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TEACHING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO SUPPORT
COUNSELING AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
IN BEND, OREGON

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TEACHING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO SUPPORT
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PREFACE

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the many people God has graciously placed in my life, especially the saints at Grace Bible Church of Bend, Oregon, and those at Southern Seminary.

My favorite saint at Grace, my wife, Mayumi, has been a patient, loving helpmate to me in my doctoral studies and throughout our twenty-six years of marriage. Thank you, my dear wife, for putting up with me all this time. Thanks to our fearless leader at Grace, pastor Phil Kooistra, for his encouragement and comradery as we competed to see who would finish their doctorate first. Sorry, Phil, looks like I win!

Thanks to the amazing staff and elders at Grace and the unity and friendship we enjoy. Thank you to the wonderful counseling teammates and community group leaders who know me well and like me anyway. Special thanks to all the Grace members and friends who supported me in the completion of this project and patiently listened to me complain about all the homework that was always due soon. Randy, thanks for our Monday morning walks that left me feeling refreshed and fueled to fight the good fight another week.

Dr. Donald Whitney, my supervisor and instructor, was so incredibly helpful in setting a high standard and helping me meet it. His course in the spiritual disciplines enriched me and my relationship with Christ immensely. Thank you, Dr. Whitney, for your encouragement, modeling, and instruction. I also can't thank Dr. Joseph Harrod enough for the extra time, kindness, and support in the classes he taught where I learned much and which I enjoyed thoroughly. Thanks Dr. Harrod. You have the rare ability to explain things so well that even I can understand them. Betsy, you are editor extraordinaire. Thank you.

Last, and definitely not least, thanks to my friend and mentor, Tom Aylward, at Southwest Bible church who introduced me to biblical counseling, encouraged me to pursue certification, made me a part of the team, and modeled and taught me how to counsel the hurting. I appreciate you, Tom. It's such a joy to continue our friendship and collegial relationship at our monthly meetings together. See you Thursday!

May the Lord richly bless these wonderful saints who have been such an incredible support and encouragement to me in the completion of this project, in my growth as a counselor and teacher, and as a part of the Lord's promise to complete the good work he's begun in me (Phil 1:6).

Dave Robinson

Bend, Oregon

December 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Grace Bible Church (GBC) in Bend, Oregon, exists to glorify God by exalting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. GBC endeavors to lift high the name of our Redeemer and give God the glory in worship, prayer, fellowship, and the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures.

The pastors and elders at GBC take seriously their roles as shepherds of the flock. There is real care and concern for the members of GBC and a strong desire that they grow in faith, and the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).¹ The biblical counseling ministry supports their mission of care to members as it provides encouragement, instruction, and accountability to those who are suffering. Because the understanding and practice of the spiritual disciplines found in Scripture is such an important part of sanctification, GBC seeks to better equip its leaders, members, and counselors to model and teach spiritual disciplines to its counselees, for their good and God's glory.

Context

GBC was planted in Bend in June 2011 as part of the Acts 29 Network of Churches and is enjoying a good season as a church. Growth is dynamic: from three couples who planted the church in 2011, to about 300 adults in attendance every Sunday and 230 members participating in weekly community groups. There is a welcoming, friendly environment on Sundays and genuine Christian love and care among members. GBC is in a strong position financially and has a beautiful building with land available

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

for expansion. The congregation is grateful to the Lord for His faithful leading, provision, and care.

As the Director of Counseling and Discipleship, my responsibilities include training future counselors and disciple makers, supporting fifteen active counselors, and counseling seven to ten sessions a week. I also train and support community group leaders as well as coordinate the Care Team ministry to help meet practical needs of members and attenders of the church.

GBC is blessed with excellent expository teaching from the pulpit and skillful, biblically based leading of musical worship. Communion is celebrated every Sunday. There is active participation in the private ministry of the Word in a variety of contexts. Many members enjoy the personal ministry of God's work by spending daily time in Bible study, meditation, and prayer.

GBC places a strong emphasis on membership, active participation in community groups that meet weekly, biblical counseling and discipleship, and church discipline with the goal of restoration (Matt 18:15-20). The elder team is made up of godly men with strong understanding of the Word and caring hearts.

The counseling ministry helps carry out the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20) as counselors walk alongside hurting people; loving them, praying with them, and ministering the Word to their hearts and lives. Every September the Fundamentals of Biblical Counseling class, which fulfills the first phase of Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) certification, is offered to members and attenders. To date, over ninety members have completed this course, giving them a strong foundation for counseling and discipleship. Five of the ministry's fifteen counselors are ACBC certified and several more are working on their exams for phase 2 of certification. For its many strengths, one area where GBC can grow is in an intentional focus on habits of grace.

Despite all this, members and attenders at GBC seem to neglect the practice of spiritual disciplines that honor God and exalt Christ. As a result, many do not abide in

Jesus as he commanded (John 15:4) and grow as they should. Further instruction from the pulpit could help emphasize the importance of personal devotional time and how to structure a daily time of personal spiritual disciplines such as Bible intake, meditation, and prayer. Additional teaching about corporate Bible intake and prayer would be helpful as well. In addition to pulpit exhortation, all existing ministries and discipling contexts could emphasize these important practices more regularly and teach the basics of the personal and public intake of the Word and prayer.

GBC's counselors, including myself, are not always explicitly instructing counselees and keeping them accountable in Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. I am concerned that many biblical counselors too quickly attempt to help with the presenting problems of the counselee to the neglect of teaching the biblical spiritual disciplines.

Rationale

Because GBC's church ministries are strong in the Word and closely connected to the gospel, there is great potential to improve the practice of the personal disciplines among members, attenders, and especially those receiving counseling. First Timothy 4:7-8 commands Christians to train for godliness. The personal and interpersonal disciplines found in Scripture are a vital element to victory over sin and growing in holiness. The disciplines will also be of tremendous value in overcoming the issues that brought them to counseling in the first place.

As a result of the neglect of the personal ministry of the Word, many members, attenders, and especially those receiving biblical counseling, are not experiencing the benefits of learning and practicing spiritual disciplines and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to have victory over life-dominating sin and to heal broken relationships. Counselees at GBC will not experience dynamic growth in sanctification and recovery from their problems until they become regular in these disciplines.

While reflections on spiritual disciplines detail many practices that have value in the Christian's fight against sin and pursuit of godliness, the disciplines of engaging

with Scripture through reading and meditation, prayer, and fellowship are especially important within the life of GBC at this time. As believers deepen their engagement with the Bible through meditation, they come to know and desire God's will more clearly (Josh 1:7-8). As they grow in prayer, they learn to cast their burdens and anxieties on a loving, adoptive Father who leads them as dear children (Phil 4:4-8). As they grow in genuine fellowship, they learn to watch over one another, encourage one another, and care for one another (Heb 10:24-25). For these and other reasons, I selected these three disciplines as the focus of the curriculum that will be taught to those participating in this project.

By means of this project I encouraged pastors and elders at GBC to recognize this need for emphasis on the disciplines and work together to highlight this need from the pulpit regularly. Assessing the role of the disciplines in the various ministries and developing a plan to provide training and support to ministry leaders to increase the emphasis on the disciplines in their ministries was an important part of this project. Primarily, I spent the majority of my efforts assessing and training counselors to emphasize the importance of the spiritual disciplines with their counselees.

Following this project, I intend to develop and implement a pre- and post-training survey to help determine growth and improvement in the counselee's progress and their practice of the personal disciplines. Generally, those who work hard to increase their daily intake of God's Word, increase their time in prayer, and participate in regular fellowship, find victory over life-dominating sins and healing of broken relationships (Josh 1:8).

I pray that God would use this project and its emphasis on the daily disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and fellowship to draw the congregation, especially the counselors and counselees, more closely to him; that they would understand and appreciate more fully the person and work of his Son Jesus, and that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to learn the Word, be convicted of sin, and grow in righteousness (John 16:8).

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase Grace Bible Church's capacity to teach and practice select spiritual disciplines for increased spiritual growth of members, especially the counselors and those receiving counseling.

