

# **Focused Discipleship**

## **What are Four Characteristics of a Discippler?**

**Key Words: Processor, Learner, Illustrator, Reproducer**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. People are turning to the church for answers to their problems because of the political, social, economic and relational crisis they are facing.**

1. ill. Christian church, Omaha, Sunday bulletin announcing Wed. pm seminar options: parenting, finances, church history and counseling (this section full).
2. Churches beginning to stop being a museum for saints but becoming a hospital for sinners.
3. I agree with Dr. Selwyn Hughes when he says, "I am convinced that helping people with their problems is not just the work of ministers and trained counselors but the task of every Christian no matter at what stage he or she may be in the Christian life (Helping, p. 85).
  - a. To try to solve all problems through pulpit preaching is like trying to put drops into someone's eyes from an eye dropper held at a height of fifty feet (Helping, p. 11).
4. One of the major purposes of the body of Christ is to help people with their problems.

#### **B. Pastors' concerns regarding counseling.**

1. Question if it is a legitimate ministry for Christians.
2. Does it have adequate biblical support?
3. Is it just another way to get secular psychology into the church?
4. Should counseling be done exclusively by trained pastors?
  - a. Theological training often leaves out counseling training programs.
    - 1) The division of laity and clergy ignores the reality of spiritual gifts

- b. Christian counseling is basically discipleship counseling when you are dealing with problems in living, not any of the psychological disorders.

**C. As a believer, you are the most important person in your community and country not foreigners because you know the language/culture.**

1. This is the reason when the gospel was first preached at Pentecost it was preached to the listeners in their own language as native speakers (Acts 2:6,8).
  - a. God did not give everyone the ability to hear one language.
2. God wanted the people to hear it in their own language and culture.

**D. Lay counseling programs may attract people on at least three levels.**

1. Desire to work through their own personal problems in living.
  - a. They attempt to fix their own present problems in living.
  - b. Attempt to fix their past.
    - 1) 75% of people who go to a psychiatrist go with problems in living (5% organic brain diseases, 20% need further examination).
    - 2) Gallup poll reveals 63% say religion can answer all or most of today's problems.
2. Desire to learn how to help others.
  - a. Dr. Hadidian has said, "Unfortunately, most Christians stay in a stage of spiritual immaturity for many years because there is no one to take an interest in their growth in Christ (p. 13).
3. Some just minister to others out of love, compassion, and obedience and to share their healing.
  - a. 2 Cor. 5:14, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."
  - b. Gal. 6:2, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

**E. Lay counseling can be very effective.**

1. Carkhuff and Truax study. "Lay helpers" were compared with professionally trained counselors, and so concluded "the patients of lay counselors did as well or better than the patients of professional counselors" (Hughes, p. 14).

2. The Durak study which surveyed 42 comparative studies concluded, “that para-professionals or lay counselors were generally as effective as, and sometimes even better than, professional helpers.”
3. Dr. Jerome Frank suggests, “anyone with a modicum (small amount) of human warmth, common sense, some sensitivity to human problems and a desire to help, can benefit many candidates for psychotherapy.”
  - a. I’ll. Selwyn Hughes shares that as a young man he sat in church with a deep spiritual problem he could not resolve. Leaving the church sad and dejected, a man tapped him on the shoulder and said, “Can I have a word with you for a moment?” Selwyn said, “Never as long as I live, will I forget the impact he made on me as he said, “I could not help noticing that something is bothering you. I am not a counselor and I have not great experience in helping people with their problems. But I can promise you one thing – I am a good listener and I care!” Those two last words were just what I needed. Within minutes, I had shared my problem and although he was unable to fully unravel it and solve it yet Selwyn said he left that service walking on air – all because someone cared.” (Hughes, Helping, p. 13).

**F. Project: set up files in each category and begin to select articles, books, sermon notes, personal journal notes that fit in each category.**

**G. Project: built a scriptural library of at least a few basic scriptures to address these crucial issues. These are your biblical tools.**

**H. To be an effective people helper one must be personally convinced that scripture answers every problem in living, either in precept (specific scripture) or in principle.**

1. God has declared it.
  - a. 2 Peter 1:3, “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

## **Mental Roadblocks**

**I. But there are at least three common mental roadblocks that may prevent people from wanting to give spiritual care or to disciple others (encouragement and counsel).**

1. The first obstacle is, “Who am I to help others because I have or have had so many problems myself... or had such a bad background?”

- a. Marlin Hewett once said, "I would like to be able to counsel others, but I have so many problems of my own to solve before I can help other people." Marlin believed he had to be near perfect before he could spiritually help others.
- b. You may think that since you have not worked through all your own personal problems in living completely, you do not feel qualified to help others. But the good news is; having a problem and working on it biblically is the first quality God is looking for in a biblical counselor or care giver. If Jesus was here physically, He would select a 'doer' (practice) of the Word of God.
  - 1) James 1:22,25, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>25</sup> But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."
- c. Not having worked through their own problems was one of the top six reasons why pastors will not counsel in Venezuela. Five other ways they do deal with people's problems are:
  - 1) Read your Bible more, pray more, fast more for hours and days.
    - a) Ironically, these were not all the only solutions mentioned in the epistles.
  - 2) Ask them to leave and go to another church.
  - 3) Remove them from office and discipline them for months.
  - 4) Just ignore the problem out of fear.
  - 5) Shame them for having problems because they are Christian.
- d. But, God encourages us to admit (acknowledge) our needs so that He can meet them personally, then, help someone else from what we learned.
  - 1) Revelation 3:16-17, "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."
  - 2) God just wanted them to acknowledge their need so He could heal them for their benefit and His glory.
    - a) Matt. 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
- e. This reality may call for a change in your perspective regarding problems and God's purpose for them. It is like changing to a different pair of glasses and looking through a different set of lenses at the same object.

- 1) Jesus was constantly changing the perspective (glasses) of his listeners regarding life and ministry. He did this six times in Matthew, chapter five alone (verses 21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44).
2. The second obstacle is, "I don't know what to say" or "I'm afraid I'll say the wrong thing" or "I don't think I could do it."
  - a. James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom (practical knowledge), let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
  - b. It goes without saying a people helper must be a student of the Bible for his own spiritual growth and to learn more biblical tools to help others.
  - c. The balance of the discipleship counseling material will answer this obstacle.
3. The third obstacle is that we do not see any personal value for our efforts.
  - a. One pastor stated he stopped counseling because after people became healthy or worked through their issues, they left the church.
  - b. This may be short sighted because all our efforts for the Lord are going to be recorded for eternity.
    - 1) Gal. 6:9, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.
    - 2) 2 Tim. 4:7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

There are many important qualities that God looks for in a person that He uses for His service regardless of what that ministry is.

Ask the group what qualities they think makes a good biblical counselor.

They may list prayer, knowledge of God's Word, faithfulness, holiness, discipline, love, filling of God's Spirit, compassion, good listener, sensitive, just to name a few.

All of these and other qualities are important for any service for God. Yet there are four distinct characteristics that God looks for in a biblical counselor.

## Four Characteristics of a Disciple from God's Perspective

### PROCESSORS

- I. **(Processor) Disciples are in the process of working through their own personal problems. and learning to get their needs met in a healthy way and they are using their biblical tools to do it. Tools are clear Scriptures or principles taken from Scripture or lessons we have learned through experience or research that does not violate scripture (i.e., Dr. Chapman's book, Five Love Languages).**
- A. **Past or current personal struggles and failures can be one of the top reasons that prevent people from becoming biblical care givers. Why?**

Ask the group why they feel their past or present struggles may prevent them from becoming a biblical care giver.  
List their reasons. Do not evaluate or criticize them.  
Encourage them to summarize their reasons in a word or brief statement.

1. One of the strongest objections to becoming a biblical care giver is the feeling (thinking) they must have all their problems solved themselves before they are qualified to help others. They must be perfect (Pharisees).
  - a. Their logic says, "If I am having so many struggles myself, how can I help others? I feel like a hypocrite."
  - b. The lie behind this logic is that you have to be struggle-free before you can help others (i.e., perfect). This lie is planted in the core belief system of the heart as a result of past hurtful experiences and/or incorrect preaching and teaching. It is as illogical as stating that a medical doctor must always be well and never get sick in order to medically treat others.

Can you recall anyone who was a big help in your life as a mentor, discipler, counselor, pastor or teacher that did have a struggle in their personal life or relationships with their family members?

