

Biblical counseling

By way of introduction, if you'll take your Bibles for a moment and turn to Romans 15:14, we see Paul here gives us a mandate, within the Christian body, to counsel one another. There are many passages we could turn to, but again, for the sake of time, I'll just briefly mention this one. And then, by way of introduction, I'll give you a few brief definitions of biblical counseling, and then we'll look at each of the key ingredients, starting with establishing involvement.

Notice Romans 15:14, what Paul says here: "And, concerning you, my brethren, I myself, also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to"—what? "Admonish one another." There's the Greek word, 'noutheteo'—"to admonish or warn or to counsel one another." We know that the scriptures are sufficient to diagnose and remedy every spiritual problem. I won't belabor that point based on such passages as 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3, that God's given us everything pertaining to life and godliness. Let me give you just a couple of definitions of biblical counseling that you can jot down there, in your introductory portion there, in your notes.

Biblical counseling uses God's Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to change desires, thinking, and behavior in people's lives that are contrary to the scriptures.

Now, let me just give you a couple of nuances based on that brief definition. There are other ways that we could define biblical counseling, but that's just one of them. Biblical counseling uses God's Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to change desires, thinking, and behavior in people's lives that are that are contrary to the scriptures.

We know, from verses like Hebrews 4:12, that the Word has the power to reach the deepest parts of the hearts of men, and able to judge even his motives and his intentions.

We also know from scripture that biblical counseling, in its truest sense, is only for believers because unbelievers are spiritually—what? Appraised. 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul says they cannot understand

the things of God because they're spiritually appraised. That doesn't mean that we don't want to meet with unbelievers as long as they want to discuss the gospel of Christ. That's the starting place—that a man has to be a new creature in Christ before he can move forward in biblical counseling. His spirit and his mind must be illumined by the Holy Spirit.

Another nuance: biblical counseling seeks the sanctification of the Christian. As pastors, we want our people to look like who? Jesus Christ. With all the theories and models out there—among secular theories and models of psychology—they can't even agree on what man should look like, but we, as Christians, know that we want people to be like Christ. So, it's a process of biblical sanctification: for the glory of God, to look at people's pattern of sin and to help them to discern what to put off—to renew their minds through the Word of God—and what to put on—to replace sinful habits and thinking—so that they're able, then, to go out and effectively teach others also, what they learn.

So, biblical counseling, in a nutshell, is the path of spiritual sanctification. Also, when we counsel with people, we're looking at (when they come into your office) not discipleship in general, but biblical counseling underneath a discipleship umbrella; looking at specific problems or issues that they're struggling with; dealing with matters of their heart. Specifically, maybe, what idols are they worshipping in place of God? As David Paulsen writes, "Biblical counseling is the ministry of God's grace to individuals just as biblical preaching is the ministry of God's grace to the multitudes." We're focusing in on specific issues, as we counsel with people, to make them more like Christ. Now, how do we do that? Let's look at some of these ingredients—key elements of biblical counseling—as I give you the broad brush this morning.

(I) First of all, when somebody comes to see you, we want to establish involvement with them.

(A) Some biblical examples here that I put in your notes:

Acts 20:31, Paul says, "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease"—there it is—"to admonish each one with tears."

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own”—what? “Our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”

Galatians 6:1-5 (you’re familiar with that passage, I’m sure), “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

Colossians 1:28-29, Paul says, “And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

What does “establish involvement” really mean?

Building a relationship with the counselee where you put yourself in a position to help. How can you do that? Several ways... By the character of your own life. Obviously, this is the supreme qualification for all Christians who attempt to do soul work—is to be like Christ ourselves, to be that example to that person, like Christ, to model Christ-likeness. As Paul says, “Be imitators of me,” 1 Corinthians 11:1, “just as I also am of Christ.”

As biblical counselors and pastors, rather than just being problem-oriented, we need to be involved and be people-oriented to show people that we care about them. We want to put ourselves in a position to be that helper, as Proverbs 27:9 says, “So a man’s counsel is sweet to his friend.” The counselee needs to see the counselor as a trusted friend or advisor. And (I’ll make the point later on this morning, gentlemen) even if that’s a five-minute conversation, we want to let people know that we share the compassion of Christ for what’s going on in their life—whether it’s a five-minute or six-month counseling case.

Secondly there, recognize that the counselee may never have had such a relationship before. You may have somebody that's new in your church that was abused as a younger person, and they may come into your office to meet with you—and maybe they've never experienced anybody in their life that's ever expressed true concern about their problems. Your hope may be all that they're going on at first. For example, Paul writes in Romans 15 (earlier, I had you look at 14...If you're still there, look at verses 4-6 there), "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have"—what? "Hope." Hope... And we'll talk about that at the end of today's session—giving hope to people.

How do you establish involvement in counseling?

Number one: Be available. Be touchable. Here at our church, oftentimes people come up to me and say, "Pastor Pile, I know you're busy, but could you meet with me? Could you sit down with me? I have some issues on my heart that I need to deal with." Be available. Be like Christ. Even though we're focused and we're about the business of studying hard and shepherding God's flock, we still need to be available. Through my years of experience and interacting with different pastors over the years, sometimes pastors give the air about them that they're not approachable or touchable—and people discern that. But we need to be available; to use our time wisely, but yet to work in time in our schedule to sit down and formally counsel people when we need to do so.

Secondly, show compassion. Why is this so important? Because compassion influences how people receive your instruction. Until we ourselves are moved with compassion, we're not really ready to minister. People will receive our instruction in a far greater way when they see that we're compassionate like the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:14-16, Jesus was our sympathetic high priest. Matthew 9:35-36, Jesus, looking out upon the multitudes—He felt what for them? Compassion. Christ was compassionate as He dealt with people. The Good Samaritan is an example. Luke 10:33, "When He saw him, He felt"—what? "Compassion." The man along the road...

Showing compassion also includes the idea of being patient with people. We're very good about asking God to be patient with our sins; sometimes, we're not as patient with those that we're trying to

counsel. It's like, "Can't you guys get this? You should be different by tomorrow! I want you to have your spiritual act together!" And yet, Paul said to Timothy, "Be very patient." Be patient. 2 Timothy 2:24-26, "And the Lord's bond servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition." We need to be patient with people, even those who may at first be resistant to our counsel. Again, that's part of establishing involvement with them—to listen carefully. And, we'll talk about that later.