Goals

The following goals guided the assessment, planning, instruction, and implementation for improving the practice of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship among GBC members and counselors, and the outcomes of those receiving counseling at GBC.

1. The first goal was to assess the church's instruction of the selected spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship in the various ministries of the church.
2. The second goal was to assess counselors' current knowledge and practice of the selected spiritual disciplines and their capacity to teach these disciplines to their counselees.
3. The third goal was to develop curriculum for instructing the counselors to increase in their knowledge of the selected disciplines, improving their own practice of these disciplines, and advancing their ability to teach these spiritual disciplines to their counselees.
4. The fourth goal was to assess the improvement of the counselors' knowledge and practice of the selected disciplines and their capacity to instruct these spiritual disciplines.
5. The fifth goal was to create a ministry plan to improve the instruction and practice of the selected spiritual disciplines in the different ministries of the church.

Definitive research methodology measured when these five goals were accomplished. The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal will be detailed in the following section.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the instruction of spiritual disciplines in the main ministries of the church: preaching, worship, women,² youth, young adults, community

² At this time, GBC does not have a specific ministry to men, largely because there is a

groups, and biblical counseling. This goal was measured by means of interviews with the leaders of these ministries. Questions were about the frequency of discussion and instruction of spiritual disciplines, the emphasis of these interactions, and the positive effects of focusing on the disciplines.³ This goal was considered successful when each of the key ministry leaders had been interviewed and summaries prepared, yielding a clearer picture of the current level of instruction of the disciplines in their individual ministries.

The second goal was to assess the biblical counselors at Grace Bible Church in their current knowledge and practice of spiritual disciplines and their capacity to teach these disciplines to their counselees. This goal was measured by administering a pre-training survey, called the Assessment of Spiritual Disciplines (ASD), which measured their knowledge and practice of the disciplines.⁴ Items on the survey included statements on the amount of time they spend in Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship weekly. It also asked how the practice of the disciplines supports their sanctification and draws them closer to Christ. Information gathered from the survey informed the creation of curriculum and instruction of the spiritual disciplines to these counselors. The goal was considered successfully met when each counselor had completed the survey and the results were analyzed to gain a clearer perspective on the pre-project status of counselors.

The third goal was to develop curriculum for increasing counselors' knowledge, improving their own practice, and advancing their instruction in the teaching spiritual disciplines to their counselees.⁵ This goal was measured by an expert panel who

conservative approach to adding new ministries by the leadership. This is to ensure that existing ministries are functioning biblically and effectively. As the perception of a need for a men's ministry grows it will likely be added.

³ See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research and Ethics Committee prior to use.

⁴ See appendix 2.

⁵ See appendix 3.

utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. The panel members included three Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) who are staff members and directors of biblical counseling ministries at other churches. The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the “sufficient” level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard.

The fourth goal was to modify the counselors’ knowledge and practice of the disciplines, and their capacity to instruct spiritual disciplines. This happened as a result of the implementation of the curriculum in four, ninety-minute classes for counselors. Following the training, a post-course ASD was administered. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples from the post-survey demonstrated a positive significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fifth goal was to create a ministry plan to improve the instruction and practice of spiritual disciplines in the different ministries of the church. This goal was measured by a panel of three pastors/elders and who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, provision of resources, and action steps.⁶ The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the “sufficient” level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Biblical counseling. *Biblical counseling* is often correctly referred to as

⁶ See appendix 4.

“intensive discipleship.”⁷ However, what separates it from general discipleship is its focus on life-challenging problems that Christians face as they grow in sanctification.

This project benefits from David Powlison’s definition of *biblical counseling*:

Counseling is one part of the overall ministry of Christ that meets us publicly, privately, and interpersonally. . . . God means for us to bear each other’s burdens. It’s a good goal to become more competent at self-counsel, the private ministry, but we always need other people. We need their prayers, encouragement, and insight. . . . Wise counseling brings that personalized relevance of interpersonal ministry of the eternal Word of Truth that turns our lives upside down and inside out.⁸

This description from GBC’s website is helpful in describing and setting the tone of the *biblical counseling* context:

Life got you down? We’re here to help. Our compassionate counselors will help you find Biblical answers to the issues of life and encourage you in your relationship with our great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Grace Bible Church Counselors are trained to help with marriage and family problems, addictions (alcohol, drugs, pornography, etc.), emotional issues (depression, anxiety, anger, fear, bitterness, etc.) and relational crisis.⁹

Spiritual disciplines. Donald S. Whitney defines *spiritual disciplines*: “The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by God’s people since biblical times.”¹⁰

Whitney goes on to describe the difference between personal and interpersonal disciplines. Personal disciplines are those practiced alone, and interpersonal disciplines are practiced with others. Many disciplines are both personal and interpersonal depending

⁷ *Intensive discipleship* is sometimes used synonymously with *biblical counseling*. It emphasizes biblical knowledge and wisdom, theological understanding, the practice of spiritual disciplines, progressive sanctification, and joyful, obedient Christian living. Intensive discipleship (biblical counseling) usually implies a focus on biblical solutions to specific issues Christians are facing that often include life dominating sin and relational crisis.

⁸ David Powlison, “5 Definitions of Biblical Counseling.” By Bob Kellemen. RPM Ministries, March 11, 2013, <https://www.rpmministries.org/2013/03/5-definitions-of-biblical-counseling/>.

⁹ Grace Bible Church, “Biblical Counseling,” accessed July 17, 2019, <http://gracebibleofbend.org/biblical-counseling-2/>.

¹⁰ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

on the context. Jesus practiced the disciplines alone (as when he got alone to pray to the Father) and with others (as seen in Luke 14:16: “And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day”).¹¹

One limitation that applies to this project is the number of counselors in the ministry. At present, the number of active, trained counselors is fifteen. It will be difficult to significantly increase the number of counselors in the near future. Another limitation will be the response and cooperation of church leadership, members, counselors, and counselees to the project. Their complete support and active participation cannot be guaranteed. It is also not possible to be certain participants in surveys and interviews will be completely open and honest in their responses.

Delimitations to be imposed are the length of the project (six months) and the number of counselor training sessions (three, two-hour sessions). During the six months of the project, only 8-10 counseling cases were commenced and completed. Therefore, a survey of counselees will not be included due to the small number of participants available.

For the sake of this project, the spiritual disciplines discussed will be delimited to Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, and the practice of these disciplines corporately. Though there is no complete list, other disciplines are mentioned in Scripture, such as worship, fasting, giving, confession, service, journaling, evangelism, learning, solitude, etc. The three practices of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship are disciplines especially demonstrated by the early church as essential for knowing God and growing in sanctification (Acts 2:42).¹² These three disciplines are also practices where those receiving biblical counseling particularly need emphasis and growth.

¹¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 5.

¹² The early church also practiced other spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, simplicity, and almsgiving, as seen in Acts 2 and 13.

Conclusion

Every Christian is responsible for practicing spiritual disciplines to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). The following chapters show Christians not only how to understand and practice what the Bible says about the disciplines, but also how to help someone else do the same (Matt 28:20). Special emphases will be given to the importance of emphasizing the disciplines in the context of biblical counseling.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
TEACHING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
TO SUPPORT COUNSELING

The practice of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship are means given by God by which believers draw near to him and experience his drawing near to them (Jas 4:8).¹ These three disciplines give understanding and direction for walking with God more closely, worshiping him more fervently, and loving him and the brethren more dearly. Practicing the disciplines empowers followers of Christ to put off evil thoughts, behaviors, and the idols they cherish. Christians learn how to renew their minds and put on the Lord Jesus in place of false worship (Eph 4:22-24).

These disciplines are commanded and taught in Scripture and are means by which believers are sanctified. They must be modeled, taught, and practiced in the context of the local church. Every disciple of Christ is responsible to learn and practice these disciplines to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). Believers must also model and teach them to others (Matt 28:18-20). Biblical counselors must help their counselees learn and practice spiritual disciplines to realize biblical change in their lives and learn to please God in everything they do.