- c. Dr. Friesen asks: Where did this need-to-be-perfect lie come from? It was unintentionally taught by those who may have hidden their own personal struggles while ministering publicly. There was a lack of appropriate transparency and honesty. The pressure to be the perfect example pressured them into hiding their own struggles while conveying to believers that successful servants of God have overcome all their struggles and are happy all the time. "To live authentically is to honestly confront the challenges which we all face. We are all broken. We must all face our woundedness..." (Friesen, p. 4).

- 1) ill." Chuck Swindoll confessed to his church one evening that he had been struggling with lust all week long.

How do you feel toward leaders, teachers, mentors who were honest about their current struggles?

What was your response when you discovered the truth or reality about that leader?

What are some of your own personal struggles that would be appropriate to share with this group?

What do you fear most about sharing your struggles with others? How do you feel now towards those who just shared their needs?

2. If you want to be successful at helping people, you must face the fact that God will allow you to go through many personal difficulties so you will be sensitive to the feelings of others.

**B. (But) Satan can use your past or present failures and struggles to discourage you from being a biblical counselor (guilt, shame, fear). But God does just the opposite. He uses your past to help others in the present (II Cor. 1:1-4).**

How have you experienced Satan's condemning accusations?

Describe your struggle, how you handled the attack and the result.

1. Satan is an accuser of the believer and he mixes both truth and lies. The truth is you are having struggles. The lie is since you have struggles, these disqualify you from helping others. Unfortunately, the lie outweighs the truth in our thinking. ("Who are you to help a couple with a marriage problem when you had an affair?" or "Look who's talking, you and your spouse have conflicts.")
- a. Ultimately the accuser will be destroyed.

- 1) Rev. 12:10b, "For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night."
- b. But until then he is searching everywhere to find believers that he can disable or destroy now.
  - 1) I Peter 5:8, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil (slanderer). He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (destroy)."
2. Satan condemns (slanders) you before God day and night for your failures and weaknesses, then, turns around and condemns you to yourself.
  - a. He will use your own voice to deceive you into thinking it is your voice, not his.
  - b. Our lie-based, deceitful heart tends to agree with these lies and therefore they feel true. They may even feel truer than truth.
    - 1) Jer. 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (vs. 10, God can).
3. One of Satan's goals is to use a past or present problem, weakness or failure to separate you from your faith in God so that you feel you now cannot help others. Satan attempted to do this to Peter.
  - a. Jesus first predicted what would happen (Peter would fail) then He visualized a ministry strengthening others in the same area of weakness in which he failed.
    - 1) Luke 22:31-32, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32) but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
      - a) Notice Jesus did not pray that Peter would not be tempted or that he would not fail. That was inevitable. But Jesus saw the benefit of Peter's failure as preparation for him to prevent others from failing or to help others to be restored because of their past failure.
4. God has documented in Scripture just how Satan was wrong.

What experiences have you had in helping someone who has gone through the same or similar things you have gone through?

Ask those who have gone through difficult experiences to visualize (dream) how God could use them to help someone else in the future.

Ask them why they think this is so.

**C. (For the record) Old Testament saints were classic examples of those who were used by God while struggling privately and publicly.**

1. Usually these Old Testament personalities are preached or taught to emphasize positive actions or used to illustrate godly character. This is only one of the purposes God had their biographies written down.
  - a. I Cor. 10:11, “Now these things happened (imp. verb: “from time to time”) to them as an example, and they were written (imp. verb: “from time to time”) for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”
    - 1) “Instruction” verb (*tithem*): “to place” + to emphasize a point (nous) “mind” “to place or put into the mind” “to drive a point home,” “to emphasize a point.”
    - 2) We learn from their failures.
2. But God did not just record their success, but He also recorded their weakness and failures to provide us a balanced picture and to give us encouragement that God can use flawed, weak, fearful, and needy people like us.
  - a. Picture a round pizza with one slice representing the flaw or mistake. True, one slice may be “flawed,” but most it is not.

GOOD



FLAW

- b. God calls David a man after His own heart, but God did not ignore David’s adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11,12). It was David’s intent of his heart that followed hard after God, but he also chose at one point in his life to do a very selfish thing (sexually violate Bathsheba and kill her husband). David’s overall intent never changed, but he did make one major mistake when he failed to control his lust (Ps. 51).

## Old Testament Examples

**D. Examine the character, failures, and weaknesses of additional Old Testament saints whom God used despite their struggles.**

### MOSES, the Murderer

1. Moses was painfully aware of his weaknesses when told by God to go to Pharaoh to seek the release of the Israelites who were now in Egyptian slavery (Ex. 3:1-22). What personal struggles did Moses experience?

- a. Moses struggled with feelings of inferiority and was painfully aware of his inadequacy, his lack of authority, and leadership skills.
- 1) Ex. 3:11, (feelings of inferiority) “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’”
  - 2) Ex. 4:10, (feelings of inadequate skills) “... And I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in the past...for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” [lack clear speech].
    - a) Moses played down his abilities by stating he was not fluent in speech although he was educated with the best teachers in Pharaoh’s palace.
    - b) Even the evangelist, Stephen, stated in the New Testament that Moses was “powerful in speech” (Acts 7:22).
    - c) Moses believed a lie about himself but his lie felt truer than the truth to him.

What lies have you struggled with even when you knew they were lies?  
 What have those lies prevented you from doing?  
 What have you done to combat the lies?  
 What did you do when the lies reoccurred?

- b. Moses struggled with doubts that he was even going to be listened to by his own countrymen. Would they challenge his statement that God had sent him to deliver them?
- 1) Ex. 4:1, “Then Moses said, ‘What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?’ For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’”
  - 2) They had already rejected him once.
  - 3) True, there may be people who would not listen to you as they failed to listen to Jesus.
    - a) John 12:37, “But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,”
- c. Moses struggled with his temper (anger) most of his life.
- 1) In anger, he killed an Egyptian who was beating a fellow Hebrew.

- a) Ex 2:11-12, "One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand."
- 2) In anger he threw down and destroyed the rock tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments.
- a) Ex. 32:19, "When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain."
  - b) When you give place to your anger, you will do the next dumb thing.
- 3) In anger he struck the rock instead of speaking to the rock as God said to bring out water.
- a) Num. 20:11-12, "Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. 12) But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'"
  - b) His anger ultimately cost him the privilege of going into the promised land of Canaan.
- 4) Even his older brother was afraid of Moses' temper.
- a) Ex. 32: 21-22, "Then Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?' 22) Aaron said, 'Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil.'"
- d. Moses struggled with the inability to take responsibility for his wrong actions. As a result, he shifted the blame for his future onto the children of Israel.
- 1) Deut. 1:37, "Because of you the LORD became angry with me also and said, "You shall not enter it, either." 3:25 "Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan--that fine hill country and Lebanon." <sup>26</sup>But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. 'That is enough,' the LORD said. 'Do not speak to me anymore about this matter.'"

Have the group list the character flaws in Moses.

Ask each one to compare their lives with Moses and share ways they can identify with him.

How do those flaws that God had recorded in the Old Testament relate to them personally today?

- e. But God went on record to state at the end of his life, "But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 3:9, 10). "So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex. 34:11 a) (CF, Numbers 12:7,8).

### **Gideon**

- 2. Gideon was in a severe personal crisis when God called him to deliver Israel from Midian control (Judges 6:12, 13; Heb. 11:32). Note these are some of the same issues all of us experience from time to time while we are seeking to help others.
  - a. Israel was under the heavy oppression of the nomadic Midianites that God was using to discipline Israel for their idolatrous and evil lifestyle. God sent a nameless prophet to remind them of their covenant with God and how they had failed to keep it. They cried out to God for relief but there does not seem to be any indication of the awareness of their sin or any indication of repentance for their sin. They did not connect in their minds the oppression of the Midianites and their sin.
    - 1) Jud. 6:6, "So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the Lord (for relief)."
  - b. God heard the cry for help from His people and enlisted Gideon personally to deliver Israel from the Midianites.
    - 1) Jud. 6:12, "And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, the Lord is with you, O valiant warrior..."
      - a) This phrase "valiant warrior" may have been spoken in satire (at this point Gideon was anything but a mighty warrior) or it may have reflected God visualizing his potential, enabled by the power of God.
      - b) Gideon was totally dysfunctional. He was in the wine vat threshing wheat out of fear of Midian discovering him.
      - c) At harvest time, the Midianites and the Amalekites would take what they wanted and destroy everything else.

(1) Jud. 6:4, "So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey."

d) God will call you to a task whether you feel you are ready or not. God rarely waits until you think you are ready. Why? He is able to be more powerful through you if you are weak or don't feel ready. This was certainly the apostle Paul's experience.