Number three: take the counselee seriously. Even if you know somebody in your congregation pretty well and he comes in—let's say it's a married man—and he comes in and says, "Pastor Pile, I'm a terrible father." Oftentimes we have a tendency, especially when we know somebody, to say, what? "No you're not. I know you." We minimize the problem.

Take the counselee seriously. Don't minimize the problem, but maximize Christ's sufficiency. Take the counselee seriously. Why is that so important? Because it communicates respect. If a man tells me he's a terrible father and I ask him, "What's going on? Tell me the reasons that you're saying that," that takes him seriously and that demonstrates that I respect what he's saying. I want to hear what's going on, because he probably has good reasons for why he thinks he's a terrible father. If, on the other hand, we make light of their problems, this can alienate the person from the beginning and remove hope that they had, that you could help them—and that's very critical when you're dealing with abused people, people that have been abused when they were young. They can discern very quickly if you're going to take them seriously and have a compassionate ear, as I mentioned under point two. If you minimize the problem, you can lose a person pretty quickly.

Number four: express confidence in a counselee's ability to obey scripture. 1 Corinthians 10:13—let the person know that "no temptation is overtaken you, but such is as common to man; and God is faithful... He can provide a way of escape, even through this trial." Philippians 1:6, Paul said that "I am confident in this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will"—what? "Perfect it until the Day of Christ Jesus." "Show confidence in the Lord; He can change you..." Again, that'll give the person hope. So, express confidence in the counselee's ability to obey scripture.

Number five: receive counselee's disagreements without being defensive. “Help me. Give me some more information,” you may need to ask the person. “Give me some more info.” Don’t be like a cat with fangs out, saying, “You know, you’re bugging me. Just get over it. Take a couple verses and go home and you’ll be fine,” you know? Don’t get defensive. Hear the person out. Be gentle. Be patient, as I mentioned earlier.

Number six: another way to establish involvement, of course, is to observe confidentiality. Now, this isn’t 100% iron-clad, based on state laws that we have to abide regarding abuse situations, or even biblically, if we need to follow Matthew 18. Here’s our confidentiality statement for counseling here (it’s not in your notes...I’m just going to read it to you): “Information disclosed in counseling sessions will be held confidential to the extent that the counselor believes the Bible or the state requires. Absolute confidentiality is not scriptural. For instance, matters of church discipline, Matthew 18 and following, or criminal incidence, may require one to disclose facts to others.” Well, we can help the person by explaining those things up front, and also to share with them that “I will tell you first before I tell anyone else, if we need to involve someone else.”

Jay Adams writes, in his *Handbook of Church Discipline* on page 32—he states it pretty well—“I’m glad to keep confidence in the way that the Bible instructs me. That means, of course, I shall never involve others unless God requires me to do so.” That’s a good quote. That’s a good way to put it. “Of course we’ll keep it in confidence, as the Bible instructs me, but if we do need to get others involved, then I will let you know first and then we’ll go from there”—and that can assure the person that you’re not going to go around and gossip about them or bring them up in your next sermon in your church.

Number seven: be honest. Be honest with the counselee about your own credentials and your academic qualifications. Don’t present yourself as something you’re not. If we’re not sure on something, we can ask and help each other in the body of Christ and get answers to a particular subject that maybe we haven’t studied. So, be honest. Be careful not to come across to a counselee that we know something when we don’t. It’s okay to say, “I don’t know. Let me check that out. Let’s work on that. Let’s get some more information.” Be honest about your own problems and sins. Sometimes, as I’ll mention a little bit later here, we can help people in a great way, because we’ve gone through the

very same things that they're going through. That can be helpful. Be honest, also, about your own agenda. 2 Corinthians 5:9, our agenda is to make that person be pleasing to God—that's our goal—and our methods, of course, flow out of the text of holy scripture. 3 John 4, for example, the Apostle John says, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." That's the great delight of doing the hard work of biblical counsel, is to see somebody change and walk in the truth because we're in there, rolling up our sleeves and getting to work at the serious issues in a person's life.

Number eight: model fruit of the Spirit. Remember, guys, we can't give away something that we don't have in our own life, as we've been hearing from our pastor here, John, in his messages and so forth. We have to deny ourselves and be walking in the Spirit. We can't give away what we don't have. So, model the fruit of the Spirit.

Number nine: communicate clearly with good content. Ephesians 4:25 says to "speak the truth in love" with the right motivation to edify that person. Ephesians 4:29, we want to be careful not to "let any unwholesome word proceed from our mouth" while we counsel someone. We want to see them edified. We want to do it at the right time. Proverbs 15:23, "A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word!" In the right manner... Proverbs 15:1-2, "A gentle answer turns away wrath." So, we need to communicate clearly.

Number 10: be a good listener. Sometimes, as pastors, I think we fail at this point. Be a good listener. Proverbs 18:13, "He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him." Sometimes, we're ready to give that biblical answer and we haven't really heard the whole story/the whole picture. So, make sure that you practice being a good listener.

Number 11, be solution-oriented. Help find biblical answers to their issues and then how do they apply that?—to work through those. Be solution-oriented: what to put off, and then, what to put on.

Have prayer with and for the counselee. Depending on how often you meet with them, pray in-between. Pray with them and for them. Maybe it's once a week that you're going to meet with this

person for the next several weeks—pray for them. I’ve seen a great impact in my own counseling ministry when I actively pray for the people in-between sessions. And sometimes, when you don’t, they come back and the scrambled egg that they’ve created is even worse; it’s now a thick omelet, you know, with all kinds of other stuff thrown in. Be faithful to pray for them, because if the Spirit of God’s at work, He’s going to be changing those people—and we can have the joy of being a part of that, by asking God to work in the heart and mind of the people that you’re counseling.

So, number I, the first key element there is: establish involvement.

(II) Secondly, gather lots of information.

Why gather data?

Because we’re not going to know how to solve the issues at hand, biblically, without lots of information. This can’t be overestimated. You need information to discern what the issue are in the person’s life. And, for the counselee, it lets him know you are really listening and you really care, as I mentioned.

For example,

Number one there: which type of person am I dealing with? If you go to 1 Thessalonians 5 for a moment, Paul gives us some categories of people that we’re going to deal with in our churches. What type of person am I talking to? I need to gather information so that I know what kind of tool to pull out of the toolbox to use to minister to this person, biblically. Notice 1 Thessalonians 5:14, “And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak”—and there’s that word patience, again—“be patient with all men.” So, what type of person am I dealing with?

