

## A DEFINITION OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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We believe that personal needs are met through a vital relationship with Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 9:8). Biblical counseling starts from the premise that submission to Christ and His Word is the solution to man's problems, which are caused by his sin. The goal of biblical counseling is not relief from pain or difficulty, but to give direction in how to respond biblically to one's circumstances. The reason to solve personal problems should be to deepen one's relationship with God in order to more effectively please Him. God is more concerned about our "holiness" than He is our "happiness". Therefore, biblical counseling is based on the directions, promises and concepts of God imparted through His Word.

Although the psychological approach may offer insight into human behavior the conclusions are often based on an incorrect view of: (1) man, (2) the source of man's problems and (3) the solution to those problems. Even when the principles and methodology employed in the observation of human behavior by the psychologist are compatible with the Bible, if his assumptions about man's responsibility are incorrect, then his conclusions will usually be wrong as well. God holds man completely responsible for his own attitudes and actions. In His Word, God gives the means by which one's attitudes and actions can be brought into conformity to His will. Thus, apart from any physical problems that may be a contributing factor, we turn to the authoritative Word as the basis and means for realizing responsibility and modifying both character and behavior.

We see the Bible as the primary resource for providing the direction in dealing with the problems of life (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12). God uses both His Word and His Spirit as the agents of change to reveal the depth of our sin so we can understand the riches of His grace. (Eph. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:15-16; 2 Cor 7:9-10). The believer is to respond by confession and repentance as the path to experience that grace and the freedom from guilt. As the believer "renews his mind" with God's truth, his attitude and actions can be brought into conformity to God's will (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). This is all part of God's ongoing process of transforming the believer into the image of Christ (Col. 3:9-10, Eph. 4:1-2).

We see the local church as the primary context for such change. We maintain that the primary responsibility for the care of souls belongs to the elders as they shepherd the flock of God among them (1 Pet. 5:1). As the body of Christ practices the "one another" commands of scripture, the body is built up (Heb. 3:13). We are committed to dealing with sin biblically, which places a priority on personal accountability to the body of Christ in maintaining biblical relationship, both with God and with one another. Therefore, we are to love others with the love of Christ, encourage, admonish and implore one another to obedience (1 Thess. 2:11-12), forgive those who offend us as "God in Christ has forgiven us" (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-14) and to seek forgiveness from those whom we have offended (Matt. 5:22-23).

We are committed to helping people understand that a loving sovereign God has ordained their difficult circumstances (Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:11-12). The believer can therefore: (1) seek to live life from God's perspective, (2) have hope in difficult circumstances based on the character of God and His promises and (3) understand that God will accomplish His goals for the believer through difficult circumstances and suffering. (James 1:2-4, 1 Pet. 1:6-7).