(1) 2 Cor. 12:7-10 "And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is

perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

3. (What was Gideon thinking (struggling with) at the time God called him to service?) Gideon was very upset with God and was questioning God in six areas (6:13). Note the six characteristics of one that God put in His "hall of fame of faith" Heb. 11:32. These are the same issues or core beliefs all of us experience from time to time (I Cor. 10:13).

a. He questioned God's presence (promise), (6:13a) "Then Gideon said to Him, "O My Lord ...if the Lord is with us" (...and I don't think He is).

- 1) Mistrust issues: He did not trust that God was present with him in his personal pain and later blamed God for the pain.
- 2) Gideon rightly concluded it was God who put Israel in the hands of the Midianites (6:13b).
- 3) Gideon's logic: "If God is with us, we should not be suffering like this."

What was wrong with this logic?

Why do you think they were blaming God?

What do you think they were failing to see and acknowledge?

Have you ever mistrusted God?

How did you work that through?

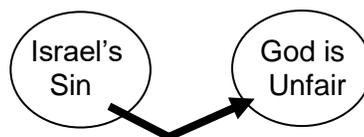
- b. He questioned God's protection, "Why then has all this happened to us (bitter)?" He felt powerless and vulnerable.
- 1) Anger issues: Gideon believed God failed to protect them. In anger Gideon failed to connect Israel's sin which resulted in God's discipline.
- c. He questioned God's power, "and where are all his miracles which our fathers told us about saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?'"
- 1) He had feelings of helplessness and powerlessness.
  - 2) God's promises seemed very distant to Gideon in view of Israel's present circumstances.
  - 3) Gideon wanted God to show His power to Gideon while Gideon showed his disrespect for God through his willful sin.
  - 4) Popular book, *Disappointment with God* by Phillip Yancy.

Have you or anyone you have known ever been angry at God?  
 Why were you angry? What was the root of the anger?  
 What did you fail to understand about yourself or God?  
 What godly man in scripture was angry at God and why?  
 I Chron. 13:11, David was angry with God.

- d. He questioned God's care. "But now the Lord has abandoned us."
- 1) Abandonment issues. "God does not care about us and has abandoned us."
    - a) One of the deepest lies Satan injects in our thinking is that we could be abandoned by God. He will discipline, yes, but abandoned us, no.
    - b) Heb. 13:5b, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."
    - c) Heb. 12:3-11, God will discipline believers when they sin, not for the purpose of punishment but for the purpose of correcting their direction and their pattern of sin. Christ has paid for all our sin and taken all our punishment (CF I John 2:2).
- e. He called into question God's fairness, "and has given us into the hands of Midian," (it's all your fault). Gideon shifted the blame from himself to God.

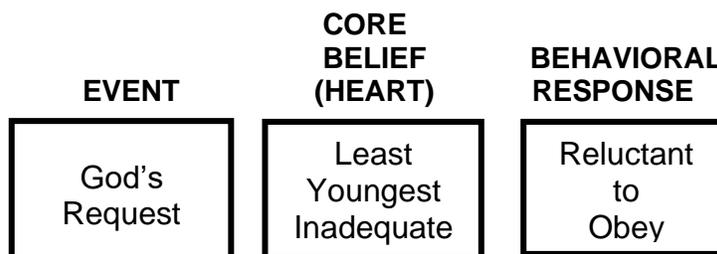
- 1) Fairness issues: "It is all God's fault. We do not deserve this." Gideon was a classic blame shifter who totally could not accept Israel's responsibility for disobedience and God's discipline for that disobedience, so he concluded God was unfair.

a) Drawing



- f. He questioned God's choice (of him). Jud. 6:15, "Oh Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." It was God's request that went through Gideon's core beliefs of his heart that resulted in his reluctance to obey.

1) Drawing:



- 2) Inferiority issues - Why me? Gideon could have been reflecting Near Eastern humility but more than likely it reflected a good amount of reality, he was in an insignificant family and role in the family.
- a) Jud. 6:15, "But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family."
- g. It would appear that people who are basket cases make the best recruits for people helping.
- 1) I Cor. 1:26-30, <sup>26</sup>Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup>God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one may boast before him. <sup>30</sup>It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."
- 2) I Cor. 6:9-11, <sup>9</sup>Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men <sup>10</sup>nor thieves nor

the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

- 3) ill. Jan Kizer, “Do you tell everyone this” that problems prepare us to help others?
- h. PROJECT: Briefly describe your own personal illustration of each of the six areas in which Gideon questioned God. Then describe what you did and the Scripture you may have used to work it through. If someone else helped you through it, who was it and how did they help you?
  - 1) God's presence
  - 2) God's protection
  - 3) God's power
  - 4) God's care
  - 5) God's fairness
  - 6) God's choice
- i. What would you say are the core beliefs of each of the following persons who were greatly used of God?
4. Jeremiah begged off from being a prophet because he did not know how to speak and felt he was too young (inadequate, too immature or inexperienced, untrained, not gifted).
  - a. Jer. 1:6, "Ah, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."
  - b. He wished his mother would have aborted him. He struggled with major discouragement (Jer. 20:14-18).
5. Isaiah thought he was ruined and useless because he had "unclean lips" and lived among a people of unclean lips. What a wretched sinner he was. He may have felt this after that incredible vision of God's majesty, holiness, and glory.
  - a. Is. 6:5, "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."
6. Jonah believed that the brutal Ninevites did not deserve God's mercy so he refused to go preach to them. The truth is that those who deserve it the least, need it the most. (Jonah felt a need for revenge because of his bitterness toward their evil war atrocities. He displayed a total lack of compassion, mercy.)

- a. Jonah, chapters 1 and 3.
7. Esther was afraid to go to the King like Mordecai requested because she was fearful of death. She wanted to survive and live a healthy life (a normal survival instinct).
- a. Esther 4:11-14
  - b. Her uncle Mordecai reminded her; 1) she will not escape the purge; 2) perhaps she became queen for this purpose. He connected the dots of all her losses as a child with all the benefits of an adult.
  - c. Her final response was "pray and fast for me and if I perish, I perish" (vs. 16b).
8. Rahab was a prostitute. Vocational prostitute; immoral, struggled with rejection, she was full of shame, an outcast with little worth, value.
- a. She hid the spies that Joshua sent in to spy out Jericho.
    - 1) Jos. 2:1, "Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, 'Go view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there."
  - b. Even though she was a prostitute, God listed her as one of the women of faith in Hebrews 11:31.
  - c. She is one of four women mentioned in the genealogy of Matthew—the great grandmother of King David through whom Jesus was born. Think of it, she is a relative of Jesus.
  - d. It is one of the ways of God that He will use you for good, even if others have used you for evil or you allowed yourself to be used.
    - 1) The other three women in our Lord's genealogy in Matthew were of questionable backgrounds. Tamar was a prostitute (Gen 38:24). Ruth was a former idolater, foreigner, and a Moabite (Ruth 1:4). Bathsheba was an adulteress (2 Sam 11:2-5). God may have had these women included to show the choice of people He is going to use is fully on the basis of grace.
    - 2) ill: One woman who had been sexually abused wondered if God could ever use her to disciple others because she had been used by someone else. After God healed her spiritually and emotionally, she was able, with her pastor's blessing, to start a sexual abuse support group that focused on spiritual and emotional healing and how to handle the scars. Her past pain formed the basis for her present ministry.

## New Testament Examples

### E. New Testament saints struggled in their own personal lives while ministering publicly.

1. The Apostle Paul helped others publicly while struggling privately. and so do ministers, missionaries, elders, deacons.
  - a. Paul did not believe he had arrived spiritually and was perfect.
    - 1) Phil 3:12, "I have not already obtained it [arrived] or have already become perfect, but I press on [personal maturity] in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."
    - 2) Read about Paul's inner battles with sin (Rom. 7:15-25).
    - 3) I Cor. 15:9, 10, "9For I am the least of the apostles who am not fit [qualified] to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."
    - a) CF I Cor. 2:3, Paul ministered "in weakness, in fear and in trembling..."
    - b) The Greek word for fear here is "*phoebea*" which means "flight caused by being scared, dread, terror." The Greek word for "fear" in I Tim. 1:7 is different. It is "*deilia*" which means timidity, shame, cowardice. It is never used in a good sense in the New Testament.

What did it take for Paul to connect his past sin to his present appreciation of grace?

What have you gone through that has given you a greater appreciation for grace (God favoring you when you don't deserve it)?

What are at least two things you have to focus on to gain a greater appreciation for grace (past sin and His forgiveness of that sin)?