Secondly, which approach is best for that kind of person? For example, I wrote John 4 there: Jesus

had an ongoing dialogue there, in chapter 4, with a Samaritan woman, engaging her in a conversation. Matthew 19:16-26 talks about the rich young ruler. He got to the point much more quickly with the rich young ruler: “Go and sell all that you have and follow me.” Now, the man wasn’t willing to confess Christ as Lord and, of course, didn’t want to give up his material possessions, so he walked away... So, what kind of person am I dealing with? What’s the best approach here? Sometimes, it can be a relatively quick answer. Proverbs 26:5 says, for example, “Answer a fool as his folly deserves, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Sometimes, we have to rebuke a foolish person rather quickly, without hearing their whole story, because their thinking is already so convoluted that, sometimes, we need to rebuke them. But, which approach is best?

Number three: what’s the true issue going on here? I need to gather lots of information to discern, maybe, what idols are going on in this person’s heart so that we can change them. Jeremiah 6:14, “And they have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace.” Sometimes, people will lie to you to cover up the fear of man issues. Abraham struggled with that a little bit with Sarah, didn’t he, before the king? “That’s my half-sister... Because I feared that there was no fear of God here, I thought that you would kill her, so I lied.” Sometimes, there’re idols and motives behind the presentation problems the counselees will give you. What is the true issue? We need to gather lots of information to get to what’s really going on—the thoughts and intents of their heart, if that person’s willing to share them with you. And that takes lots of information.

(B) What kind of data to gather?

Well, all categories of life. What is the person’s presenting problem?—and go from there. I listed a little PREACH acronym by Dr. Mack:

P – Physical: sleep patterns, diet, activity level, illness... We need to gather information, maybe, on that.

R – Resources and Relationships: their job situation, school, intellectual, social, spiritual...

E – Emotions: extremes, feelings-oriented type of person...

A – Actions: behavior, sins of commission and omission...

C - Conceptual thinking: what are their goals? What are their values, desires, motives? “What do you want?” “Well, I want my husband/I want my wife to change. That’s what I want.” See, what is their motive for coming in? What is their thinking?

H – Historical background: how did they handle things in the past compared to the present context? Their failures, their school/their job problems...

This is just a little acronym that may be helpful. I also gave you a hand-out this morning—you see the circle there...

(C) How to gather data? Ask proper questions...

Extensive and intensive (so I gave you a sample there of that)... Extensive questions, of course, have to do with asking a little about a lot of subjects. That’s more of a shotgun approach: in *all* areas of life and activity. We’re trying to cover as many bases as we can to gather some information. You see the extensive questioning with the arrows to those particular topics in the middle of the circle there? Sometimes, when you’re collecting information (maybe the first few sessions of meeting with a person), you’re going to take the shotgun approach and ask a lot of questions about the issues that are going on in their life, depending on how specific the problem may be. Sometimes, you need that background. Versus... Intensive questions is asking a lot about a little. That’s more of a rifle approach. You’re aiming in on one particular issue—one problem in detail—so you’re going to ask a lot of intensive questions about the adulterous affair that they had/the person had, for example. So, extensive and intensive questions. How else can we gather information?

Well, number two: relevant information. What are the pertinent facts in this person’s life that you need to know to make a biblical diagnosis? What are the pertinent facts? What’s relevant here? What do I need to know to help this person?

Be careful not to ask questions that promote rabbit trails. Oftentimes, as you counsel with people, you

can ask them a question, “Hey, how are the Lakers doing?” you know, and they’ll go down a rabbit trail—why? Because they want to waste time. They’re scared to bring up the topic that they’re there for, and they’ll go down rabbit trails. You know, that’s a simplistic illustration, but be careful not to ask questions that’ll shoot them down a rabbit trail that really isn’t pertinent to gathering the information you need to make a biblical diagnosis.

Also, men, be careful not to ask questions that are too detailed just to satisfy your own curiosity. We have to be careful, especially with sexual sin issues. If a man comes to me and confesses that he committed adultery twice, I don’t need to know the ugly details of what took place in that particular sin; I need to know that he committed adultery twice. That’s the pertinent facts—now, what are we going to do about that, in the past month, or whatever the case may be? So, we need to be careful that we don’t let our own flesh act up, so to speak, and ask questions that are not really relevant. Some things we just don’t need to know. We need enough information to help the person, but be careful on that.

Number three: questions that find facts. Let me give you the categories here... “What?” type of questions. “What?”—this produces basic information. Ask a lot of “what?” type of questions. This will give you basic information.

Then, “how?”—that gives you the mechanics. “How did you do that? How did that happen?” That gives the mechanics of what took place.

Also, “where?” questions and “when?” questions. Look for patterns. “Where did this occur? When did this occur?” Look for patterns. “Where?” and “when?”

Also, “what for?”—this can give you reasons, motives. “What for?” “Because I wanted to get even. That’s why.” “What for?”—that can get to motives.

And then, another obvious question, “how often?” “How long has this been taking place? How often

did this occur, that you committed adultery with this other person? How long? Over what period of time are we talking?"

These are good questions to ask because it gives you good information. Be careful of the "why?" questions too early because "why?" questions just give you excuses oftentimes. "Why'd you do it?" "Because I wanted to," you know... "It felt good." They can rationalize. So, ask lots of "what?", "how?", "when?", "where?" type questions.

Number four: open-ended questions. Be careful about using yes-and-no questions. For example, "Are you having problems in your marriage?" "Yes." Doesn't give you much information, versus, "Tell me about your marriage. What's going on?" Provide open-ended questions. Provide flexibility for the response. It also helps to determine what's important to the counselee. Open-ended questions. It helps you to better understand. Here's another example of a closed question: "Do you want to get married?" (to a single person), "Yes or no?" versus "What are your thoughts about marriage?"

Number five: be specific. Avoid fuzzy questions. Also, don't settle for vague or general answers. A fuzzy question might be something like this: "Is your wife sincere?" Kind of hard to answer, isn't it? Or if she says, "My husband isn't sincere." "What does that mean? Explain that to me." So, we have to avoid fuzzy questions. And, if you ask a question and the counselee looks at you like a dog—"Say, what?"—you know that maybe you're asking a fuzzy question. You know how dogs give you that question command, like "What?" They turn their head... So, if a counselee does that, and so forth, you may be asking a fuzzy type of question.