Four passages of Scripture form a biblical and theological foundation for the necessity of Christians to practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. The chosen passages also promise blessings and rewards to those who are obedient to the practice of these three disciplines. Joshua 1:7-8 emphasizes Bible intake,

¹ In Jas 4:4-10 God “gives grace to the humble,” that we might become a “friend of God.” In prayer, we can find strength to “submit ourselves to God,” “resist the devil,” and “humble ourselves before the Lord and he will exalt us.” Bible intake and prayer is done privately, and in the fellowship of the church. Through these practices we “draw near to God, and he draws near to us.”

Philippians 4:4-7 focuses on prayer, Hebrews 10:24-25 highlights fellowship, and Acts 2:42-47 stresses the importance of all three of these disciplines in the context of Christian community. At the conclusion of each section a special emphasis will be given for the application of that discipline in the lives of Christians, including those with issues of sin and suffering that require biblical counseling.

Bible Intake: Joshua 1:7-8

Joshua stands on the plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River and the Promised Land. God is clear that he will be with Joshua (1:5), and the people will inherit the land promised to their fathers (1:6). The strength and courage God commanded Joshua (1:6) would come from God's presence with him. Joshua must meditate on the Law of God day and night and carefully do all that the Law commanded, not turning from the right hand or to the left. Then, Joshua would be prosperous and find success in his God-given task (1:7-8). It is also the way that followers of Christ, even those struggling with serious sin and intense suffering, will find blessing and sanctification in this life and the next.

The Presence of God

God promised that, just as he was with Moses, he would be with Joshua (v. 5), and his presence would be with Joshua "wherever he goes" (v. 7). Apart from the presence of God, Joshua could do nothing (John 15:5). Professor Richard S. Hess says about the text, "Joshua will not be alone in striving for obedience to the law and the promises. Rather, the obedience and success will be enjoyed in the presence of the LORD God who gave both the law and the promises. Joshua will not succeed because he obeys God's instructions; he will succeed because God is with him to enable him to obey his instruction."²

² Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 6 (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 79, Logos Bible Software.

The words “I will be with you” in verse 5 are the same promises made to Isaac (Gen 26:3), Jacob (31:3), Moses (Exod 3:12), and Joshua himself (Deut 31:8, 23). The promise in Exodus is especially important because it is connected with the revelation of God’s name, “Yahweh” (Exod 3:14-15). Yahweh promised to be with Moses, in fact, “his name was tied to the idea of his keeping covenant to be with his people,” states Old Testament professor and commentator David M. Howard.³

Yahweh promised to be with Joshua wherever he would go (v. 9). Author and commentator Trent C. Butler writes, “When this is read with verses 3-4, we see the divine presence over all the lands of the Hittites to the Great Sea. Joshua would enjoy the presence and power of God with him throughout the promised land.”⁴

Likewise, Christians are powerless to be obedient to the Law of God without the help of the presence of God. The fruit of the Spirit are displayed only in those walking with the Spirit (Gal 5:22-24). Joshua was successful only because of God’s presence. Hess explains, “Like Joshua, Christians do not succeed spiritually because they obey God’s law. Instead, God through Christ enables them to have victory over sin” (1 Cor 15:57).⁵ Obedience to what God has commanded is possible only because he is with every believer, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20).

Meditation on the Law

“The heart of the LORD’s encouragement involves turning Joshua to the Torah of Moses, the existing Scriptures of his day,”⁶ writes Professor Adolph L. Harstad. The

³ David M. Howard, *Joshua*, The New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 82, Logos Bible Software.

⁴ Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 7A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 220.

⁵ Hess, *Joshua*, 79.

⁶ Adolph H. Harstad, *Joshua*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 81.

Scriptures are where Joshua will find strength and courage to walk in the way of the Lord and to lead the Israelites into the promised land.

Joshua is commanded to memorize God’s Word and meditate on God’s Word day and night (v. 8). For the Word to be on Joshua’s lips he would need to hide it in his heart (Ps 119:11). Scripture memorization and meditation would be vital not only for his own instruction but also as he continually taught others from the writings of Moses. Hardstad goes on to say about Joshua, “He is to be like Mary, ‘who treasured up’ and ‘pondered’ the words and events surrounding Christ’s life” (Luke 2:19).⁷

Biblical meditation is much different from Eastern meditation⁸ and New Age forms popular in the West, as well as from different types of Christian mysticism that are divorced from the truths of Scripture.⁹ Howard explains the Lord’s command to meditate on the Law:

The idea of meditating here is not the one commonly familiar in the late twentieth century, namely, of emptying the mind and concentrating on nothing or on self or on visualizations of various types; much of this type of meditation is indebted to Eastern mystic religions. Rather the Old Testament concept of meditation involves two things. First, a focus upon God himself (Ps 63:6), his works (Pss 77:12; 143:5), or his law (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2), and second, an activity that was done aloud.¹⁰

⁷ Harstad, *Joshua*, 81.

⁸ Theologian, archeologist, and Christian educator John J. Davis describes the Eastern meditation systems prevalent in the US: “Eastern meditation arrived on America’s shores most visibly in the forms of Transcendental Meditation, yoga, and various Buddhist traditions—Zen, Theravada and Tibetan.” Many spiritual seekers are attracted to these exotic alternatives to Christianity. John J. Davis, *Meditation and Communion with God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2012), 12, Kindle.

⁹ Justin Taylor, “An FAQ on Mysticism and the Christian Life,” The Gospel Coalition, October 20, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/an-faq-on-mysticism-and-the-christian-life/>. Publisher and writer Justin Taylor discusses some difficulties with Christian mysticism that are not consistent with biblical truth:

A primary difference between Christian mysticism and biblical spirituality is that, “Whereas the biblical model is to fill our hearts and mind with the great and precious promises of God (2 Pet 1:4)—meditating on his Word day and night (Josh 1:8), such that it is compared to our daily, sustaining bread (Matt 4:4)—the Christian Mystic seeks to not only purge himself of all that is sinful and encumbering . . . but ultimately wants to purge himself of even his delights in the character and presence of God. . . . This is deeply and manifestly unbiblical.

¹⁰ Howard, *Joshua*, 84.

To mediate actually means “to make a sound” and can be applied to all kinds of things that make sounds; from the chirps of a bird to human voices praising God. In this context, to meditate seems to represent the sounds of a person reading aloud to himself. Israelite kings were to write a copy of the law and read it continually to avoid becoming proud or cruel (Deut 17:18-20).¹¹ Followers of Christ today would also benefit greatly from reading the Word of God aloud and meditating on it continually.

Reformer John Calvin gives a sober warning about the failure of believers to regularly meditate on God and his Word: “Assiduous meditation on the Law is also commanded; because, whenever it is intermitted, even for a short time, many errors readily creep in, and the memory becomes rusted, so that many, after ceasing from the continuous study of it, engage in practical business as if they were mere ignorant tyros.”¹² Ceasing from the regular practice of meditation on God’s Word robs believers of the daily blessings found in Scripture: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked . . . but his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and on his Law, he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:1-2).

Obedience to the Law

Howard states, “The importance of obedience to the law as the key to Joshua’s success cannot be overestimated.”¹³ Calvin emphasizes the necessity of Joshua’s obedience to the Law in this way: “Joshua shall make it his constant study to observe the Law. By this we are taught that the only way in which we can become truly invincible is by striving to yield a faithful obedience to God.”¹⁴ He goes on to assert, “Let believers,

¹¹ Butler, *Joshua*, 221.

¹² John Calvin, *The Book of Joshua, Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 32.

¹³ Howard, *Joshua*, 84.

¹⁴ Calvin, *The Book of Joshua*, 31.

therefore, in order that their affairs may turn out as they wish, conciliate the divine blessing alike by diligence in learning and fidelity in obeying.¹⁵ Emphasizing the importance of obedience, James warns his readers, “But be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jas 1:22).