2. Paul's disciples struggled privately while ministering publicly. Timothy was one such example. Paul referred to Timothy as his son in the faith (II Tim. 1:2) although Timothy was already a believer when he met Paul. Paul was a mentor to Timothy – perhaps the father Timothy never knew.
  - a. Timothy's assignment given to him by Paul: To correct certain men for teaching strange doctrine in the church of Ephesus.

- 1) I Tim. 1:3, "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines."
- b. Timothy's internal struggles:
- 1) He struggled with his youthfulness. "Let no one look down on your youthfulness" (I Tim. 4:12) (but be their example).
  - 2) He struggled with his timidity. "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline (sound judgment)" (2 Tim. 1:7). Apparently, he was very shy.
  - 3) He struggled with his physical weakness "No longer drink water exclusively but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" (I Tim. 5:23).
    - a) Often emotional struggles (stress, anxiety) show up in physical problems, such as ulcers.
- c. One of the hindrances to delegating responsibility to others is our fear of giving responsibility to less than perfect people. Paul had to trust the work of the ministry (fish cleaning - discipling) to less than perfect people who had needs and were working on them, just like Jesus did with the disciples.
- 1) Euodia and Syntyche had a conflict with each other although they were working with the Apostle Paul (Phil. 4:1-3).
3. The Apostle Peter's life was characterized by inner personal struggles.
- a. He was obnoxious, proud before the events of Pentecost.
- 1) Peter bragged to Jesus that (Matt. 26:33), "Even though all men fall away because of you, I will never fall away."
  - 2) Peter bragged about his loyalty (Luke 22:33), "Lord I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Peter turned right around and denied Him (Luke 22:54-62).
  - 3) Then on the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter, out of fear, denied he even knew the Lord three times (John 15:15-18; 25-27).
- b. Then fifty days later he was used greatly at Pentecost to bring the gospel to the Jews.
- 1) Acts 2:41, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls."
- c. Peter was used by God to open the door for the gospel to the Gentiles through the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10).

- 1) Acts 10:28, "And he (Paul) said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.'" (Therefore, the Gentiles should have equal access to the Gospel.)
- d. But after all this incredible ministry, Peter still struggled later in life with the fear of rejection.
    - 1) Gal. 2:11-13, Paul speaking "But when Cephas [reputed to be a pillar in vs. 9], came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, [in Jerusalem] he used to eat with Gentiles, but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof fearing [rejection from] the party of the circumcised." (Peter feared that if the Jews knew he was not practicing all the dietary laws, they would reject him.)
      - a) God has warned in Prov. 29:25, "The fear of man brings a snare."
      - b) The fear of rejection and abandonment is like a prison, it keeps you bound. However, the keys and locks are on the inside (of yourself), not outside. You must face your fear by growing in truth, by stepping out of your comfort zone of fear into the faith zone of faith.
  - e. Peter was living out a core belief lie in his heart that he was nothing without the approval and acceptance of these Jewish brethren.
    - 1) Peter was raised in a performance-based atmosphere as a child. i.e., Judaism. He lived out the lie, "if you really knew me, you would not like me." It was a totally new concept for him to get his value in his relationship with Christ. Later he came to understand it, which he expressed in his letters.
      - a) 2 Pet. 1:2-3, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup>seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."
  - f. Peter finally matured to the point of accepting any pain whether it was physical or emotional. As a result, he wrote two letters at the close of his life and the theme of both of them was suffering.
    - 1) 1 Pet. 2:20-21, "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."
4. Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest, was living each day of her life with the sense of personal shame, disgrace and failure. for not bearing any children

when God selected her to become the mother of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus.

- a. Luke 1:24-25, (Elizabeth) "kept herself in seclusion for five months [after she discovered she was pregnant with her son John] saying [to herself] this is the way the Lord has dealt with me...in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men."
  - b. She saw her life as a disgrace before others. Why? Because she believed she was defective and could not produce children—she felt she was "bad." Children were her validation (worth, value) and her hope she could ever be the mother of the Messiah who had to be of the tribe of Judah, not Levi.
    - 1) Yet the Scripture gives God's perspective regarding her son that she bore in her old age, "...among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (Matt 11:11).
5. The disciples of Jesus struggled for prominence and power as a basis for their worth and their significance.
- a. Luke 22:24, "And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be the greatest" just after Jesus instituted the "Lord's Supper" and just before He went to the Mount of Olives where He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**F. Summary: Biblical people helpers are those who are admitting their needs, but they are actively working through their own personal problems and meeting their needs using biblical tools.**

1. They are not just people who have problems but are those who are working through them biblically to maturity and Christ likeness (Phil. 2:12,13).
  - a. God is not looking for those with great ideas or intellect but rather believers with a great likeness to the Lord Jesus.
  - b. God is not looking for a perfect person but one progressing toward Jesus.
2. Remember, there are at least two commonly held perspectives to view counseling. One is represented by an onion, the other represented by a banana:



- a. A banana is peeled once and eaten. Problems should be fixed quickly once for all and they should not need to be dealt with again. This is not reality.



- b. An onion has many layers like issues to work through over time to maturity. At the core or end of the process is Christlikeness. This perspective takes into account the reality that growth into Christlikeness is a lifelong journey which may mean there are many issues to work through at different stages of life and you may need a friend to help you through them.

- 1) Gal. 4:19, "My children, with whom I am again in labor (process) until

Christ is formed in you.” It will take time.

- a) The first time was for salvation. The second time was to grow into Christ likeness.
- 2) Phil. 1:6, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”
- 3) Gal. 6:1-2, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2) Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

## LEARNERS

**II. (Learners – Disciples) Biblical people helpers may not have any prior formal training, but they have a strong desire to learn, especially through their problems in living. God is looking for learners.**

**A. The focus of the Great Commission was not to make converts only, but disciples, learners who were eager to learn how to act, think, speak like Jesus CF (Gal. 4:19). Conversion was a given.**

1. The Great Commission was directed at the process of cleaning fish (discipleship), not catching fish (evangelism).
  - a. Matt. 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (vs. 20), teaching them to observe (put into practice) all that I have commanded you.
    - 1) There is one main verb “make disciples” which is accompanied by three participles: “going”, “baptizing”, and “teaching.”
    - 2) God is not looking just for decisions for salvation, but disciples who will follow Him and learn about Him, others and themselves as they go through trials.
    - 3) “to observe,” How to put into practice what they were taught.
    - 4) Wisdom is practical answers to difficult situations.
  - b. Gal. 4:19, “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” just like a parent does raising a child.
2. It is more enjoyable to catch fish (evangelize) than to clean them (disciple) plus, it is easier.
  - a. No one walks up and down a riverbank or a lake shore asking to clean your fish for free. Everyone is catching. No one is cleaning.

3. True, Jesus said to His disciples He would make them fishers of men (Mt. 4:19; Mk. 1:17) and many of the disciples were fishermen vocationally (Mk. 1:16-20; Simon, Andrew, James and John).
  - a. Yet only one of the New Testament books was dedicated specifically for the purpose of evangelism, the book of John.
    - 1) John 20:30-31, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; (31) but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."
    - 2) The other three gospel writers depicted three perspectives of the life of Christ (i.e. Matthew - king, Mark - man, Luke - servant).
    - 3) Acts is Dr. Luke's continuing account to Theophilus of the historical account of the birth (book of Luke) and spread of church throughout the then known world (book of Acts).
  - b. The books of Romans through Revelation were directed to believers, disciples, learners not unbelievers, although there are many references to and for unbelievers in those books.
  - c. Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5) yet most of the contents of I and II Timothy dealt primarily with church matters (cleaning fish in the church).
4. Believers were referred to in the first century as 'followers of the Way' (of life) that they had learned by being discipled. They were to reflect Christ in whatever country or culture they are in.
  - a. Acts 9:2; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22
  - b. It was a way of life that thought and responded to life like Christ would have if He was here.
  - c. The goal of developing Christlikeness was to be their core belief goal.
  - d. They were not called Christians until Acts 11:26. The ending, 'ian' means belonging to the party of Jesus. Two other times were Acts 26:28; I Pet. 4:16. Now they are a distinct group.

**B. The confident apostles were without formal training but were willing to learn. None of these men were formally trained priests, rabbis or scribes.**

1. Peter and John were viewed by Jewish leaders as confident although they knew they were formally untrained.
  - a. Acts 4:13, It was said of them, "Now as they (ruler/ elders) saw the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated

and untrained men, they were marveling and began to recognize them as only having been acquainted with Jesus."