Number six: withhold judgment while getting information. Be careful to withhold judgment while you're collecting information. Proverbs 18:17, "The first plead his case seems right, until another man comes and examines him." That's a big one, isn't it, especially, in a marital context? The husband comes in, meets with you for an hour, tells you what a horrible wife he's married to, and you think, "Man, this woman sounds like a contentious woman described in Proverbs." Then she comes in, and you get the other side of the story, that he has a lot of issues. So, withhold judgment. Be careful not to take the side of the first person. You have to collect lots of info.

Number seven: mark important areas for further questioning. I often tell people, “I’m going to take some notes, so it helps my memory—to jot down the key issues.” And, sometimes, when they share with you some wrong thinking patterns, and so forth, just put little stars there by key words that they say that you can come back to. Again, when you’re collecting information in the first few sessions with people, you want to be careful not to jump on that right away, because then you’re going to go down a rabbit trail thinking that maybe that’s the biggest problem—and that’s only the presenting problem; they’re not even to the idols of their heart yet! So, keep collecting. Just take good notes, and put little stars by—“Oh, boy, that’s quite a statement there. I want to come back to that later here and examine that”—because, again, you’re gaining involvement in the person’s life, so you don’t want to jump on wrong thinking patterns or behavior patterns too quickly. You want to gain that information.

Number eight: observe the countenance. Nonverbal communication. We call it “halo data”—their facial expressions, the way they are seated, sometimes arms being folded. If you have a marital couple come in to meet with you, and they put their chairs back to back, that can usually, by their halo data, give you some good information, right? Now, again, we have to be careful with that because we’re not God: we can’t read people’s hearts. But, sometimes, the countenance of a person, and so forth, can clue you in on the right kind of questions to ask to get information. How something is said, right? We can often say nice things in a wicked way. “Gee, honey, that was a *nice* dinner tonight,” you know; sarcasm and things like that. So, how does a person say something to you? You can pick up on that.

But be careful, again, not to misread—and we’ll talk about that in a little bit. I can remember one situation where the wife’s mouth dropped wide open, and it’s like, “Oh, oh, the guy’s lying again,” but it was just the opposite: “I can’t believe he told the truth.” You see, her countenance was, “[Wow] he actually told the truth,” whereas you might sit there and go, “He’s at it again. She’s like, “Oh, he’s lying...,” you know, so be careful on that. But, halo data can clue you in on some things that are going on there with the person you’re dealing with.

Number nine: gain information from others. You might give some homework assignments, to go out and collect some information from their boss, if they’re having struggles at work—what’s going on

there? Their in-laws... The spouse, of course... You can give them homework assignments to glean information from other people. For example, a boss: you might send a man to his boss to ask him what three areas he needs to improve in, in his job. See, he's blaming his boss—"This guy picks on me all the time," and so forth. Well, is that really the case? Maybe not. So, "Go to the boss. Get some information for me. Have the boss jot down some things and bring it back next week. Let's talk about that."

(D) The importance of listening.

Very necessary, as I mentioned. To be an effective pastor/counselor/discipler—however you want to call that—We need to listen with our whole body, our eyes, our posture, and so forth.

Secondly, that requires self-control. Don't check in and out with people. Listening is active, not passive. You don't think so, just ask your wife. She knows when you're reading the sports page, etc., etc., or if you're really paying attention to her or not. It's active. A counselee can pick up on that as well. It requires self-control. Be careful not to do this, while somebody's sitting there talking, pouring their heart out. You do that, as I mentioned earlier, you could lose somebody—and we've all experienced that, haven't we? We go to the hospital, make a hospital visit or something, and we're thinking we'd take a quick peek, we've been there awhile—and the person sees you. We have to be careful of those things.

Number three, here's what to listen for: wrong goals. These are very common, of course. What's their goal? They may just want to come in and vent. That's it. "Pastor, I'm married to this skunk over here. You need to help me. I just want to vent on the person"—maybe they really *don't* want help, I should say. "Change my spouse"—that's the idea. They have wrong goals. Oftentimes, couples are sitting there like this, "Right, Pastor, fix him/fix her. It's not me. I'm only ten percent of the problem. She's ninety percent, so get her, will you?" Listen for wrong goals.

Secondly, listen for expectations or lusts. "My spouse should do this for me." Or a single person: "I need to be married, Pastor, to be fulfilled! You just don't understand." Maybe a lust, maybe an idol...

Third, blame-shifting. Sin number one justifies sin number two. “She started it. I just finished it. I just punched her in the eye.” See? Justifying, blame-shifting... “It’s my background. I can’t help it. It’s my culture. He caused me to stumble.” The whole Adam and Eve deal, right?

Number four: “can’t”—be aware of these words—“can’t,” “I’m *unable* to do that,” “it’s *too much*.” 1 Corinthians 10:13, as I’ve already quoted. Really means, “I won’t. I don’t want to do that. It’s too demanding. I can’t do that, Pastor. It’s too difficult.” Philippians 2:14, Paul instructs us to do all things without grumbling or complaining. Really, when a person says, “I can’t,” they’re really saying, “Christ isn’t sufficient. The power of the Holy Spirit is not enough.”

Listen for victim mentality. Maybe they are a victim in the short-term. The world says, “You’re scarred for life”; we would say, “Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ can help you overcome anything. Even if you are a victim of abuse, we can work through that, because Christ is your sympathetic high priest. We can move from being a victim to a victor.”

Another one: calling sin sickness. People may be used to secular terms they’re reading, and so forth, as they come into your churches, so they say that they’re an “alcoholic” versus being a drunk (Ephesians 5:18), “perfectionist”—whatever words they may come with.

Rabbit trails, as we mentioned earlier; sometimes, people try to hide behind them—the questions asked that turn discussion from the problem at hand. So, be careful of rabbit trails, and listen for those. You may have to, sometimes, pull the person back to keep them on focus: “Let’s talk about *this*...”

What the counselee doesn’t say. You may have a person come in and say a lot about their mother and not talk about their father. That may clue you in to say, “Oh, what’s happened over here in this relationship? We need to explore that.”

Hopelessness. The person may come in, have no hope—suicidal people. “This will never end. There’s

no light at the end of the tunnel.”

Listen for evasiveness. They don't answer your question. You ask them a specific question and they go down the rabbit trail, right? And it's like, "Wait a minute, come back here," and you ask them again and they go... It's like trying to nail jell-o to the wall, right? You can all relate to that, right? I say, "Wait a minute. Come over here. Answer this question. Were you or were you not at this place?" (or whatever the case may be) and they're evading it.