Success for Joshua came from not turning from the Law to the right hand or the left (v. 7). As Harstad explains, “By the expression ‘not turning from it to the right or the left’, the LORD states for Joshua the *sola Scriptura* principle. Human reason and human institutions are not to stand in judgment of Scripture nor undermine or overrule it.”¹⁶ To emphasize the Scriptures’ supremacy, perfection, and authority, Harstad declares, “To add to Scripture by increasing demands or to subtract from Scripture by rejecting or ignoring part of it is to depart from it to the right or left” (Deut 4:2, 13:1). . . . Deuteronomy 28:14 equates turning to the right or left with following after other gods.”¹⁷ Joshua must obey the one and only true God and His Word. Prosperity and success would be the results of keeping the Law for Joshua.

Prosperity and Success

The prosperity and success promised to Joshua for following the Scriptures may not look exactly the way he thought it would. David M. Howard, Jr. writes,

Keeping the law would be the key to Joshua’s success but it’s striking that God’s instructions here to Joshua are not about military matters, given that Joshua and the Israelites faced many battles ahead. However, the keys to his success were spiritual, directly related to the degree of his obedience to God. The keys to Joshua’s success were the same as those for a king: being rooted in God’s word rather than depending on military might (Deut 17:14-20).¹⁸

¹⁵ Calvin, *The Book of Joshua*, 33.

¹⁶ Harstad, *Joshua*, 82.

¹⁷ Harstad, *Joshua*, 83.

¹⁸ Howard, *Joshua*, 83.

Military victory may or may not be a result of a general's obedience to the Scripture, but spiritual success and prosperity is promised to those who follow the law.

The two words speaking of prosperity and success found in verses 7 and 8 are almost never used in the Old Testament to refer to financial success. People are not to focus exclusively on material prosperity, but rather on obedience and holiness. Christians are called to love and fear God, be holy because he is holy, and keep his word with their whole heart. When believers do this, God will bless them, but not necessarily in the way they might like or the time they might want.¹⁹ God's promised blessings may be tangible or spiritual; temporal or eternal; but they are certain.

Harstad also comments on these two terms: "The terms 'prosper' and 'succeed' in Josh 1:8 need to be understood according to God's use of these words. Failure in the world's eyes may actually be prosperity and success in God's eyes, and what God calls failure may be considered prosperity and success by the world."²⁰ Disciples of Christ need to see these blessings through the lens of Scriptures and thank God accordingly.

The New Testament equivalent to these truths is seen in the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33: "But first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Instead of military might or financial success, the real blessings for obedience to the Scriptures are spiritual: his righteousness, peace, and joy, and the presence of God in his kingdom.

Application

Like Joshua, Christians are to be strong and courageous in the presence of the Lord and remember that he who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deut 31:6), is with them always, wherever they go. Believers enjoy God's strength and

¹⁹ Howard, *Joshua*, 83.

²⁰ Harstad, *Joshua*, 86.

courage when they abide in Christ and His Word. They are then able to bear much fruit, but apart from him they can do nothing (John 15:5).

Abiding in Christ involves reading and meditating on His Word. Time should be set aside daily in the practice of this discipline to hear the words of God and contemplate their meaning and application. In this way, the words of God will be on the Christian's lips and not depart from their mouth (v. 7).

Diligence is required to fully obey the commands given in the Scriptures, not turning to the left or the right or adding or subtracting from them. When this is done, the Christian's way will be prosperous and he will find success in the form of spiritual blessings: righteousness, strength, courage, joy and peace. Jesus puts it this way in John 14:21: "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

All disciples must learn and practice the important discipline of Bible intake, but it is especially important for ministry leaders to be firmly grounded in the truths of Scripture and walk in a manner worthy of their calling. As Joshua taught the Israelites about the importance of meditation on the Word and obedience to the Law, instruction on the importance and practice of Bible reading, meditation, and righteous living should come from the pulpit regularly. This important discipline should be modeled and taught in all the ministries of the local church and become a part of its culture.

Biblical counselors need to be specially trained and equipped to minister the practices of Bible intake to those who struggle with sin, suffering, and/or relational crisis. What a joy it is for those trapped in iniquity to understand from the Word of God that their sin is paid, they are forgiven, and guilt is gone. What relief and encouragement it is for the lonely and depressed to read about God, who is an ever-present help in time of need (Ps 46:1). What peace they experience when they understand and practice truths from the Scripture that help reconcile broken relationships with loved ones.

These blessings are true prosperity and success. Counselees can then join with the psalmist and all the saints in saying, “You make known to me the path of life; In your presence there is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps 16:11).

Prayer: Philippians 4:4-8

Paul, suffering imprisonment in Rome, writes to the church at Philippi suffering with problems of their own. They are in danger from Jewish legalists and apostates. The Philippian church is greatly concerned for the welfare of Paul in prison. There is trauma and division created by selfishness and conflict within the church. In the midst of these difficult issues, Paul sends a letter with the themes of joy and peace.

In Philippians 4:6-8, Paul teaches those in the church at Philippi that they can rejoice in the Lord despite persecution and hardship. These suffering believers will be able to display a gentle, reasonable spirit to all, because the Lord is near. They need not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by praying with thanksgiving, they can find supernatural peace beyond human understanding. This peace will guard their hearts and minds in the power of Christ Jesus. In the same way, Christians today, especially those suffering difficult circumstances, can rejoice and find peace in this life and the next in Christ Jesus.

Rejoice in the Lord

A true Christian’s joy is not dependent on people or circumstances but is found in trusting the One who does not change, but is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). This command to rejoice in the Lord (Phil 4:4), repeated twice for emphasis, is written to suffering Christians and demands a cheerful attitude in every circumstance. “Faithfulness in the Christian walk flows out of the practice of rejoicing in the Lord,” writes seminary professor and commentator G. Walter Hansen.²¹

²¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 286, Logos Bible Software

“In the Lord” is the only place for true joy to be found. The Philippians saw Paul’s life and were reminded of the joy available in the Lord, and Paul wished the same joy for them. Richard Melick describes joy in the Lord in spite of circumstances: “Paul knew that no situation is beyond the Lord’s help. Christians can always rejoice in that, if nothing else.”²² Gordon Fee states: “Christian joy is not the temporal kind, which comes and goes with one’s circumstances; rather, it is predicated altogether on one’s relationship with the Lord, and is thus an abiding, deeply spiritual quality of life.”²³ The righteous rejoice in the Lord (Ps 64:10).

Be Reasonable

The exhortation to “let your reasonableness be known to everyone” in verse 5, is closely related to Paul’s command to rejoice (v. 4). Christians learn to rejoice not by focusing on themselves but on others. Biblical scholar and translator Moises Silva observes, “Genuine Christian joy is not inward-looking. It is not by concentrating on our need for happiness, but on the needs of others, that we learn to rejoice. And so, the apostle calls the Philippians once again to look out, not for their own interests, but for the interests of others, and to regard others as more important than themselves.”²⁴

The Greek background of “reasonableness” (*to epieikes*) includes “what is fitting,” “magnanimity,” and “patient steadfastness.” The Christians in Philippi needed forbearance, patience to endure insults and persecutions, and steadfastness to endure humiliations. “A balance of amiability was called for, not insisting on rights but pressing on in the face of opposition,” says John Reumann, professor and commentator for the

²² Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 148, Logos Bible Software.

²³ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 404, Logos Bible Software.

²⁴ Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 194.

Anchor Yale Bible.²⁵ “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others” (Phil 2:4).

This perseverance and rejoicing in the Lord in the face of persecution would be a great witness to the citizens of Philippi, in much the same way as Paul and Silas’ witness to the prisoners in the Philippian jail before their miraculous release (Acts 16:25-26). Gordon D. Fee explains, “It is this ‘gentle forbearance’ and ‘meekness’ of Christ, to which Paul appealed in 2 Cor 10:1, which he here calls the believers to exhibit in Philippi.”²⁶ It is also the same joy and humility Christians must exhibit in their witness to others in the current time and place.