- 1) The terms "uneducated" or "unlettered" men referred to men without technical training in the professional rabbinical schools of Hillel or Shammai (A.T.R. p 52).
2. But the disciples were eager to learn (just like you).
    - a. Luke 11:1, "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.'"
    - b. Biblical people helpers may not have the formal training of professionals but are trained in the Word and in life by the Holy Spirit and mentors.
      - 1) John 16:13, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."
    - c. Get all the formal training you can get but realize the most significant training may take place outside of four walls.
  3. (Even) Jesus was also regarded as unlearned or not a graduate of the formal rabbinical schools, but people were amazed at his teaching.
    - a. John 7:15-16, "The Jews therefore were marveling saying, 'How has this man become learned having never been educated?' Jesus therefore answered them, and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent me.'" (It comes from a different source. It comes directly from My Father.)
    - 1) Religious authorities figured that someone either studied at a traditional school or was self-taught. Jesus added a third source, God-taught. Many of us are God-taught through the difficult situations we have been through with God.
  4. Formal Bible training is great, yet you can be effective if you do not have that opportunity.

Describe some of the "schools of learning" God has allowed you to go through.

What did you learn?

Could you have learned this lesson another way?

What did others learn from you and your response when you went through it?

**C. Even secular research confirms effectiveness of lay people helpers.**

1. Carkhuff and Truax study, "lay helpers" were compared with professionally trained counselors, and so concluded "the patients of lay counselors did as well or better than the patients of professional counselors" (Hughes, p. 14).
2. One of the most effective, requested counselors at Living Foundation Ministries has no formal training, but has been a diligent student of the Bible and people and has experienced an incredible amount of pain both in her birth home and marriage.

**D. Here are five possible advantages a non-professional counselor may have over the professionally trained one. These are the same reasons nationals and not foreigners are the important ones in their own country and should be trained to help those in their own culture.**

1. He may be closer in relationship to the one being helped than a professional counselor. Professional counselors need to build a relationship with the counselee.
  - a. He may know him as a friend and know his family background.
    - 1) Statistically, people first turn to a friend, then a pastor, then a mental health professional for help.
    - 2) He can spot non-verbal cues, body language.
  - b. He especially knows his culture, traditions, and language. This is why nationals are more important than foreigners .... and why the Living Foundation Ministries team members are trainers of trainers. We believe everyone should be disciplined in their own language and culture.
  - c. A friend is better informed about the counselee's family, work situation, beliefs, neighborhood, sources of stress and pressure.
  - d. He is better able to understand problems based on their past experience together. Professional counselors have to learn it.
    - 1) Prov. 27:6, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted."
    - 2) Prov. 27:9, "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend."
    - 3) Prov. 27:10, "Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity."
    - 4) Prov. 18:24, "A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

- 5) John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this; that one lay down his life for his friends."
2. Often a friend is more available than the professional or even the pastor. Professionals and pastors are usually very busy.
    - a. Prov. 17:17, "A friend loves at all times."
    - b. Heb. 3:13, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'today.'"
    - c. One of the generous ingredients of Alcoholics Anonymous is availability. The alcoholic's sponsor is available 24 hours a day. He is often told to make 90 visits in 90 days.
  3. Friends are able to communicate in language which the person can easily understand. and not have to deal with complicated psychological terms or formulas.
    - a. Jesus taught in the common Greek language of His day and most of this teaching dealt with how to get along with each other and work out conflicts between His followers.
    - b. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost everyone heard the gospel in his own language, as if spoken by native speakers who knew their culture.
      - 1) Acts 2:8, "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?"
      - 2) Since they heard the gospel in their own heart language, each person should be able to be discipled and counseled in his own language and culture.
  4. Friends tend to be more practical, relaxed, and informal.
  5. Friends do not have to work with complicated psychological personality theories. thus can focus on the person's needs.
    - a. I Cor. 1:21, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."
    - b. There are over 200 personality theories. None proved better than others. Newsweek Magazine, Jan. 1998 stated:
      - 1) In 1952 there were 60 recognized mental illnesses.
      - 2) In 1999 there were 410.

6. Even Jesus made it clear to His disciples that He no longer called them servants, but friends and as such He would pass on to them everything His Father showed Him.
  - a. John 15:15-16, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

**E. God is basically looking for people who are both faithful in present responsibilities and have an openness to learn as you work through your own problems.**

1. They are not using counseling others to avoid their own issues. They do not necessarily need to be well educated people with degrees unless they are seeking to be licensed.
2. Faithfulness is the basic requirement of stewards who are entrusted with important responsibilities financially and relationally.
  - a. 1 Cor. 4:2, "it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" (faithful) and loving because love encourages trust.
  - b. 2 Tim. 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
  - c. Faithfulness means loyal, reliable, believable, true to fact, a standard, thorough in their present performances of duty and responsibility.
  - d. Note: We did not say, "Successful."

**F. Biblical care givers have dug deeply into their past experience of life for a wealth of insights and lessons that God taught them through their trials, hurts, failures, abuse, abandonment or losses.**

1. People helps view their past as a gold mine of insights and lessons to process and learn from rather than avoid their difficult past as a dark hole to be ignored.
  - a. The Apostle Paul did just that as he viewed the terrific abuse he inflicted on believers and their families (1 Tim 1:12-16).
  - b. Paul became a trophy (pattern, example) of God's grace and mercy.
  - c. Joseph did the same thing to bring healing to his brothers.
  - d. Gen 50:20, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive."

2. One's past is a frame around the picture of his present life.
3. Biblical counselors are God-taught through personal experience of walking with Him through any affliction.
  - a. 2 Cor. 1:3-4, "Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4) who comforts (gives hope and strength to) us in all our affliction so that we will be able (ability and resources) to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."
  - b. Remember, the most important learning may take place outside of four walls, in life experience. But it may take some discipleship to learn to package and use what you've learned.
    - 1) ill.: The founder of Alcoholics Anonymous was a former alcoholic.
    - 2) ill.: Fred Stoeker, the president of Living True Ministries was a former pornography addict.
    - 3) ill.: Franklin Graham, President of Samaritan's Purse, former alcoholic, drug user, immoral.
  - c. Ben Franklin once said, "Those things that hurt instruct."

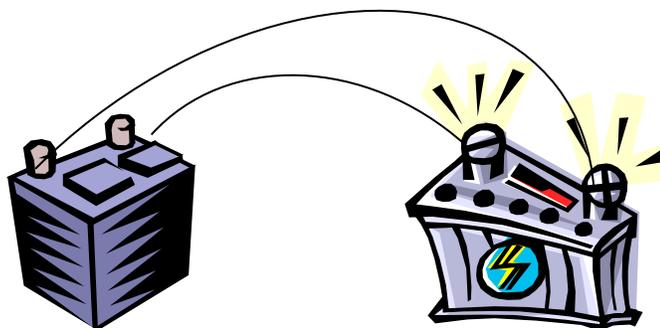
**G. He has learned by personal experience what it means to be comforted by God when he went through deep pain himself. Comfort offers at least two elements: hope, when you feel hopeless and strength when you feel so weak.**

1. He knows the source of hope.
  - a. Hope is communicated by the Holy Spirit.
    - 1) Rom. 15:13, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
  - b. Hope is communicated through scripture.
    - 1) Rom. 15:4, "For whatever things were written before, were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."
  - c. Hope comes as a result of a process.
    - 1) Rom. 5:3-5, "And not only that but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>and perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>Now hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
  - d. Hope is ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ.

1) Col. 1:27, "To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

2. He knows the ultimate source of strength, the energy to keep going.

a. Mental, emotional and spiritual stress can drain our energy like an electrical short can drain the battery in the car. But when our battery gets too low, He connects us to His ever-charged battery and transfers His endless energy to us.

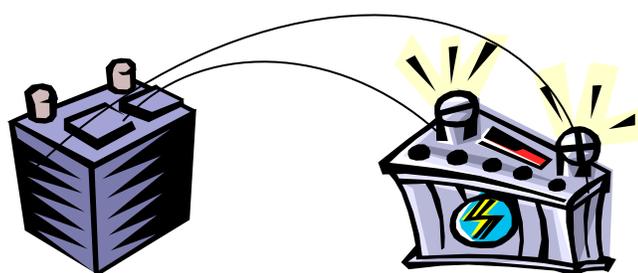


Our low battery

God's full charge battery

1) Isaiah 40:29-31, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. <sup>30</sup>Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, <sup>31</sup>But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

b. God may use other believers to give us energy to help us keep going.



Our Low Battery

Others' High Energy

1) Gal. 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

2) Luke 22:32, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

3) Hebrews 3:13, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

3. He knows the combination of hope and strength is one of the best medicines for discouragement.

a. Courage is the ability to control our fear and potential loss.