Exaggerations. They use words like "always" and "never." "He *never* helps me around the house!" and "He *always* does that!" That could clue you in on some big issues that are going on, when they exaggerate.

Also, defensiveness. Pride. May I suggest to you that I think that's, obviously, as we all know, the biggest issue, before we can move somebody forward in biblical sanctification—is pride? God is "opposed to the proud, but gives His grace to the humble." We understand that because we understand our own sin, don't we? We understand that, when our spouse has confronted us, sometimes the walls go up and say, "Here's the justification for what I did. You know, you started all the stuff that we're going over here, right?" We understand that. We're defensive. But, until a person's willing to be teachable and to listen to wise counsel again, as Proverbs so eloquently talks about throughout the whole book, you can't really move a person forward, because they're not listening through their proud ears. "That's not me." It's like a person who has a sign on their back: all of you guys see that sign—"Jim is proud and obstinate in this area of his life"—you all see the sign, but I don't. So, sometimes, we have to help the person—to talk to them, straight up, that "Your pride is holding you back. This is what God says to do and you're too proud to admit it."

Another one is judging another's motives. 1 Corinthians 4:5, you have to caution them about judging the motives of other people: Paul says, "Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time." So, you may have to caution them. Listen for how they judge other people. They may be pharisaic on their viewpoint toward others.

A willingness to accept responsibility. Well, sometimes, the results are in God's hands, it's not my responsibility, and yet, Paul says, in 1 Timothy 4:7-8, that we should "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness, for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things." They need to take on their responsibility in the situation or issue.

(III) Number three, make a proper interpretation.

We have an example of a wrong interpretation. Mark 6:45-52, after feeding the 5,000, Jesus sent the multitude away, departed to the mountain to pray—was early in the morning, the disciples were in the boat, the wind was against them—He came walking on the water, and they saw Christ and became, what? Fearful. They had a wrong interpretation of the information that was coming towards them. It was the Lord Jesus! They saw the circumstances as horrible! They didn't learn from the loaves, the previous miracle that He just had. And, in verses 51-52, "And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." So, we need to make a proper interpretation.

(B) Let's look at that—the process, then, of interpreting.

Number one: compare all the information you've collected and responses to God's Word, and the example of Jesus. You can jot down in your notes Psalm 1 and Isaiah 8:19-20. We need to take the information, as I mentioned, whether it's five minutes, one hour, or several weeks, and compare it with God's Word. Compare the person's behavioral responses, their thinking patterns, their attitudes, their interpretations of their problems, and compare it to the light of God's Word. Compare the person's desires, their values, their expectations and motivations to God's Word.

Secondly, look for themes and patterns. Are there typical behavioral responses in certain situations that they're experiencing? Maybe they're critical. They criticize others and they're very critical in certain situations. Here's a little tip for you that I've noticed, over the years, in my counseling: the things that people are critical of in other people are oftentimes what they are—what? Involved in. They're very

critical of other people, and sometimes those are the very sins that they're involved in—very pharisaical. So, look for themes and patterns. Are there typical expectations, thought patterns, desires, longings, or demands that the person has in certain situations? You want to look for those themes and patterns.

Number three: use biblical labels and terms. Avoid psychological labels, such as “dysfunctional family,” “you come from a dysfunctional family,” and so forth. The world tells us those things. We're all from a dysfunctional family, all the way back to Adam and Eve—all of us—just depends on degree, does it not? “Perfectionism”—things like that. Titus 3:3... “Sexual addiction,” the person may say, versus Paul says “sexual lust,” Titus 3:3. Ephesians 5:18—I mentioned that earlier—person says they're an “alcoholic” versus Paul saying, “Don't get drunk with wine for that is dissipation; be filled with the Spirit.” So, avoid using psychological or secular terms. Use biblical labels. Help the person to start thinking biblically.

Number four: Put data on the witness stand and ask it questions. What's this mean? What biblical categories could be used to describe the person I'm counseling? 1 Thessalonians 5:14—I mentioned that. Is this an “unruly” person? “Fainthearted”? What does the person understand about biblical change? That's another big question. Put the information on the witness stand and ask it questions. How does this person view change occurs? Maybe they come from a legalistic background, so you might have to help adjust their thinking. Maybe they come from a Keswick background, “Let go and let God”—there's no discipline in it, it's all God's work, nothing of me—versus biblical discipline and sanctification, 1 Timothy 4:7-8.

Also, some other things to look for... What about complicating factors in this situation? David—he lusted. He went and sinned with Bathsheba (committed adultery), then he murdered Uriah, and then he was deceitful about it. What are the complicating issues that I'm looking at here? And test that against the biblical grid. And then, what is the best way to approach the counselee? What's their greatest need? How can I help them, based on putting the information they've given me on the witness stand?

Number five: prayerfully study the information to identify what may be going on in the person's heart—their ruling motives, their goals, and what he worships.

Number six: form tentative interpretations by using scripture. What does God actually say about this person's problem? Make a biblical interpretation. Use scripture to identify the different possibilities. For example, Cain was very depressed, right? After he murdered Abel. "Why is your countenance fallen?" Well, because he was evil, full of pride... He was depressed. If he listened to God, would not your countenance be lifted up? What's going on here? This person's depressed; now I'm comparing it with scripture, making tentative interpretations. You may be able to use your own experience here based on 1 Corinthians 10:13. Maybe, you've gone through the same thing that that person has gone through. It never ceases to amaze me—with the counseling we do here at church with our "Pastor of the Day" ministry, where our younger guys, who are in seminary and throughout the church, help with manning the phones with taking outside, nonmember calls—how God providentially orchestrates guys that have gone through things in their own experience, that that particular person will call that particular day, that particular hour, that that person's on. In all the years and the thousands of counseling cases that I've experienced here in the past nine years, never ceases to amaze me too that, when I pick up that phone, I'm the right person that should hear that person call—how God providentially works that out.

