

I. Introduction.

- A. The church is important. Acts 20:28 Eph. 5:25 1 Co. 3:16-17 Mt. 16:18 1 Tim. 3:15
- B. The Lord has given the local church everything it needs to fulfill its calling. 2 Tim. 3:16-17
1 Pet. 5:1-4 4:8-11 Eph. 4:8-11 2 Tim. 4:1ff 1 Cor. 11:23ff 12:1ff Acts 2:42 John 14:16ff

II. Biblical counseling is necessary for the church – The church is called to counsel.

A. What do we mean by *counseling*?

- 1. Counsel simply means to give advice. Ex. 18:19 1 Ki. 1:12 Ps. 1:1 Nu. 31:16 Dt. 13:5
2 Sam. 15:31,34 17:11 1 Ki. 12:6-9 1 Chron. 10:13 2 Chron. 22:3 Job 38:2 Pr. 12:5
- 2. We should seek and heed wise counsel. Ps. 32:8 Pr. 1:5,25,30 12:15 15:22 19:20
- 3. God is the perfect (wonderful) Counselor Who counsels us through His Word.
Job 12:13 Ps. Ps. 119:24 16:7 33:11 73:24 Pr. 8:14 Isa. 9:6 11:2
- 4. Biblical counseling offers instruction from the Bible so that believers can grow in Christlikeness. 1 Tim. 1:5 Col. 1:28-29
- 5. There are other terms which can be used synonymously - discipleship, soul care, encouragement, comfort, admonition, etc. Mt. 28:18 2 Co. 1:4 Rom. 15:14
Heb. 10:24 3:13 1 Th. 5:14 Isa. 50:4 Eph. 4:29

B. Why are pastors (and other church leaders) reluctant to counsel?

- 1. Many pastors do not feel equipped to counsel.
- 2. Some pastors do not believe that they are called to counsel. Acts 6:4 2 Tim. 4:1ff
1 Tim. 4:13-15
- 3. Counseling can be frustrating and discouraging.
- 4. Many pastors out-source most of their counseling.

C. Counseling is at the heart of the pastor's calling.

- 1. Pastors/elders are called to shepherd God's flock. 1 Pet. 5:1-4 Ps. 23 Acts 20:28
- 2. God takes shepherding seriously. Ezek. 34:1-10 Heb. 13:17
- 3. Faithful shepherds reflect the love of Jesus for His sheep. John 10:11-14 21:15ff
- 4. Paul exemplifies how leaders are to tenderly care for God's people. 1 Thess. 2:7-12
2 Col. 11:23-30 Col. 1:28-29 Acts 9:15-16 20:19
- 5. God blesses faithful shepherds. 1 Pe. 5:4

D. The public ministry of the Word (preaching) and the private ministry of the Word (counseling/discipleship) complement one another.

- 1. Paul proclaimed the Word both publicly and from house to house. Acts 20:20
- 2. Faithful preaching enhances the counseling ministry.
- 3. Faithful counseling/shepherding/soul care enhances the public preaching ministry.

E. The entire church is called to be engaged in the ministry of biblical counseling.

- 1. Pastors can't accomplish biblical soul care on their own. Exod. 18:13-26
- 2. Pastors equip the saints for works of ministry so that the whole church body can grow and mature. Eph. 4:10-11 2 Tim. 2:2
- 3. All of us are able to encourage one another from God's Word. Rom. 15:14 Eph. 4:29
Col. 3:16 Heb. 10:24 3:13 Gal. 6:1
- 4. Soul care takes place both through formal and informal ministry in the church.

F. Biblical counseling helps the church to fulfill the Great Commission. Mt. 28:18ff

III. The church is necessary for counseling – hurting, needy people need the church.

- A. Hurting Christians often look to the wrong sources for spiritual help.
 - 1. They seek out secular specialists who give unbiblical counsel. 1 Chron. 10:13
Isa. 47:14 1 Kings 12:8
 - 2. Some go to “Christian” therapists who rely upon unbiblical methodologies.
 - 3. People in crisis need the resources God offers in the local church.

- B. Many professing Christians are in spiritual trouble because they aren’t committed to a sound local church.
 - 1. Many don’t appreciate the importance of the local church. Heb. 13:17 Mt. 18:15ff
 - 2. Some counselees seek outside help because they don’t want their local church to be involved in their problems.
 - 3. Some counselees attend churches which are not fulfilling their calling to shepherd God’s sheep.
 - 4. What are the characteristics of a sound church? (From “Help! I Need a Church”)
 - a. Is this church centered upon the gospel of Jesus Christ? 1 Co. 2:2
 - b. Does this church stand firm on biblical doctrine? Titus 1:9 2:1 Gal. 1:8 2:16
 - c. Is the Bible faithfully preached week after week? 2 Tim. 4:1-3 2:2 Acts 20:27 2:42
 - d. Is the worship biblical and God-centered? John 4:23-24 Acts 2:42
 - e. Are church leaders biblically qualified and mutually accountable? 1 Tim. 3:1-7
 - f. Do the leaders shepherd the sheep? 1 Pet. 5:2 Acts 20:28 Heb. 13:17 Ezek. 34:1ff
 - g. Does this church practice biblical church discipline? Mt. 18:15-17 1 Cor. 5:1ff
 - h. Does this church equip people to serve God? Eph. 4:11-12 2 Tim. 2:2
 - i. Is this church a community of grace, love and peace? Rom. 15:7 12:18
 - j. Does this church have an outward focus – missions, evangelism and church planting? Mt. 28:18-20
 - 5. A biblical counseling center cannot take the place of the church in caring for souls.

- C. Hurting souls are to be cared for in the context of the church.
 - 1. The church is entrusted with the Word which is the only infallible and sufficient source of wise counsel. 2 Tim. 3:16-17
 - 2. The church is led by pastors/elders who are called by God to care for sheep. 1 Pe. 5:1-4
 - 3. The church is a community of many other gifted men and women who can offer help, love and encouragement. Titus 2:3-5 Rom. 12:4ff Gal. 6:2 Rom. 15:14
 - 4. The church is designed to be a place of healing – a spiritual hospital. 1 Th. 5:14 Heb. 12:12
 - 5. The church is the place of ongoing care and growth (discipleship). Col. 1:28f
 - 6. The disciplinary authority of the church is necessary in the lives of believers. Mt. 18:15-20 Heb. 13:17
 - 7. Christ is present in His church. Rev. 1:12-13
 - 8. Long term success in counseling rarely happens without a vital connection to a healthy local church.

IV. Conclusion: IBCD exists to help local churches fulfill their calling to care for God’s sheep.