Fear and Loss

b. Discouragement means being conquered, controlled and managed by fear and loss, but you are still fighting.



Fear and Loss

c. Despair is the loss of all hope and strength, and we have stopped fighting.



Fear and Loss

4. He knows he can expect comfort (hope, strength) at the same time of the affliction, which is a pressing (squeezing) stress, pressure painful circumstances or a hurt from people.

5. He knows he can count on God to give him hope and energy to continue even if there is no change in the situation.

a. 2 Cor. 12:8,9, “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup>And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness,’ therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”



- e. God will bring opportunities to help others whether you are ready or not. This may be a means of God forcing you to learn more how to help others.
- 8. He knows his life experience with personal pain and the use of God's tools from His Word will prepare him to be effective to help others work through their pain biblically (II Cor 1:4).

**H. The biblical people helper is able to distinguish between capital "T" truth and small "t" truth as he continues to learn.**

- 1. Capital "T" truth is supernaturally revealed truth contained in the Scriptures.
  - a. Scripture is inspired and preserved by God Himself.
    - 1) 2 Peter 1:20-21, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup>for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."
    - 2) 2 Tim. 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training (discipling) in righteousness."
- 2. Small "t" truth is what we discover by observation, research, and life experience.
  - a. Dr. Gary Chapman's best seller, The Five Love Languages, is based on small "t" researched truth and has been a major source of encouragement for Christians around the world. It is recommended reading for all.
  - b. Doctors Cloud and Townsend's book, Boundaries has sold over 2 million copies. It is an excellent book, but most of it is based on research and clinical experience.
- 3. But all small "t" discovered truth must always be in submission to God's revealed truth, not equal to it!
- 4. The lay counselor can learn from many people and resources but all that is accepted for use must submit and be 100% in compliance with God's Word. It must not violate it in principle or precept. Readers are leaders and all that is read must be tested by God's Word (I John 4:1; Acts 17:11).
- 5. Theologians tend to only study theology and do not study and understand people. Psychologists tend to study people and do not understand God. A balanced people helper will study and understand both people and the Scripture. The book of Proverbs will help you to understand people.

**I. If you are going to help others, you must maintain a teachable heart both through personal reading and through difficult tests you experience.**

- 1. View life as one big learning experience about God, people and especially yourself.

## ILLUSTRATORS

**III. (illustrator) biblical counselors are willing to learn to illustrate with their life how God's Word works both in truth and in practice. Not just words but actions. Jesus is gone. You are His example (I Peter 5:3).**

**A. Your own personal practical application of God's Word in your life lays the basis for your effective people helping. Academic training can be helpful, but it must not be a substitute for applying God's word to your own issue.**

1. The Apostle Paul was always drawing from his past personal experience to illustrate biblical truth.
  - a. Look how God prepared the Apostle Paul before salvation and his call.
  - b. I Tim. 1:12-13, 15-16, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, <sup>13</sup>even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief." <sup>15</sup>"This is a faithful saying and worthy of acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. <sup>16</sup>however; for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern [example, illustrator] to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life."
    - 1) Paul seemed to say, "I was such a sinner that one might doubt whether I could be saved or was worth saving" (Nicoll, Vol 4, pp. 98-99).
    - 2) Paul firmly believed he was an object of God's grace and mercy (IBID).
    - 3) "That Christ might show all longsuffering' Alford, Nicoll reflects on Paul's core belief, "Greater longsuffering He could not show in any case than in mine, nor find a sinner that so required all His longsuffering" (IBID).
    - 4) "A pattern (example) to those who are going to believe on Him." "That no one who ever afterwards hears the gracious invitation of Christ, need hold back from accepting it by reason of the greatness of his sin, which he has the example of Paul before him" (IBID).
    - 5) This is the only time in the New Testament that believers are referred to as sinners. They are called saints at least 60 times.
  - c. I Cor. 15:9-10, "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (Acts 8:3) 10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."
    - 1) "Paul realized his past was simply a backdrop (frame) on which to display the 'grace of God' "(BKC, NT, p. 542).

- 2) Paul's past life was the frame around his present message.
  - d. Paul was an example or trophy of what he taught.
2. Even elders (pastors) in the church are required to be living examples of what they preach and teach.
    - a. I Peter 5:3, "...not as being lords (masters) over those entrusted to you, but being an example to the flock."
  3. Even trained professionals confirm your value as a lay counselor who is applying the Word of God in your own life.
    - a. Christian psychiatrist Frank Minirth, M.D. says "one who knows the Word of God and is living it can probably help 95% of the people who come to him." He adds that such counselors need to know that their success rate "may be proportionally higher than other professionals" (Bobgan, p. 81).
    - b. Why may this be true? Because we are talking about counseling problems in living and not the psychiatric disorders (i.e., schizophrenia, borderline, bipolar, etc.).
    - c. Clinical depression is a result of depleting of serotonin. Serotonin is the result of unprocessed anger.
  4. Ezra, the Old Testament scribe (teacher), illustrated the personal discipline of study, application and teaching in his life and ministry.
    - a. Ezra 7:9b-10, It was written of him, "The good hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra has set his heart to:
      - 1) Study the Law of the Lord. (A good project is to read the Bible through once a year.)
      - 2) To practice it personally (apply it to your own life issues).
      - 3) And to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel (share what you learn).
    - b. The Word of God went through Ezra's life experiences, not just his head.
      - 1) The book of James makes it clear that God does not bless the people who know the truth. He only blesses the doers of the truth (James 1:22-25). Many have confused hearing with doing. They are two separate functions.
      - 2) Dr. Larry Crabb "Without an increasing understanding of how the biblical message works in our lives, no amount of training in counseling theory or technique will ever produce a biblical counselor" (Understanding, p. 72).

- 3) The life of a person is far more important than his words. It is not so much instruction that causes change as it is one's example (Hadidian, p. 46).
- 4) They will not only reproduce your strengths but also your weaknesses. The key word is integrity. Be who you say you are.
5. Elders of the early church were not to control their churches by verbally lording their position over the people and bossing them around but to lead by their example. They were to practice what they preached so the people could see and know how God's Word works. They were to be examples of how the Word of God works in everyday life and in all circumstances and not just on Sundays.
  - a. I Pet. 5:1-3, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, (2) shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."
6. The Apostle Paul encouraged people to follow (imitate) his example as he followed (imitated) Christ.
  - a. I Cor 11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."
  - b. 2 Thess. 3:7, "For you, yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you."
7. People need a pattern to follow in dealing with their problems in living. It is your task to counsel from a point of being an example of a problem solver.
8. The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy how to conduct himself among the leaders of the church of Ephesus where Timothy was ministering.
  - a. I Tim. 4:12, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."
  - b. Paul put the responsibility on Timothy to teach and lead by example. He was not to demand respect but to earn it through his example.
  - c. A discipler must have some proficiency in the skill he wants to teach.
9. There were no examples of how to be and act like a Christian when the gospel was first preached. There were no Christians. Jesus came to explain a new way of life based on the gospel. There was a serious immediate need for examples, mentors and role-models to follow.

**B. To be an effective biblical counselor you must be personally convinced in your heart that Scripture answers every problem in living, either in a specific scripture or a principle of scripture. Why?**

1. God has stated this reality to be true even apart from your own personal experience.
  - a. 2 Peter 1:3, "God has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness..." (to gain life and to live it).
  - b. 2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may adequate, equipped for every good work."
  
2. The application of God's truth is the basis of setting a person free from troublesome behavior and negative emotions (fear, guilt, shame).
  - a. John 8:31-32, "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'"
    - 1) It's not the knowledge of truth; it is living (abiding) in truth that makes one free.
    - b. Eph. 6:14, "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness."
  
3. The biblical people helper must believe, "Every change that God promises is possible. Every quality that God requires in His redeemed children can be attained. Every resource that is needed God has supplied" (The Unchangeable Christ; The Christian Counselor's Manual, Jay Adams).
  - a. Phil. 2: 12,13 "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out (incorporate) your own salvation (into everyday life) with fear and trembling; for it is God who works (energizes) in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."
    - 1) This does not mean "work for" your salvation because they are called "saints" in 1:1 and "brethren in 1:12.
    - b. Phil. 4: 13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
  
4. A biblical counselor does recognize that there are organic, physical, hormonal and legitimate brain disorders.
  - a. But much wrong behavioral patterns are being described as disease. For example, the passive aggressive behavioral pattern is not a disease; it is an inappropriate way to handle anger. Co-dependency is not a disease; it is an inappropriate way to deal with the fear of abandonment. Co-dependency is a form of relational addiction with God removed from the issue. They are making a human act in the place of God on their behalf.

