

Counseling from the Attributes of God

Greg Gifford

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

—A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

I. Introduction

II. A Fundamental Aspect of Your Counseling is Calling Others to Be Like _____

A. Ephesians 5:1:

B.1 Corinthians 11:1

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III. The Divine Perspective of Biblical Change¹

A. _____ is a clear statement on the doctrine of how God transforms a man:

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18)

B. Observe the _____ and _____ relationship of this passage.

1. _____ — Beholding the Glory of the Lord

¹ A great resource for further discussion this is Tim Bryant’s, “Gaining a Transforming View of God,” lcbcc.org, Lowcountry Biblical Counseling Center accessed October 5, 2017. Part of this section is adapted from the provided lecture. Also reference *Behold Your God* directed by John Snyder for a great resource on this topic.

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2. _____ — Transformed into that same image

a. Why?

b. _____

IV. Key Observations from this Passage: _____

A. "We, all, with unveiled faces"

1. NT saint has the potential to see and comprehend God's glory much more fully through the work of Christ than the Old Testament saint.

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2. NT saint has the potential to be transformed into the image of the glory of Christ as he/she more fully beholds that glory.

B. _____

V. Observe the Key Terms of this Passage:

- A. What is “the _____ of the Lord”?

1. “The glory of God is the sum of all His infinite excellence and praise worthiness set forth in display.” - *The Joy of Fearing God*, Jerry Bridges

2. Glory is the worth, value, attributes and abilities of a person/thing on display.

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3. In Christ, God has revealed His worth, value, attributes and abilities in full measure.

- a. Jesus is the perfect image of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:4).
Consequently, in becoming more like Jesus we are being conformed to the image of God, which Jesus perfectly reflects.

VI. Biblical Counselors Should Seek to Expose Counselees to the Glory of God and Call Them to Become Like Him (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-2).

A. Examples:

1. Ephesians 4:32

2. 1 Peter 1:16

3. Luke 6:36

4. Additional: Be impartial like Him (James 2), love like Him (1 John 4:16), and, in terms of Jesus, be humble like Him (Phil. 2:5), a servant like Him (Matt. 20) and suffer like Him (1 Pet. 4).

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VII. Key Takeaways

A. Only true change can take place as one beholds the glory of God!

“Whenever sinful behavior exists, one should suspect faulty views of God. So assign counselees to read portions of God’s Word on His attributes (e.g. Deut 8, Ps 100, 103, 139, 145, Is 40, etc.). Assign them to read supplemental works on God from authors like Tozer, Pink, Charnock, MacArthur, Sproul, Piper, etc. (i.e. assign a chapter and have them list out three facts that stand out). Assign Bible Studies on Knowing God. Assign memory work and meditations on verses about God – meditating often. Assign CD’s/tapes on sermons about knowing God. Assign good songs and hymns to read and sing.”²

B. This can only occur within _____ (i.e., removed veil).

C. This is the process of _____.

² Dr. Stuart Scott, *The Goodness of God*, lecture at ACBC Conference 2008.

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1. “This is what progressive sanctification is all about. This is Christian growth. This is the process of becoming like Christ ... moving from one level of glory to the next as we gaze at the glory of the Lord.”³

VIII. Conclusion: “A believer who is not manifesting godliness in some area of life can do only one thing—spend more time in the Word asking God to illuminate his mind and heart.”⁴

John Piper communicates this point in the following way:

People are starving for the greatness of God. But most of them would not give this diagnosis of their troubled lives. *The majesty of God is an unknown cure*. There are far more popular prescriptions on the market, but the benefit of any other remedy is brief and shallow. Preaching that does not have the aroma of God’s greatness may entertain for a season, but it will not touch the hidden cry of the soul: “Show me thy glory!” Years ago during the January prayer week at our church, I decided to preach on the holiness of God from Isaiah 6. I resolved on the first Sunday of the year to unfold the vision of God’s holiness found in the first four verses of that chapter. ...

So I preached on the holiness of God and did my best to display the majesty and glory of such a great and holy God. I gave not one word of application to the lives of the people. Application is essential in the normal course of preaching, but I felt led that day to make a test: Would the passionate portrayal of the greatness of God in and of itself meet the needs of people? I didn’t realize that not long before this Sunday one of the young families of our church discovered that their child was being sexually abused by a close relative. It was incredibly traumatic. They were there that Sunday morning and sat under that message. I wonder how many advisers to us pastors today would have said: “Pastor Piper, can’t you see your people are hurting? Can’t you come down out of the heavens and get practical? Don’t you realize what kind of people sit in front of you on Sunday?” Some weeks later I learned the story. The husband took me aside one Sunday after a service. “John,” he said, “these have been the hardest months of our lives. Do you know what has gotten me through? The vision of the greatness of God’s holiness that you gave me the first week of January. It has been the rock we could stand on.” The greatness and the glory of God are relevant. It does not matter if surveys turn up a list of perceived needs that does not include the supreme greatness of the sovereign God of grace. That is the deepest need. Our people are starving for God.⁵

³ John MacArthur, “From Glory to Glory, Part 1,” Grace to You, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-75/from-glory-to-glory-part-1>, accessed October 4, 2017.

⁴ Jim Berg, *Changed Into His Likeness* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones Press, 1999), 147.

⁵ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 9-11.

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