So, sometimes we can use our own experience to help that person to interpret what they're going through, because we understand; we've walked in those shoes. You can also use your experience with other people. Why? Because we're building a backlog of experience, based on our counseling knowledge in shepherding people. For example, men who get angry at their wives—here's a big one that we see all the time at our church, unfortunately. Men who get upset and angry at their wives. What's the underlying issue in that person's life? Pornography. Lust. Internet porn. Slipping out to see a prostitute. Why? Because the guilty conscience is screaming, and when the wife at home brings up something, he takes out his anger upon the spouse, because his conscience is guilty. So, again, you may see some presenting issues—and that may not be the main issue at all. Anger—it could be because he's into pornography, sexual sin. That's a very common factor, unfortunately, among men who express anger at their spouse.

Number seven: pray. Ask God to give you wisdom. Pray in between sessions. Take good notes. "Am I seeing this correctly?"

Number eight: gather more information. It may give you a different perspective of what is going on. Keep a journal.

Number nine: get input from another counselor. Run the situation by another experienced pastor or Christian. A lot of you guys call us sometimes, when you have scrambled eggs out there, and we try and give you some insight or help to run things—and keep it anonymous, of course. We do that with our staff all the time; just say, “Hey...” I go to a fellow pastor, “Give me some insight on this situation I’m dealing with,” again, without gossiping about the person, but to say, “Here’s the scenario. How do you see this?” So, we’re in the body of Christ to help each other, to gather more information and input from other people.

Number ten: explain to the counselee and get some feedback. “Am I scratching you where you’re itching to get that feedback?” You know, “Am I hitting it here?” And, sometimes, they may say, “No, it’s really over here”—and we keep getting more information. “Am I scratching you where you itch?”

Number eleven: form a strategy—prioritize. Includes clarifying the issues with which you will deal, looking for heart issues—and this includes prioritizing the order in which you will deal with these issues. What are the biggest logs? I have a husband and wife come in to meet with me, maybe a first assignment: “Maybe write down this next week, what is the biggest Sequoia that each one of you needs to deal with and begin to chop down? What’s the biggest log in your own eye that God would have you change?” And then, you start to prioritize. “We need to look at this big tree over here. We need to start chopping that one down—the “Pride Tree,” see—and once that one gets chopped down, then all these other minor problems oftentimes take care of themselves.

(IV) Okay, provide instruction.

(A) Obviously, it needs to be biblically based. Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, but according to

Christ.” Let me run through this real quick, because I realize we’re getting short on time here.

Based on the scriptures alone, never on mere human ideas or observations because:

Number one, the Bible is practical. (This is not in your notes, by the way.) The Bible is practical. (You can just jot it down real quick.) Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light to my path.”

The Bible is comprehensive. We realize, as pastors, don’t we, that the Bible’s not exhaustive on every subject, but it’s comprehensive. As Peter says, “Seeing that His divine power is granted to us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness”; that the Bible is sufficient to help us deal with the issues of man’s heart. It’s comprehensive.

Number three: the Bible is trustworthy. John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is”—what? “Truth.” It’s trustworthy.

And, number four: the Bible is adequate. 2 Timothy 3:16-17—and you’re familiar with that.

We need to make sure that our instruction—number two there in your notes—is Christocentric. We need to exalt Christ. What a great Lord we have! What a great Lord we have. You can jot down Colossians 1:15 and following. John 8:58, of course, Jesus said, “I Am.” We need to exalt Christ. We need to build His disciples, not our own. It needs to be Christ-centered—our counseling.

Number three: action-oriented. Scripture is given to be applied! Jesus, when He gave the great commission, said to teach them, what? “Some things”? But, no, “Observe *all* that I commanded you”—to be action-oriented. “Teach them to observe *all* that I commanded you”—to put on godly actions. We don’t want people to understand, without application, because knowledge can puff us up, right? There’re a lot of people walking around that have a lot of theological knowledge in their head,

but they're not, what? Applying it. Those are some of the most miserable people on earth, you know. They can argue the distinctives of Calvinism, you know, just like *this*, but they're treating their wife in a horrible way.

Number four: differentiate between biblical directives and human suggestions. The directives, of course: "Thou shalt not commit..." the commandments of scriptures. Be careful the difference between human suggestions. For example, don't lift up a suggestion to be on par with scripture. That can become legalism. Let me illustrate that for you:

1 Peter 3:7, "You husbands, likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way." That's the command, isn't it? That's God's "Thou shalt..." Well, a human suggestion may be, "One of the ways that you can live with your wife in an understanding way is to keep a notebook on her. What are her likes, dislikes, and all those kinds of things?" We have to be careful though, that I don't tell every man, if he doesn't keep a notebook on his wife, that he's in sin, right? That's a human suggestion.

So, we have to be careful to differentiate between a biblical directive—"Thou shalt do this"; if not, church discipline will be applied—versus my human suggestions. This is what works for us. So, be careful on that.

Number five: make method appropriate to counselee's learning style. People learn in different ways: some people like to read—you may give them books to read, some people like to listen to tapes, so you may give them homework with tapes, illustrations, role-playing... Sometimes, role-playing can be very effective to help people see their blind spots. When I have a husband and wife in my office, sometimes I'll play the husband's role, sometimes I'll play the wife's role, so that they can sit there and see what they're really doing. That can be very effective.

So, what is the counselee's learning style? Oftentimes, I'll ask people that. "Do you prefer to read? Do you like to study? Do you like to do projects, etc.?" and get some feedback from them, so that I can tailor-make their homework that's more effective for that person.

(B) The development of counseling instruction.

Topical work lists—you should have a list of specific problems or issues in your filing cabinet, notebook, and so forth, in your office, so that you have topical work lists, whether it's anger, worry, fear, depression... Begin to collect good articles, things like that to keep in your office.

Secondly, personalized chain-reference Bible. Index the first verses; go there. What's been very effective for me, over the years—and I'm sure you can relate to this—is to put down cross-references, according to verses that you have an easy time remembering, on specific counseling issues; and you go there, and then, in your margins and so forth, you may have tons of other verses that would be very helpful to that person—because you can't remember all of them! But, you memorize and work on key verses and topics. That can be very helpful.

Number three: become familiar with a particular teacher and a particular area for—Dr. Wayne Mack, for example, on marriage and family issues, Dr. Robert Smith on medical issues. *The Biblical Counselors*, medical desk reference, is out now, by Dr. Robert Smith; that's a very helpful book on medical issues. Take advantage of training resources. I have some listed there for you. Let's move on, so we can get to some Q & A here.

(V) Give homework.

(A) Reasons for homework.