**C. (Honestly, there are no shortcuts at this point.) Illustrating how to use God's tools (principles from Scripture) in your life is your core curriculum to help others.**

1. You are to be a trophy of the struggles and victories in your life.
2. Most of the time people do not know what to say to others because they have not adequately dealt with that problem in their own life. They may have confused denial of a problem with having processed it.
3. It does not mean, however; you have to experience every problem that each counselee may present to you.
4. Yet, there seems to be a pattern that God usually brings people to you who are struggling with what you have struggled with in your own life, whether you are ready or not.
5. Jesus faced the same basic temptations that people of all cultures face.
  - a. Heb. 4: 14-16 "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession for we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
  - b. "Sympathize" lit. "to feel or suffer with." As a man, he could feel the reality of the temptation just like an immovable bolder can hear the blast of a raging sea.
6. There are no trials, temptations or tests that are not common in any culture. These may have different ways of manifesting themselves, but they have the same roots (guilt, shame, fear, etc.).
  - a. 1 Cor.10:13, "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."

**D. Explore the following list of "problems" in living. What experience have you had personally in working through these areas? God never wastes life experience on anyone. Ask yourself:**

1. How do I process (control) anger? (Anger is 95% of the cause of depression.)
2. What do I do when I am lonely? (drugs, sex, internet, pornography, alcohol and unhealthy relationships are usually alternative solutions to loneliness)
3. How do I control lust? Fantasy? Avoid pornography?

4. What do I do when fearful? Anxious? Controlling?
5. How do I respond to other people's anger?
6. What do I do when I fail?
7. How do I process guilt and shame?
8. How do I pray, study the Bible, witness, give?
9. How do I forgive?
10. How do I deal with the memories of past hurts or failures?
11. How do I deal with problems, trials, afflictions, temptations?
12. How do I handle rejection (past or present)?

**E. Project: Set up files in each category and begin to collect articles, books, sermon notes, personal journal notes that fit in each category.**

**F. Project: Build a scriptural library of at least a few basic scriptures to address these crucial issues. These are your biblical tools.**

1. God's Spirit does not bring back to your mind what you did not put there. If you do not memorize them, at least study them thoroughly and know where to look them up in your Bible.

## **REPRODUCERS**

**IV. (Reproducer) biblical people helpers have a desire to reproduce other counselors who will in turn be able to help others work through their problems in living from scripture.**

**A. Biblical counselors have viewed their own personal trials, hurts and testing as their personal preparation to help others work through their own problems in living.**

1. Dr. Friesen, "People who conquer a problem often end up helping others conquer the same problem. Many helping professionals are people who have been through traumas themselves and are helping others with theirs. One alcoholic founded "Alcoholic Anonymous" (Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, p.36).
2. But a biblical counselor will not use counseling as a means to fill a hole in their own soul or ignore the hole in his soul.

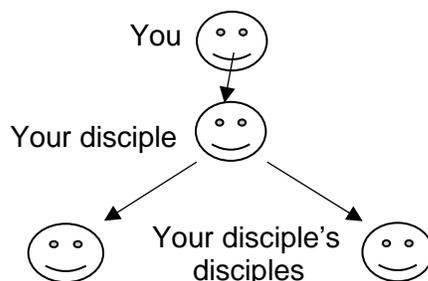
**B. Biblical care givers now adjusted their perspective and view counselees as trainees to train others to do what they have done. Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators clearly stated, "We were born to reproduce."**

1. This is the perspective God has on the whole process of counseling.

- a. 2 Cor. 1:2-4, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our

affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

- b. As you help one person, you may then help two who may in turn help three and so on.
- c. Drawing



- d. One youth pastor was overwhelmed with so many teenagers to reach and disciple so he recruited three older youth who had come to see him for counsel, as disciples. He worked with Brian, Sue and Sue S. who in turn met with scores of other teens. Today all are licensed counselors or psychologists helping people around the world.

2. Most hurting people have experienced a desire to help others, especially those who are going through personal pain. But no one has helped them connect the processing of their pain with the personal preparation for ministry, even if their pain was self-inflicted. It is like a mental wall has been erected between life's pain and God's preparation to minister. Fish that are caught (evangelized) and cleaned (discipled) are now ready to reproduce, especially if that mental wall has been removed and they can connect their past to preparation for the present and the future.

- a. Drawing



- a. Joseph is an Old Testament example who connected the pain he suffered at the hands of his brothers with God's plan to prepare him to help others.
- 1) Gen. 45:5, “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.”
  - 2) Gen. 50:20, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”



**D. God re-established the same principle of reproducing biblical counselors in the New Testament**

1. Disciples (Matt. 10:2-4)
2. Apostles (Eph. 4:11)
3. Elders/Pastors (I Tim. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 2:2)
4. Deacons (I Tim. 3:8-13)
5. Lay persons (Gal 6:1,2)
  - a. Gal. 6:1-2, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”
  - b. “You who are spiritual.” Notice he did not refer to an office or a technical qualification. Instead, he referred to the “spiritual” who know God and know how to apply His Word regardless of their past. It is important to know God *and* know people.
  - c. “Restore”: to set a broken bone or to mend a broken net. Our goal is to restore brother or sister to a healthy walk with God and to return them to effective service. This will take time. Remember, we are going through layers like an onion, not a quick fix like peeling a banana.
    - 1) Jam. 5:19-20, “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, <sup>20</sup>let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

**E. God puts a high priority (focus) on helping a brother (Christian) work through a problem in living, so they can in turn help others.**

1. The concept of helping one another was just established at creation when God provided a “helper compatible to him” (Gen 2:18).
2. Our brother’s need is our opportunity to minister.
  - a. Gal. 6:10, “So then, while we have opportunity (occasion) let us do good (keep on doing good) to all men and especially to those who are of the same household of faith.”
  - b. A single parent friend recently wrote after a visit, “Although I needed lodging I was really coming for more than that. You have always been so accepting of me – even when there has been lots of garbage inside of me. I want you to feel that your love for me has paid off. I came so you could understand how the Lord has been working and yes, I must admit, I came for some more of that love because my spirit was tired. You did not disappoint me.”

3. Helping others work through problems in living and relationships is a practical act of love/obedience to God. This one act will fulfill the love of Christ, to love God and to love people.
  - a. We are commanded to keep carrying other's personal crushing overloads whether personally or relationally.
    - 1) Gal. 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" i.e., love.
      - a) "Bear" take up/carry (present/active/imperative). It is a command, not advice.
      - b) They may feel like they are standing in the middle of their house while it is burning down and all they have to fight with is a glass of water.
      - c) Or they see a 100 ft. tidal wave coming ten feet away and they can't swim.
    - 2) God has chosen to fulfill this promise of Matt. 11:30 by using brothers and sisters to accomplish this.
      - a) Matt. 11:29-30, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
  - b. But in time they will need to carry their own load.
    - 1) Gal. 6:5, "For each one shall bear his own load."
      - a) The "load," referred to here is that of a backpack carried by a Roman foot soldier.
      - b) It is a load designed just for his body size and the function he is to carry out.
        - (1) Matt. 11:30, "For My yoke is easy, and my load is light" (versus Satan's or others).
  - c. Believers who declare they do not believe in counseling or counselors are usually afraid of something they do not want to be revealed in their own life. They may have had a bad experience with a counselor in the past. They may have a fear of failure or inadequacy. They also may have a lot of pride that prevents them from acknowledging a need. The refusal to acknowledge a need sickens the heart of God.
    - 1) Rev. 3:16-17, "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup>Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

**F. Dr. Luke summarized the discipleship-training procedure. He explained how Jesus used to carry out his ministry and prepare others to take over. He wrote the gospel that bears his name; he then wrote Theophilus an accurate history of the spread of the gospel after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.**

1. The procedure Dr. Luke describes.
  - a. Acts 1:1, "This first account [Gospel of Luke] I composed Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do [show] and teach [tell]."
2. Paul illustrated in his ministry this same "show and tell" principle with his disciples.
  - a. 2 Tim. 2:2, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."
    - 1) "Heard from me...entrusted to faithful men"

**G. This show and tell procedure of reproduction included at least six ingredients.**

1. Observation/instruction. Jesus had His disciples follow Him, listen to His teaching and observe how He spoke and ministered to people. The disciples at this point just listened and observed.
  - a. Luke 6:17, "Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases."
  - b. The disciples listened to Him and watched Him heal others.
2. Participation under supervision. Jesus then included the participation of disciples as Jesus closely supervised them.
  - a. Matt. 14:13-21 (Feeding of the 5,000)
  - b. Clinical definition of supervision, "an intensive, interpersonally focused, one-on-one relationship in which one person is designated to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence in other people" (Loganhill, p. 14).
3. Participation without supervision. Jesus then sent His disciples out two by two to participate in ministry but without His supervision.
  - a. Luke 9:1-6 (Jesus sends out the 12).
4. Report participation (accountability). Jesus spent time listening to their reports in order to prepare for the next step.