The command to rejoice and be reasonable in verses 5-6 ends with the statement, “The Lord is at hand.” Commentators debate if this phrase is referring to the future coming of the Lord and the exhortation that brings to the Philippians to continue in their gentleness and reasonableness (v. 5) in light of the coming judgment, or to God’s ever-present help in time of trouble (Ps 46:1) to help them relieve their current anxiety knowing the peace of God in the present (v. 6). Silva synthesizes both these views well: “Because the Lord is near exhibit patient steadfastness, stop being anxious about everything.”²⁷

Don’t Be Anxious, Pray with Thanksgiving

Paul talks next about the second consequence of the Lord’s being “near.” They can live without anxiety, instead entrusting their lives to God by prayer and thanksgiving.²⁸ Verse 6 tells believers to not be anxious about anything. This is reminiscent of the

²⁵ John Reumann, *Philippians*, The Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 7 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 632-33.

²⁶ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 405-6.

²⁷ Reumann, *Philippians*, 633.

²⁸ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 406.

Savior’s words in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Matt 6:25). If God cares for the birds and the lilies, will he not provide for his followers (Matt 26-32)? Jesus reminds Christians again that God himself will give them what they need and relieve their anxiety if they pursue him in prayer: “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33).

This prayer is to be offered in thanksgiving. Melick declares, “The attitude of gratitude accompanies all true approaches to the Father.”²⁹ Hansen adds, “The continuous positive focus of praying with thanksgiving to God in everything breaks and replaces the habit of worry.”³⁰ When a Christian remembers God’s faithfulness to him with thanksgiving, his hope and faith is increased about the things yet to come. The prayer of thanksgiving brings peace for the future.

“Let your requests be made known to God” (v. 6). The word “requests” speaks of naming specific items.³¹ “By expressing our specific requests to God, we acknowledge our total dependence upon God,” writes Hansen. He goes on to explain, “Prayer orients our lives towards God; we grow in an open relationship with God by presenting our specific needs and desire to him.”³² Placing the need for thanksgiving before making requests is the right attitude for every Christian coming to God with their requests. Fee explains the correct action and the result: “Gratitude acknowledges—and begets—

²⁹ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 149.

³⁰ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 288.

³¹ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 289.

³² Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 289.

generosity.”³³ Philippians 4:19 says, “And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

The Peace of God

Making supplications with thanksgiving results in the elimination of anxiety and the peace of God in believers’ hearts and minds (vv. 6-7). This relief, the opposite of anxiety, is the peace God gives to his people in answer to their prayers.³⁴ Hansen explains, “The transcendent experience of God’s peace is the assured result of praying as verse 6 describes prayer. The condition for experiencing God’s peace is not that God grants all of our requests but that we have made known all our requests to God with thanksgiving.”³⁵

As with joy, peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).³⁶ Fee writes, “Here it is called ‘the peace of God’ because God is ‘the God of peace.’ The God who dwells in total *shalom* (wholeness, well-being) and who gives such *shalom* to his people.”³⁷ This transcendent “peace of God” is the calm serenity that is characteristic of God’s character, and he invites Christians to share in this serenity.³⁸ God also invites Christians to share this *shalom* with one another (Rom 14:17).³⁹

This peace “that surpasses all understanding” is beyond human comprehension and has a supernatural source; the Creator of the Universe. Therefore, the Christian can trust its source. Fee explains, “Because the God to whom we pray and offer thanksgiving,

³³ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 408.

³⁴ Silva, *Philippians*, 195.

³⁵ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 290.

³⁶ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 408.

³⁷ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 408.

³⁸ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 290.

³⁹ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 290.

whose ways are higher than ours, is also totally trustworthy, our prayer is accompanied by his peace.”⁴⁰ Pray, give thanks, receive peace.

Application

Like Paul and the Philippians, all Christians are to rejoice in the Lord despite their circumstances. The Lord is the only place true joy can be found. Instead of the fleeting enjoyment of worldly pleasures, the Lord’s joy is genuine, lasting, and life transforming. Practicing this joy leads to faithfulness and the presence of the Lord in the Christian’s life (Phil 4:9).

The results of this joy are the ability to display steadfastness, patience and gentleness to all, and the capacity to do these things diligently, remembering that the Lord is at hand. This assurance should give believers pause to remember judgement and eternal life lie ahead and spurn them on to excel still more (1 Thess 4:10).

Since the Lord is near, Christians should not be anxious about anything but rather pray about everything with an attitude of thanksgiving. They should set aside time for prayer every day (Ps 5:3) and learn to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). Like Paul and the Philippians, followers of Christ today should turn to the Lord in prayer in even deeper ways when suffering. The wonderful result of this discipline of joyful, disciplined, thankful prayer is God’s peace in the deepest part of the innermost being (Eph 3:16), something for which every Christian longs.

Those called to leadership must especially be men and women of prayer. As Paul practiced regular joyful, thankful, prayer, so must teaching pastors model this type of prayer from the pulpit. Like Bible intake, prayer should be exhibited and taught in all the ministries of the local church, and the ethos of the body of Christ should be a culture of prayer.

⁴⁰ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 408.

Those trained as biblical counselors also need coaching and equipping if they are to model and teach the importance and practice of prayer to their counselees. Then those receiving counseling from them can learn how to rejoice in the Lord, practice reasonableness, pray with thanksgiving, and receive God's supernatural peace to overcome anxiety, depression, and relational strife. What relief and freedom it will be for these struggling Christians to pray about everything and receive something more precious than gold or silver; God's wonderful, incomprehensible, presence and peace.

Fellowship: Hebrews 10:24-25

The author of the book of Hebrews writes to a community of converted Jews that likely included a number of unbelievers in their midst. Some of these Jews were attracted to Christianity but had yet to make a full commitment to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because the Christian community was facing persecution, many were tempted to disassociate themselves with the real Christians and revert to their old beliefs and practices of Judaism.

The writer to the Hebrews sends a letter to the Christians to remind them of the supremacy of Christ, the cleansing of their sin, and their holy identity in Christ. It also includes severe warnings to those Jews dabbling in the Christian faith without having made a whole-hearted commitment to follow Jesus.

Hebrews 10:24-25 urges the Hebrew Christians to consider how to urge their brothers and sisters to love and good works and gives a strong warning and command not to abandon their gathering together. Rather, they should encourage one another, especially in light of the coming return of Christ. This love, encouragement, and admonition will help give them the strength they need to stand in persecution and challenge unbelievers to true faith.

Life in this fallen world today requires these same provisions of grace to be ministered to one another. Believers need to heed the warnings of unbelief and obey the command to believe in Christ and love another (1 John 3:23); even more so for those

seriously struggling in their sin, the sin done against them, and the sin in this fallen world. With the help of Christ and his body, followers of Christ will all benefit greatly by heeding these words to the Hebrews.

Let Us Consider

After being commanded to “draw near to God” (Heb 10:22) and “hold fast their confession” (v. 23), the next command to the Hebrews is to “let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works” (v. 24). Commentator and professor David L. Allen explains the meaning of the first phrase of this verse: “The verb ‘let us consider’ conveys the concept of careful consideration, thoughtful attention, and deep concern.”⁴¹ “Let us keep on caring of one another,”⁴² is how theologian and professor William L. Lane interprets this charge. In summary, “Carefully, thoughtfully, with concern and care,” stir one another up to love and good works.

“Stir,” is a word that denotes intense emotion, usually with a negative meaning.⁴³ It is often translated “to provoke.” John W. Kleinig, Concordia professor and New Testament commentator, reflects on the positive connotation of the word:

That kind of “provocation” comes from looking at one another with the eyes of love, as in a good family, to discover what is needed by them and how their needs can be best met, without belittling them, by treating them sensitively as highly valued siblings rather than as greedy spongers and needy takers. ‘Good works are good since they issue from “love.” They do not just provide something good for the recipients, but they thereby also provoke them, and the whole community with them, to “love and good works.”’⁴⁴

“Here love is provoked in the sense of being stimulated in the lives of Christians by the considerateness and example of other members of their fellowship,”

⁴¹ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 517.

⁴² William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Dallas: Word, 1991), 289, Logos Bible Software.

⁴³ Allen, *Hebrews*, 517.

⁴⁴ John W. Kleinig, *Hebrews*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 506.

summarizes British scholar F. F. Bruce.⁴⁵ Thoughtful, loving care and concern provokes others to love and good works, which stirs them to care, concern, and stir up others to love and good works. Love provokes love.