Number one: translates what is discussed into action. Remember, biblical counseling is not like the secular world, where it's just therapy that they come in and vent once a week. In fact, this may be the low point of their week—when they come to see us—because we're dealing with their sin, their issues, right? And that could be the low point. So, we want to give them homework to work on throughout

the week, and devise specific strategies on pertinent biblical directives for that person to work on throughout the week, because it translates what's discussed into action and we'll see how serious they are about change.

Number two: it puts the responsibility for change where it belongs: on the counselee. They're responsible before God for their life and actions. We can't be with them 24 hours a day.

Number three: helps decrease dependence. What we want to teach a fellow Christian is an independent dependence upon God (not on us, but on God)—how to work through the issue, to renew their mind, what to put on, and how to handle that in the future—to help decrease dependence upon us and bring it back to their focus on Christ. This is especially important when we give assignments that are given to be completed in concert with other members of the body of Christ. How are they relating to other members in the body? Some assignments there.

Number four: it saves you time. It finds those who mean business. It helps us to be a good steward of our time. We don't want to spend hour after hour after hour with people who are trying to spin our wheels and they're not serious about change, because we need to be good stewards of our time as well. Good homework also brings out problems and patterns more quickly as well—and those who mean business will give you that information, because they really want to change. The level of focus on homework will gauge the true motivation for change in a person.

Number five: continues counseling between sessions. It promotes problem-solving. The assignment can grow out of counseling (what issues come up?) and it can be a yard-stick for measuring progress.

Number six: it says you can believe things can be different today. This sets a pattern of expectation of change from the beginning. It can give the person hope.

Number seven: it provides data for future sessions—issues that may arise from the homework assignment itself.

(B) Now, the mechanics of homework.

Be specific. “What happened? What were you thinking? What did you do? What changes do you need to make?” Be specific, see, “What happened?” Maybe it’s an anger journal. “What happened to make you angry? What were you thinking when you got angry? What did you do about it, when you got angry?” “Well, I hit my wife,” etc., you see... “What changes do you need to make? What would God say about that?” See, you may have them do an anger journal. Be specific.

Number two: make it involve knowing and acting—not only their thinking, but their behavior.

Number three: review at the next session, because this may become the subject of counseling. They may come in and fill out an anger journal, and that may become the subject of what took place this week, a big blow-up that they had. Remember, don’t let people waste your time. Don’t let a person who is not controlling his time, control yours. If they don’t do their homework, then you may need to say, “Did you understand it? Did you intend to do it? What hindered you this week?” “Well, I got sick.” There may be some legitimate reasons; there may be some illegitimate reasons (they’re just lazy and they’re not really serious about changing).

Number four, there: examples, again, of some homework that may be effective...

(VI) Give hope.

(A) The need for hope.

Of course, hope is a great theme of the scriptures. Generally, for everyone; specifically, for those who have had problems for a long time, have serious or difficult problems, specifically marital issues. Obviously, a large majority of our counsel, as pastors, is going to be dealing with marital issues. It’s a

big one. People who've had life-shattering experiences—loss of a job, death of a loved one; people who have failed (for example, students); those who are spiritually weak; the elderly, maybe close to death or lonely; people who are depressed; people who are suicidal... There's just a sample of those who specifically need hope.

What's the bottom line? All counselees need hope.

(B) True hope versus empty hope.

Empty hope, of course, is when it's not scripturally based, due to wrong goals, as I mentioned earlier. "If I can just get what I want, then I'll be satisfied," or "If I was married" or "If I had a better job" or "if" this or "if" that, "then I would be fine"—empty hope, denying reality. They may be lying to you about their abilities, due to mystical thinking—"A verse a day will send the Devil away," "What does it mean to me?" rather than "What does the scripture mean here? How does it apply?"—very mystical. That's empty hope.

True hope: the result of salvation, based, of course, upon scripture. It's realistic. Romans 8:28—the adversity itself is not to be the ground of our hope, but that God is at work in the adversity through that difficult trial, and so forth. We can trust a sovereign God.

(C) How to inspire hope?

Share the whole gospel.

Help them grow in relationship to Christ.

Teach counselee to think biblically about their situation. The Bible speaks and addresses the

categories, the issues that they're dealing with—about God's character, about possibility for good. People have a tendency to see only the negative side and not the positive side. Oftentimes, as I work with people here at Grace, the Romans 8:28 principle is to point out to them: we may not see totally what God is up to on this side of heaven, He may not reveal that to us—the death of a loved one at an early age, the death of a child, this is very difficult—but God's up to something, and you're going to discover those things, as we move down this path, if we keep trusting Him and don't become bitter and angry, etc. God's up to something—and He can use you to help comfort others, etc., whatever the issue may be.

Number four: be solution-oriented. Don't let the person talk without seeking a solution. We're here to help people change, according to His Word.

And, number five: be a model. "Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ"—I mentioned that earlier—1 Corinthians 11:1.

The bottom line of biblical counseling? Gather information, make a biblical interpretation of the issues, and give a biblical answer (along with true hope that living to please God is possible). All this is done in the context of genuine love and concern for the individual. That's important, because many people caricature biblical counseling, and us as pastors, as "Just take a couple of verses a day, and you'll be fine," right? You've heard those kinds of things before. That's just a false caricature. True counseling is under the umbrella of discipleship, where we're helping people because we love them, we show Christ's compassion, and we're willing to work and walk alongside them to help them be more like Jesus Christ—and, if it's an unbeliever, we want to share the hope of the gospel with people.

Okay. I realize that that was broad-brush, and very fast. I'm sort of asking you to take a drink from a fire hydrant—I understand that. That's the broad-brush principles there that we take many hours on each one and slow it down. Do you have any questions or comments—and, if you do, may I just ask that you keep it concise and succinct, so that I can, hopefully, repeat it for the tape, because I can't remember a lot?

How do we gather information?

We do have a form here that we hand to a person coming in that's like an inventory sheet, asking what's going on, what's the issues, and some background type of questions. We don't use any specific personality-type questions and forms, and so forth, that you are alluding to.

And, secondly, as far as the demonic question, I can't say that I, personally, have faced that, yet—a person who may be demon-possessed type of thing. But, a couple general principles that I would share with you...