- a. Luke 10:17, “The seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’”
5. Correct and clarify. Jesus corrected any teaching or practice they reported that was not consistent with His Word.
- a. Luke 10:20, “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”
6. Commission and release.
- a. Matthew 28:18-20, “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
7. Note: These six points can be illustrated by a simple skit. Select three people, one to be Jesus and two to be the disciples. Place a fourth person about 20 feet away seated in a chair.

Step 1. Have Jesus and two disciples follow him over to the person seated in the chair and they observe Him healing him. Then Jesus and His disciples walk away.

Step 2. Next the disciples go with Jesus and put their hands on the one to be healed as they participate in ministry with Jesus (like they did at the feeding of the five thousand).

Step 3. Then have Jesus send the two disciples out on their own to heal the man (without His supervision).

Step 4. Have them report back what happened.

Step 5. Then Jesus clarifies what needs to be corrected or clarified.

Step 6. He then commissions them to go and He walks away.

**H. As a reproducer, he knows that his role will ultimately change from a direct trainer to a mentor advisor who will be available but will release and let go and pray fervently for them. (Train and release.)**

- 1. The apostle Paul mentored Timothy, then, released him to be an apostolic representative in Ephesus. Two of Paul’s last letters were mentoring letters to Timothy. Paul prepared, then, released Timothy and fervently prayed for him because Paul knew his days on earth were coming to a close.

2. J.R. Miller in *Making the Most of Life* wrote of a similar event in the life of Leonardo da Vinci.
  - a. “It is told of Leonardo da Vinci, that while still a pupil, before his genius burst into brilliancy, he received a special inspiration in this way: His old and famous master, because of his growing infirmities of age, felt obliged to give up his own work, and one day bade da Vinci finish for him a picture which he had begun. The young man had such a reverence for his master’s skill that he shrank from the task. The old artist, however, would not accept any excuse, but persisted in his command, saying, simply, “Do your best.” Da Vinci at last trembling seized the brush and kneeling before the easel prayed: “It is for the sake of my beloved master that I implore skill and power for this undertaking.” As he proceeded, his hand grew steady; his eye awoke with slumbering genius. He forgot himself and was filled with enthusiasm for his work. When the painting was finished, the old master was carried into the studio to pass judgment on the result. His eye rested on a triumph of art. Throwing his arms about the young artist, he exclaimed, “My son, I paint no more!”
3. Failure to follow the example of the apostle Paul to train others, then, let them go and reverse roles by serving under them as the new leaders will have results much like a tale relayed by Miriam Adeney as told by an African Christian about an American missionary.
  - a. “An elephant and mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, “Mouse, let’s have a party!” Animals gathered from far and near. They ate. They drank. They sang. And they danced. And nobody celebrated more and danced harder than Elephant. After the party was over, Elephant exclaimed, “Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a blast!” But Mouse did not answer. “Mouse, where are you?” Elephant called. He looked around for his friend, and then shrank back in horror. There at Elephant’s feet lay Mouse. His little body was ground into the dirt. He had been smashed by the big feet of his exuberant friend, Elephant. “Sometimes, that is what it is like to do mission with foreigners,” the African storyteller commented. “It is like dancing with an elephant.”

**I. A biblical counselor knows counseling will be personally demanding but greatly rewarding.**

1. Demanding

- a. Gal. 4:19, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.” (Paul uses two metaphors to describe this process.)
  - 1) “Again in labor” i.e., birth pains a second time with the same child. The labor is not over.

a) Paul tells us in 2 Cor.11:28 that the burden of seeing his children grow

into Christ-likeness was the heaviest burden he had to carry (Tyndale, Gal. p.175).

2) “Until Christ be formed in you”, *morphothe*, “to be formed, shaped.” This is a transforming experience. We get our word metamorphosis, which describes the process of a caterpillar turning into a cocoon out of which a butterfly emerges. It is the same word used in Romans 12:2, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

a) This reference to “labor” is the only place where Paul speaks of himself as a “mother” of his spiritual children, usually “father” is the metaphor used.

(1) In Old Testament God’s love for Israel is compared to a mother’s love (Is. 49:15).

(2) Paul compares his gentleness to that of a nursing mother (I Thess. 2:7), but does not speak of himself as a “mother.”

b) It is not just transferring the facts but rather the transferring of one’s life to another (Hadidian, p. 27).

(1) I Thess. 1:8, “...we had fond affection for you and were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you became very dear to us .”

## 2. Rewarding

a. I Thess. 2:17-20, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while – in person not in spirit – were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. <sup>18</sup>For we wanted to come to you – I Paul, more than once and yet Satan hindered us. <sup>19</sup>For who is our hope or joy or crown or exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? <sup>20</sup>For you are our glory and joy.”

1) “In effect he (Paul) asked what would be the greatest blessing he could possibly receive at the judgment seat of Christ. They were! They were everything that was worth anything to Paul” (BKC, NT, p. 697).

**V. REFLECTION QUESTIONS (for personal application)**

1. Who has helped you to mature in your Christian life? How did they do it?
2. Who in Scripture had similar problems as you and how did their life encourage you?
3. List your own personal problems and describe what you have been doing to work them out? Who has helped you? How did they do it? What Scripture did they use? What did they do that was most helpful? What did they do that was least helpful? What do you wish they would have done differently?
4. Describe an experience where you helped someone in the area you have struggled in? What was their response? What did you learn from that experience?
5. What has God allowed in your life to keep you weak that He might prove to be strong through you?
6. What advantages do you feel you may have as a lay people helper?
7. What do you feel are some of your limitations in helping people work through their problems in living?
8. What areas of ministry do you feel you have been faithful in that may help you now to minister to other believers?
9. Who have you observed helping someone else and what did you learn by observing them?
10. What areas of your life are you seeking to illustrate to others how God's Word works in practical everyday living or problem solving?
11. Who have you taught to work through a problem in living? How did you do it? What did you learn through it?
12. What are some of your favorite verses and how have they helped you personally?
13. What has God allowed you to go through that has resulted in strengthening your confidence in His Word?
14. What present or past difficult situation has God taken you through that you can now see how He was preparing you to help someone else? How did it prepare you?
15. What are your fears of attempting to help someone work through a problem in living? What do you feel God is doing in your life to address those fears? What growth have you seen in those areas? How can we pray more effectively for you in this regard?
16. What small "t" truth have you learned that helped you to present the capital "T" truth?
17. Share a personal struggle that you keep battling while still ministering to others.
18. What areas of your life would you like your group to pray for so that you would be able to share with others how you worked it through?

## **VI. Summary Keys**

1. Process your personal issues biblically.
2. Learn from Old Testament and New Testament saints who ministered while processing.
3. Always remain a learner.
4. Use your advantage as a non-professional counselor.
5. Focus on faithfulness in current responsibilities.
6. Illustrate how the biblical tools work in your life.
7. Trust the effectiveness of God's Word.
8. Reproduce in others what God has accomplished in you.
9. Build your library of personal experiences with God.

## Four Characteristics of a Biblical Counselor

### SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Who has helped you to mature in your Christian life? How did they do it?
2. Who in Scripture had similar problems as you and how did their life encourage you?
3. Share some of your own personal issues and describe what you have been doing to work them out? Who has helped you? How did they do it? What Scripture did they use? What did they do that was most helpful? What did they do that was least helpful? What do you wish they would have done differently?
4. Describe an experience where you helped someone in the area you have struggled in? What was their response? What did you learn from that experience?
5. What advantages do you feel you may have as a lay people helper?
6. What do you feel are some of your limitations in helping people work through their problems in living?
7. What areas of your life are you seeking to illustrate to others how God's Word works in practical everyday living or problem solving?
8. What present or past difficult situation has God taken you through that you can now see how He was preparing you to help someone else? How did it prepare you?
9. What are your fears in attempting to help someone work through a problem in living? What do you feel God is doing in your life to address those fears? What growth have you seen in those areas? How can we pray more effectively for you in this regard?
10. What areas of your life would you like your group to pray for so that you would be able to share with others how you worked it through?

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