Do Not Neglect to Meet Together

Mutual love and care are often shared among Christians when they meet together frequently. When Christians do not gather together, the support and encouragement of one another wains and complacency and criticism can more easily set in. Professor and Anchor Bible commentator George Wesley Buchanan concurs: “The community that kept itself busy caring for one another would have less time and inclination to become discouraged and grumble, as the exodus generation had done.”⁴⁶ Therefore, the writer of Hebrews exhorts members of the community to “not neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another” (v. 25a).

Forsaking worship and fellowship with the assembly is serious business.

Kleinig gives this severe warning:

Withdrawal by “some” from the worshipping community is described as a deliberate act of abandonment rather than a careless act of negligence. By forsaking the congregation, they dissociate themselves from the heavenly assembly in God’s presence. They thereby drift away from the Gospel, shrink back from life with God (10:38-39), and turn away from the living God (3:12).⁴⁷

Bruce writes,

Our author fears that the discontinuance of their special Christian meetings will mean their complete merging in the life of the larger Jewish community with the loss of their distinctive Christian faith and outlook. To withdraw from the society of

⁴⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 257, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁶ George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 36 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 169.

⁴⁷ Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 506.

their fellow-believers was to court spiritual defeat; only by remaining united could they preserve their faith and witness.⁴⁸

This is evidence that those who “neglect to meet together” are not real believers.

The Day Drawing Near

Hebrews 10:39 says, “We are not of those that shrink back and our destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” Those who have genuine faith and anxiously await the return of Jesus are true believers. Kleinig exhorts true Christians: “That ‘Day’ will not be a day of judgement for them but the day of Christ’s visible appearance, a day of salvation for those who wait for him (9:28), the day of consummation when they will receive all that God as promised to give them as their eternal inheritance (9:15; 11:39-40).”⁴⁹

Remembering the return of Christ will change the way believers live, love, and encourage one another. Kleinig explains, “Their vision of that ‘Day,’ and their growing awareness of its imminence, inspires them to see one another in a new light and to treat one another as members of an eternal community, citizens of heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal city of God (12:22-24).”⁵⁰ The coming “Day” also prompts encouragement that none fall away. Lane gives this exhortation to the church: “The entire community must assume responsibility to watch that no one grows weary or becomes apostate,”⁵¹ which is each Christian’s responsibility.

Application

Individual Christians today must also seek “to stir one another on to love and good works,” “not neglect to meet together,” and “encourage one another, especially as

⁴⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 257.

⁴⁹ Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 507.

⁵⁰ Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 507.

⁵¹ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 290.

the Day draws near.” Though primarily an interpersonal spiritual discipline, fellowship also has a personal spiritual discipline component. Each Christian must personally initiate these commands with others. He must choose to “stir up” others, decide to meet to worship with his brothers and sisters, and resolve to encourage them regularly. This is evidence and assurance of a believer’s own faith and his place in the kingdom.

Followers of Christ must also initiate conversations that urge others to test themselves and see if they are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5) and remind them that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). In this age of cultural Christianity, it seems so many are “professing but not possessing” a real Christian faith. Believers should pray for boldness to speak the truth in love to those who are perishing.

With Bible intake and prayer, these personal responsibilities of the discipline of fellowship must be part of church culture. The importance of fellowship should be preached from the pulpit and modeled and taught by leaders in the various ministries of the church. Genuine fellowship should happen in organic conversations among all who claim allegiance to Christ.

Fellowship is also a vital component of a biblical counseling and discipleship ministry. Helping others get connected to the body of Christ to receive encouragement to love and good deeds is a powerful force of change. Being encouraged by others in this way is a new experience for many Christians and leads to sanctification, victory over life-dominating sin, and usefulness in service to others.

Presenting the warnings in this passage sometimes lead to conversions in the counseling room. Counselors, and every Christian, must be diligent to understand and teach the gospel in a holistic way, with all its warnings and wonderful blessings. “And all the more as you see the day drawing near” (v. 25b).

Disciplines in Community: Acts 2:42-47

Extraordinary events occur suddenly and in rapid succession in the early chapter of Acts. The apostles and other followers of Jesus receive the Holy Spirit and begin

declaring the gospel in the various tongues of the many Jews visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost. Peter stands up and delivers his famous sermon, resulting in 3,000 people receiving the Word and being baptized. After this, the church explodes into action (Acts 2:1-41).

In Acts 2:42-47, Luke describes the miraculous beginnings of the Jerusalem church as an idyllic body of new believers who share love, care, close relationships, and worldly goods with one another. It is a community of teaching, prayer, fellowship, and the breaking of bread together with glad hearts. They enjoyed favor with the other residents of Jerusalem and every day more people were coming to Jesus and added to the church. What a beautiful commencement of the body of Christ!

Devoted to the Disciplines

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (2:42). “The expression of ‘devoting themselves’ has the idea of persistence or persevering in something,”⁵² describes New Testament scholar and professor Darrell L. Bock. This church “devoted” themselves to four disciplines. Southern Seminary professor John B. Polhill speaks about Bible intake:

First was the teaching of the apostles. Just as the apostles had been instructed by Jesus, so they passed along that instruction to the new Christians. In keeping with Jesus’ teaching to them (chap.1), this would have included such subjects as his resurrection, the Old Testament Scriptures, the Christian witness, and surely their own reminiscences of Jesus’ earthly ministry and teachings.⁵³

This teaching was from the Law, Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44), as well as the teachings of Jesus remembered by the apostles. and parts of the Gospels; the Scriptures.

“Secondly, they devoted themselves to *the fellowship (te koinonia)*. The *koinon-* words in Greek normally mean ‘to share with someone in something above and

⁵² Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 149, Logos Bible Software.

⁵³ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 118, Logos Bible Software.

beyond the relationship itself,’ or ‘to give someone a share of something,’”⁵⁴ writes researcher and lecturer David G. Peterson. This term also carries the meaning of close relationship, fellowship, and communion.⁵⁵ Members of this church loved and cared for one another, sharing their very lives with each other (1 Thess 2:8).

The breaking of bread and the prayers are the concluding spiritual disciplines in which the disciples shared. The breaking of bread, another form of fellowship, is thought by some to mean the Lord’s Supper. Moises Silva takes this position: “Luke is simply using an early Palestinian name for the Lord’s Supper in the proper sense.”⁵⁶ Another view is that the term refers primarily to simply eating together and sharing fellowship.⁵⁷ Most likely both interpretations are correct.

Regarding prayer in this community, Bock writes,

A community of prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. It seeks God’s direction and is dependent upon God because God’s family of people do not work by feeling or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord’s direction. The plural with the article (“the prayers”) could suggest that some set prayers were used. Another option is that the expression refers to an entire range of praying, both set and more spontaneous.⁵⁸

Peterson agrees with Bock, suggesting that this prayer refers to “specific prayers,” but also to the “petitioning prayer” that took place in households, as that was vital to community life.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 160.

⁵⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, 118.

⁵⁶ Moises Silva, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 83.

⁵⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 270.

⁵⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 150.

⁵⁹ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162.

The apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer, "are in fact the four elements which characterized a Christian gathering in the early church," recaps the Scottish New Testament scholar, I. Howard Marshall.⁶⁰

Results of the Disciplines

The practice of these corporate disciplines yielded several results; awe from the Jerusalemites toward the people among whom miraculous events were happening (v. 43), incredible unity and harmony among the Christian community which was viewed favorably by all the people (vv. 44-47a), and growth of the body of Christ in Jerusalem (v. 47b).

The signs and wonders of the apostles and the supernatural nature of the community generated fear among those outside of the community.⁶¹ One writer described it as "religious awe at the self-manifestation of the divine."⁶² The activity of the new church showed that God was at work through his Word, their prayer, and their worship.

The harmony and unity of the church was seen in the way they lived together and had everything in common. From other accounts it appears the selling of one's goods was a voluntary matter.⁶³ People willingly gave up worldly goods to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters.