If it's a non-Christian, of course, demon-possession could still occur today—and what's the answer? The gospel, repentance, and faith in Christ. If it's a person who professes Christ, and they're acting in bizarre behavior, manners, and so forth—even like David, when he feigned madness, you know, before the king and so forth, and drooling—that example, and some other examples that we have in scripture—what's the answer to that as well? Repentance, faith, and working through the issues that may be in here. Remember that people, oftentimes, who act in bizarre manners, have spiraled downward because each point where they've had to choose God's way or their way over the years, they've chosen their way, and they've headed down a spiral all the way down here to—like Cain, very depressed, etc., or acting in bizarre manners, because they've chosen their way rather than God's way. And that can lead to very confused individuals, right? In fact, it's interesting that you bring that up. Let me just show you one passage that comes to mind as you talk about that. It's pretty fascinating here.

Deuteronomy 28 is the blessings of God to the Israelites, and then, the second half of the chapter, the curses, “If you don't obey Me...” Deuteronomy 28:28, “The Lord will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart, and you shall grope at noon as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways, but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually with none to save you.” Now, who's a good example of that in the Old Testament? Nebuchadnezzar—wasn't he?—the king. And what was his issue (at the end of chapter four)? Pride—remember? And then he acknowledged God, you see.

So, to answer your question—“Is a person demon-possessed or not?”—we would really not worry so much about that as to preach repentance and faith in Christ, whatever’s really going on there. Whether or not they’re demon-possessed or not, if a person is not professing Christ, Lord only knows, but the answer is the gospel; that’s the power unto salvation. And yet, God does allow people (Romans 1), as you know, with reprobate minds, and so forth, so we can run across some very bizarre things. How do we get help with that? Go see a medical doctor. Get a complete physical. Could there be an organic issue with the physical body that might be, you know, an issue that we need to look at? So, we try to work with medical doctors *within* our church—hopefully, preferably, for you men that are Christian doctors, if you can work the blood tests. Is there any organic things going on? So, again, collect lots of information there and see what’s going on, and then bring it back to the Word.

What about people who are Bipolar?

Begin to spend time with them; bring them in, collect your information like you would with other people. Again, if you can work with a medical doctor—is there any organic issues going on there that might be relevant or not relevant? As you collect information with that person, and they begin to, hopefully, if they’re professing Christ, get a handle on the issues that may be going on that causes them to be manic versus depressed—those states—as we have seen here, as you work with people like that, and they begin to get a handle on some of the issues that are going on in their heart, then you can send them back to their doctor. Hopefully, the person’s not medicated to such a point that they can’t think correctly. We’ve had some cases like that, where we have to say, “You have to go back to your doctor, and ask him, ‘How are you determining that there’s a physical issue here?’” And, oftentimes, if it’s a psychiatrist or whatever, they’re not; they’re just medicating the person, putting a band-aid on the symptoms, not dealing with this, right? As we know. But you may have to send a person back, to try and downgrade their medication, so that you can work with them cognitively, according to biblical principles. That’s rare, but it can happen.

So, hopefully, you can work with the person to ascertain the biblical categories and issues that they’re dealing with—and we’ve seen success, of course, through the Word of God, that people do get a handle on the issues that were causing them to be depressed, etc., that they can go back to their doctor and say, “Please take me off the medication now. I’ve learned to handle these problems in another way.”

We don't tell people to get off medication—we're pastors, we're not doctors—we're very careful about that. But we want to, again, if you can get a Christian doctor to help advise you with this person, as an ally, that can be very good. And work with the person slowly, patiently, so, hopefully, they can deal with the issues that are going on there. That's a general answer. I know that's a big one, but that's just a few general principles for now.

How do you help a couple where there's severe problems going on (they may even be temporarily separated)? How does the one person help while he/she waits for change in the other spouse?

Romans 12 is a good passage for that, in the section where Paul gives us some good outlines there of our own personal duties and how we relate to other people. "Overcome evil with good"—those principles in that whole section from 9-21. "So far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"—that the person's going to need to exercise patience, as we talked about here, that we need to be patient with the counselee, that that person needs to be patient as you, the counselor (or the pastor or your elders), deal with that other person, maybe, even, if it's a church discipline problem. If it's a physically abuse situation, where the spouse is separated for a season to protect herself, then to be patient, to stay accountable to leadership, and, again, come back to working on some of these principles of trusting God. Hopefully, change will occur; "Overcome evil with good." Be patient on those things. Those are a few general principles that come to mind—because, if the other person is a true Christian, just like David with his severe sins, that person is going to eventually repent and want to do things biblically and right, and allow you men to restore the marriage, even if it's adultery or something, you know, sinful like that.

What about schizophrenia?

Check out Jay Adams in *The Christian Counselor's Manual*—that you can look for that book, and he has a chapter on schizophrenia that you'll find helpful. Again, you want to be careful not to just tell the person to go to the psychiatrist and tell him he's off his rocker or something; you want to try and work with that person. Find out what the issues are, again, biblically—it's going to take some patience and

time to work that through—and then, try again to help the person, biblically. But, Jay’s chapter on that can be very helpful to you (on schizophrenia). *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*. Okay? Again, that’s just a general answer to get you started, for the sake of time.

Of the Matthew 18 process? I mean, when they cross that line for us to move forward?

I think it really is the—you know, when Jesus says, “Take two or three witnesses” there and confirm the facts. One thing I’ve learned here at Grace—and I’ve been here since ’86, and on the staff since ’94—is our elders have always erred on the side of grace; they’ve done a good job of that through their wisdom and maturity. So, as I sit and observe these discipline cases that we talk about at elder’s meetings, we will, generally, if there’s still some hope there, and so forth, we’ll, generally, continue to try to patiently counsel with a person. So, to answer your question, where I’m going with all that is that this is a very verifiable sin issue by two or three; that it would hold up in court, so to speak. Just like Paul says to Timothy, “Don’t let an accusation be made against us, lest it’s based on”—what? “Two or three witnesses,” meaning that, when we pull the trigger on discipline, it’s usually a very verifiable sin that our body and elders that are working with that particular case; that it’s very clear-cut.

Now, if it’s a factious person, we move very quickly; we don’t wait on that. Within the week or something, we may be at step three, and then, out of the church. Factious, as Paul says in Titus. But, with other sin issues, we err on the side of grace. If a person comes back to us and says, “I repent of the prostitution, etc., etc., that I’ve been involved in,” then we may withhold for another month or so, and see if they begin the process of listening to our counsel and bear fruit of repentance. So, very verifiable by people—and I know that that can get sticky on some issues. I realize that, but that’s why the plurality of elders, you know—the biblical model. It is so helpful, because we’re unanimous on these decisions, as an elder board as we deal with people.