisis to reveal and identify misbeliefs, personal needs, core beliefs.**

**V. Bibliography**

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## Why Does God Allow Problems

### Small Group Questions

1. What were the occasions in your life that may have caused you to ask, “Why” of God?
2. What positive benefit did you ultimately gain by going through these difficult times?
3. How did God “speak” to you in the midst of these difficulties?
4. When did you come to understand that God was taking you through a process and was not just going to “fix” the trial or difficulty?
5. In what ways did you change your speaking, thinking and acting as a result of going through a major trial or even after you came out of it?
6. What areas in your life did you grow in as a direct result of some difficult times you experienced?
7. What advice would you give to one who is going through a difficult trial now?