They worshiped and fellowshiped, both at the temple and in their homes. Polhill explains, "In the intimacy of the home setting, a common meal was shared together, probably including the Lord's Supper as well. It was a time marked by thanksgiving and rejoicing in their fellowship with one another and with the Spirit and by their own

⁶⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 88, Logos Bible Software.

⁶¹ Bock, *Acts*, 150.

⁶² Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 271.

⁶³ Silva, *Acts*, 84.

openness and sincerity.”⁶⁴ Their love for one another was genuine and energized by the Lord. In addition, as Polhill continues, “They experienced the favor of the nonbelieving Jewish community in Jerusalem.”⁶⁵

The final result of the Christians’ commitment to the spiritual disciplines was the growth of the church. This was an effective community as it was growing at a regular pace.⁶⁶ The Lord was calling many to himself and adding to the number of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

This unity, generosity, fellowship, growth, and fear of the Lord characterized the early church. Polhill points out, “It was an ideal, almost blissful time marked by the joy of their life together and the warmth of the Spirit’s presence among them. It could almost be described as the young church’s ‘age of innocence.’”⁶⁷ This was accomplished by the work of the Lord and the people’s obedience to him and the disciplines he commanded.

Application

Oh, that the church today would emulate the activities of this first church; that it would practice the disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship together in love and harmony in such a way that the church would be a beacon of love and truth to the culture, and that churches would grow with those coming to faith and seeking to grow in their relationship with the risen Lord.

Leadership in today’s churches must model and instruct the people in the corporate practice of these disciplines in a spirit of love, unity, and generosity. One of the aims of counseling must be to connect hurting and lonely people to the body to practice

⁶⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, 120.

⁶⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, 120.

⁶⁶ Bock, *Acts*, 153.

⁶⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, 120.

these activities and enjoy the benefits of accountability, support, growth, and encouragement.

These connections help create a community where discipleship flourishes and all members enjoy spiritual growth; a place for all to work out their salvation in fear and trembling (Phil 2:12), worshipping God, and loving others. For those facing serious challenges in this life, the church is a hospital of acceptance, care, and instruction about how to mend their souls in the presence of the Savior and become useful in love and service to others.

These are the results of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, practiced in the community of Christ.

Conclusion

What a joy it is to have peace with God, the peace of God, and peace with fellow men, to walk closely with the Lord day-by-day communing with him; to enjoy a clean conscience, freedom, and the presence of the Son through the Holy Spirit; to appreciate friendship, fellowship, unity, encouragement, and worship with brothers and sisters in a loving community; and to obtain victory over anger, fear, anxiety, doubt, conflict, and depression. These transformative experiences are made possible through the grace of God and the practice of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer and fellowship.

The individual discipline of Bible intake teaches Christians who God is, what he has done and what he will do in the future. Scripture makes known the path of salvation and sanctification and instructs believers in everything they need for life and Godliness (2 Pet 1:3). Listening to, reading, memorizing, and meditating on the Word of God produces prosperity and success (Josh 1:7-8).

Prayer allows followers of Christ to pour out their heart to the Lord in confession, praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. They then receive forgiveness, joy,

contentment, and answers to that for which they have asked. Children of God are then able to grasp God's peace which surpasses understanding (Phil 4:4-8).

Initiating fellowship with other Christians prompts believers to consider how to stimulate love and good deeds in others and how to give and receive encouragement within the body of Christ (Heb 10:24-25). Practicing the disciplines in the context of Christian community promotes unity, harmony, generosity, fear of the Lord, and the growth of the individual Christian and the church (Acts: 2:42-47).

These truths lay a biblical and theological foundation for the necessity of all believers to learn and practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. These are the responsibilities of every disciple of Christ. How much more important are these activities for believers experiencing life-dominating sin, relational crisis, extreme emotional distress or some combination of these things? Teaching the spiritual disciplines supports discipleship and counseling in the local church. The Scriptures command Christians to seek God in the Bible, prayer, and fellowship. They are to love him with their whole heart and love their neighbor as themselves (Matt 22:37-39). "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps 119:1).

CHAPTER 3
EQUIPPING COUNSELORS FOR TEACHING THE
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO
SUPPORT COUNSELING

To effectively teach the spiritual disciplines to those they counsel, biblical counselors need to understand what the disciplines are, why they are vital to spiritual growth and overcoming life's issues, and how to develop daily habits of abiding in Christ themselves. Counselors will then be better prepared to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18), have "the Word of Christ" dwelling richly within them, and better equipped for "teaching and admonishing" their counselees "in all wisdom" (Col 3:16).

A Precip of the Disciplines

Scripture reveals that God gives "all things that pertain to life and Godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). It is "breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Therefore, one's understanding of the disciplines must come from the Bible. In Acts 2:42, the early church was devoted to these important spiritual disciplines: the teaching of the apostles (Bible intake), prayer, and *koinonia* (fellowship), as well as to "the breaking of bread."

Bible intake includes reading and listening to God's Word, studying the Scripture, meditating upon it, and memorizing verses and passages. Prayer is simply talking to God—it is the means for the Christian to express his thoughts, emotions, and desires to the one who created and sustains all things. Fellowship is the gathering together of Christians to encourage, love, and care for one another. It can be practiced one-on-one, in small groups, and in a large congregation. Pastor, scholar, and writer Paul Enns explains

that the communal acts of eating and partaking in the Lord’s Supper are also examples of fellowship.¹

In Acts 2:42, Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship are seen as interpersonal spiritual disciplines—spiritual activities practiced with other believers. However, the importance of the daily practice of the personal disciplines of Bible intake and prayer cannot be overstated. Scripture commands the individual believer to “lay up these words of mine [God] in your heart and in your soul” (Deut 11:18) and to “continue steadfastly in prayer” (Col 4:2). In the Bible, believers in both the Old and New Testaments devoted themselves to individual prayer and Bible intake.

Paul commanded Timothy to study the Scripture to be able to “correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Jesus said to those who believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Christ himself “would often withdraw to desolate places to pray” (Luke 5:16), and Scripture commands every Christian to “pray without ceasing” (2 Thess 5:17). Christ followers will do well to follow the Lord’s commands to practice the personal disciplines of Bible intake and prayer individually, as well as to actively participate in these disciplines in fellowship with other believers.

The Purpose of the Disciplines

The purpose of the spiritual disciplines is to “train yourself for Godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). They are biblical practices that promote spiritual growth and habits of devotion that foster experiential Christianity, including personal encounters with God. The disciplines—both personal and interpersonal—help the Christian strive for the “holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The blessings that result are the fruits of the Spirit: “love joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). Former pastor and author R. Kent Hughes

¹ Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 377.

compares this striving for holiness with other areas of one's life: "We will never get anywhere in life without discipline, be it in the arts, business, athletics, or academics."² In the same way one cannot grow in his or her spiritual life without effort and perseverance.

Practicing the disciplines are not means by which Christians earn favor with God but instead are agents of grace in their lives. Quaker author and theologian Richard Foster explains, "God has given us the Disciplines of the Christian life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so he can transform us."³ If it were not for God's grace in the Christian's life, there would be neither the desire nor the power to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). It may feel like the Christian is the one doing the hard work necessary for sanctification, but ultimately "it is God who works in you for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Like Zacchaeus, the believer's job is to put himself in the path of the Savior that he may encounter him (Luke 19:4-5). And as Zacchaeus received blessings (Luke 19:8-9), so shall the believer who seeks Christ through spiritual disciplines.⁴

The Popular Application of the Disciplines

To know the joy of encountering Christ, all Christians must "be wholly true to the Lord our God" and commit themselves to "keeping his commandments" (1 Kgs 8:61). Blessings are promised to those "who obey the commandments of the Lord" (Deut 11:27). These commandments include the constant practice of spiritual disciplines for discernment and to "distinguish good from evil" (Heb 5:14).

The spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, taught and practiced individually and in the community of Christ, will promote and encourage all

² R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 18.

³ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 2009), 8.

⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 13.

members to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, including those who suffer deeply, struggle with life-dominating sin, or find themselves in relational crisis. The understanding and practice of the disciplines is especially important for people who counsel those facing the difficult issues of life.

