

Passion for Christ

The Missing Ingredient in Our Counseling

Titus 2:11-14

Pastor Brad Bigney, Grace Fellowship Church, June, 2010

I. The Focus of Your Counseling Has to be Leading Your Counselee into a Deeper Relationship with Christ ~ not just Dispensing Biblical Principles

“When principles or steps wander from Christ himself, they become self-serving guidelines. They make our marriages, families, friendships, and work go better, but the goal is our own betterment more than the glory of God... ‘Be good’ and ‘Do right’ are fine messages, but when they stand alone they have more in common with the Boy Scouts’ Handbook than Scripture. Remember that in the Bible, ‘This is who God is and what He has done’ always precedes ‘This is what you must do.’ Action follows our knowledge of God and trust in Him. It is as if God has said to us, ‘Now that you have seen who I am, you will want to love Me in return...’” *Addictions: a Banquet in the Grave*, Edward T. Welch, P. 155

John Piper “Sin is what we do when we’re not satisfied in God.”

I Corinthians 15:10 "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

II. You Need to Help Your Counsees to Taste the Goodness of God in Christ so that They’re Ruined for Anything Else

Psalms 34:8 “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him.”

“It is a dreary holiness indeed that is merely resisting sin. The joy of holiness is found in having heard a sweeter song... This is the true meaning of grace. Grace does not demonize our desires nor destroy them nor lead us to deny them. Grace is the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming our desires so that knowing Jesus becomes sweeter than illicit sex, sweeter than money and what it can buy, sweeter than every fruitless joy. Grace is God satisfying our souls with his Son so that we’re ruined for anything else!” *One Thing (Developing a Passion for the Beauty of God)*, Sam Storms, pg. 123 & 140

“Though we can often point to a lack of amputation or a failure to remain accountable to someone locally or lack of time in the Word as the problem the truth is... Radical Accountability, Amputation and Appropriation are in and of themselves of little lasting value without... ‘Radical Adoration’.

People can read the Bible, repent and be sorrowful for their sins and sever the areas of access to that which trips them up. We could find a local accountability partner but we cannot rely on our accountability partners

because sooner or later those relationships drift away or we will be unable to get a hold of them in a moment of need. We cannot always rely on our filter because we will inevitably get a new computer that will not come with a filter preinstalled or be somewhere that porn is available for viewing or purchase. We cannot only shop in stores where unattractive people dressed in burlap bags shop, and to my knowledge there are no college campuses, beaches or streets in cities that require full length summer apparel that show no skin. Without falling in love with Jesus Christ and seeking to serve Him daily with all their heart, mind, soul and strength it is only a matter of time before our resolve to stay away from the old idols begins to weaken and down we will go.” **Shon Bruellman**, The Executive Director of Setting Captives Free, *Newsletter*

C.S. Lewis ‘...making mud pies in the slum because they can’t imagine what it’d be like to have a holiday at the sea.’

III. Without a Passion for Christ Sin will just Lay Low & then Morph into Another Area of Your Life

Sam Storms says, “Holiness does not come merely by creating a list of moral taboos and then exerting our willpower to resist them. ‘Just Say No’ alone doesn't work. Of course, we must say ‘No.’ Please don't misunderstand me. But lasting, meaningful victory will come only if there is something more enticing to which we can say ‘Yes!’ ...We must fight sin with a massive promise of superior happiness. We must swallow up the flicker of sin's pleasure in the forest fire of holy satisfaction. The only thing that will ultimately break the power of sin is passion for Jesus. The only thing that will guard me from being entrapped by sin is being entranced by Jesus. In other words, the key to holiness is falling love!” *Pleasures Evermore*, Sam Storms, p. 31-32

IV. Your Thinking Has to Be Shaped by Jesus as the Lover of Your Soul

A. You’ve Got to Stop Living for the Moment and Start Living with a Sense of Hopeful Expectation about Eternity and Your Savior

Titus 2:13 “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

"A startling thing has happened among Western Christians. Many of us habitually think and act as if there is no eternity - or as if what we do in this present life has no bearing on eternity... Being oblivious to eternity leaves us experts in the trivial, and novices in the significant... most Christians, let alone the general public, do not even have an accurate picture of what the Bible says will happen to us after we die. We major in the momentary and minor in the momentous." Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions and Eternity* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989), pp. 138-139

B. You've Got to Connect Your Fight Against Sin Here Now with the Finished Work of Christ on the Cross!

Titus 2:14 "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed..."

"Where the Lord calls for change, connect those specific changes to what God is doing. Whenever you need to change, put the Redeemer in the center of the picture... Don't ever degenerate into giving advice unconnected to the good news of Jesus crucified, alive, present, at work, and returning."

Ephesians gives us no Reader's Digest list of 'six principles for successful marital conversation' or 'four keys to getting your life organized.' Such advice is often reasonably OK, though rather pale and powerless."

Seeing With New Eyes, David Powlison, page 43

"We approach the Bible with a 'where can I find a verse on _____' mentality. We forget that the only hope the principles offer rests on the Person, Jesus Christ... We cannot treat the Bible as a collection of therapeutic insights. To do so distorts its message and will not lead to lasting change. If a system could give us what we need, Jesus would never have come... He is the only answer, so we must never offer a message that is less than the good news. We don't offer people a system; we point them to a Redeemer." *Instruments in*

the Redeemer's Hands, Paul David Tripp, P. 8 & 9

Counselor Check-List

Pointing Counselees to the Savior of Grace Rather than just Dispensing Biblical Principles

1. Am I talking about Christ as much as I am sin?
2. Am I just using 'Single Bullet' verses... addressing the sin... and the way out... or am I sharing larger portions of Scripture that put a solid doctrinal foundation under the counselee's feet of redemption and hope in the Savior?
3. Am I regularly lifting the counselee's sights to the future... stirring up hope about the Savior... or am I focused largely on the immediate problem?
4. Do I effectively weave the redemptive work of Christ on the cross into our sessions... and calling my counselee to celebrate Christ's power and freedom over sin... or am I just pressing them and calling them to 'Quit your sinnin'!'
5. Are my homework assignments giving my counselee enough opportunities to 'taste and see that He is good'? (Psalm 34:8)
6. Am I quick to make a bee-line from their sin to the cross? Do I keep talking about redemption and a Redeemer even as the brokenness and ugliness of sin keep spilling out each week in our sessions?
7. Do I approach our sessions with the mind-set of growing a Christ-follower... or am I just fixing a problem?
8. Am I making the person and glory of Christ attractive by my words and attitude – leading a broken sinner to the Savior – or do our sessions feel more like a business transaction... sticking biblical principle 'band-aids' onto sin spots?
9. Have my counseling sessions with this person maintained a hopeful future expectation (based on the person and promises of Christ) or do our sessions mostly wallow in the drudgery of the immediate mess?
10. Is my own life right now reflecting the celebratory worship of a Christ-follower or do I just come across as the Bible 'Answer Man'?