Bible Intake

The Bible consists of the very words of God, is the means of knowing God, and is the authority in all areas of life. New Testament scholar David G. Peterson portrays the Scripture this way: “The Bible, all of it, is livable; it is the text for living our lives. It reveals a God-created, God-ordered, God-blessed world in which we find ourselves at home and whole.”⁵ Bible intake could therefore be considered the most important of the disciplines.

The Scriptures can be read in a variety of ways, in large sections or short passages. Listening to the Bible is an engaging method to intake the Word of God and studying a Scripture passage promotes understanding of the meaning of that text. Biblical meditation is not to be confused with worldly meditation, emptying the mind, or visualizing desires. Biblical meditation is thinking deeply about the truths of Scripture. Memorization of the Bible hides the Word in the heart (Ps 119:11) and stimulates meditation.⁶

Reading, listening, and writing. Because the Word of God is food for the Christian (Matt 4:4), learning to thoughtfully read the Bible is foundational to spiritual growth. Early Christians read or listened to the Scriptures to enjoy God and allow him to

⁵ David G. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 18.

⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 41-42.

work in their lives. Bible intake was for joy and transformation and a means of experiencing God's presence.⁷

There are several ways to read the Scripture and allow it to sanctify the heart. One can read through the whole Bible in a year either book-by-book (canonical) or in the order of events (chronological) to get an overview of the grand narrative of the Scriptures. Topical plans are good to explore an area of theological interest or personal application. Doing a biographical reading will help understanding about the life and faith of a biblical figure. Reading and rereading one book of the Bible at a time helps give a thorough understanding of the doctrines and details of that particular book. Whatever method is chosen, it is important to read it daily and "delight in the Law of the Lord" (Ps 1:2).

Listening to an audio recording of the Bible is an excellent way to intake the Bible while doing daily activities like walking or driving. Listening to the same book over and over often fills in details that might be missed by a lapse of attention while reading. Reading and listening to the Scripture simultaneously increases the understanding of Bible truths.

Writing the Scripture by hand, also known as scribing, is a method of Bible intake that promotes thoughtful understanding of the words of Scripture. It was a requirement of every king of Israel to write out the Pentateuch and read it "in all the days of his life" (Deut 17:18-19). Reading and writing word-by-word slows down the mind and increases appreciation of God and his Word. If one reads out loud while scribing, he engages all forms of communication, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This is a powerful means of increasing Bible comprehension.

⁷ James C. Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 11-12.

Bible study. Every Christian who is serious about learning the Scripture will learn to study diligently, “rightly handling the Word of Truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Donald S. Whitney speaks about the importance of rightly understanding the Scriptures:

Correctly handling the Word of God does not permit making the text say what we want. To understand the Bible accurately—which is essential for right belief and living, for truthful sharing with others, and for authoritative teaching and preaching—we must do whatever is necessary to discover (or “exegete”) the single, God-inspired meaning of every verse before us. The text of the Bible means what God inspired it to mean, not “what it means to me.”⁸

One effective method of Bible study that helps ensure a correct interpretation of the text involves a step-by-step process of the observation, interpretation, and application of the Scripture.⁹ This method asks, “What does it say (observation)? What does it mean (interpretation)? How should one respond (application)?”

In the observation stage of Bible study, key words are identified, and contrasts and comparisons are noted. It is helpful to create lists of related items and observe cause and effect relationships. Defining words that are not clearly understood is important at this phase of Bible study. In these ways it can be determined what the text is saying.

To ascertain the meaning of a text, questions must be asked of the passage, such as, “What is the literary form—historical, prophetic, didactic, poetic, or allegorical?” This will determine in what manner it is interpreted. Other questions include: “What is the main point of this section?,” “Why did this audience need to hear this?,” “What is the context before and after the text?,” “What historical and cultural factors need consideration?,” and “What other questions come to mind?” Using Bible study tools such as a concordance and Bible dictionary will also help in the interpretative phase of study. Understanding the intent of the original author will aid the next stage: application.

⁸ Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 34.

⁹ Howard G. Hendricks and William Hendricks, *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 2007).

Logical conclusions based on observation and interpretations of a passage will guide the application phase of Bible study. Here, more questions are asked and answered, such as, “Why do we need to hear this section of Scripture in this day and age?,” “To what part of our lives does this speak?,” “What part of my heart and behavior needs to be conformed to this teaching?,” and “How can I effectively pray through this portion of Scripture?” Through this process of Bible study, the beauty and truth of Scripture and the Lord may be clearly observed, interpreted correctly, and properly applied to one’s life.

Memorization and meditation. To abide in Christ and to have his “words abide in you” (John 15:7) requires Scripture to be committed to memory. Memorization of God’s Word helps keep the believer from sin (Ps 119:11) and gives him wisdom. Hiding the Word in one’s heart enables the Christian to comfort and counsel other believers and communicate the gospel to the lost.

There are a variety of ways to learn to memorize the Bible. One may read and reread a verse out loud. Writing a verse repeatedly will visually ingrain the words in the heart and mind. One way to do this is to write the verse on a whiteboard or computer screen and say it out loud, erase a few words and say the entire verse again, erase a few more words and say it again, then finally erasing all the words and vocalizing the entire verse one more time. Another engaging method is to cut out each word in a verse, mix them up, and place them back in the correct order. Creative methods of memorizing Scripture abound and can be easily discovered by searching websites or apps devoted to the subject. Scripture memory does not have to be drudgery but could be an enjoyable process of writing God’s Word on one’s heart. It is also a means of biblical meditation.

Unlike Eastern and New Age views of meditation, which often recommend an attempt to empty one’s mind or find relaxation, biblical meditation is thinking deeply about scriptural truth.¹⁰ Meditation that is Christian will be in harmony with Philippians

¹⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 46-47.

4:8, which instructs believers to think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Meditation on the Bible should be a delight to the believer and pursued day and night (Ps 1:2). As Christians meditate on God’s wonderful promises and his works, they “understand the way of your precepts” (Ps 119:27). Meditation is a means by which the people of God can “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8).

Meditation on Scripture is invaluable to Christian growth because it helps in understanding and experiencing the truth of the Bible and its Author. As Whitney explains, “Through reading, we receive the indispensable truth of Scripture, but through meditation we *experience* the truth of Scripture. Through reading, for example, we learn that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8), but through meditation we feel the love of God—we experience ‘a felt Christ’ as the Puritans were known to say.”¹¹ This transformative understanding is not a new idea. Theologian and journalist Timothy George declares, “It was a core conviction of the Reformation that the careful study and meditative listening to the Scriptures, what the monks called *lectio divina*, could yield a life-changing result.”¹²

While it is profitable to read long sections of Scripture, short portions are usually more conducive to meditation. There are many profitable methods of biblical mediation—Whitney’s book alone describes seventeen distinct methods.¹³ One of these methods is to paraphrase a verse or verses in one’s own words. Drawing a picture of what is seen in the text is a creative way to ponder God’s truth. Repeated reading of a verse aloud while emphasizing a different word each time helps appreciation of the value of each jot and tittle of the Bible (Matt 5:18). Considering how a portion of Scripture points to Christ and the gospel brings to mind the central person and message of the Bible. As

¹¹ Donald S. Whitney, quoted in Jason K. Allen, *Portraits of a Pastor: The 9 Essential Roles of a Church Leader* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 173.

¹² Timothy George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 19.

¹³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 56-68.

previously mentioned, asking questions of a text, scribing Scripture, and memorization are all acts of meditation. Meditation is also sometimes called the missing link between Bible intake and prayer.

Prayer

When Christians learn to ponder God and his works through biblical meditation it will inspire them to prayer. Reading and meditating on God's great glory, power, and wisdom prompts believers to adore him for who he is and what he has done (Ps 145:10). Prayer is also a means of intimate relationship with God and becoming more like him. Richard Foster writes, "The primary purpose of prayer is to bring us into such a life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of his Son."¹⁴ Speaking of the intimacy of God's presence in prayer, Paul Miller, author and executive director of seeJesus, says, "Prayer is a moment of incarnation - God with us. God involved in the details of my life."¹⁵ What a comfort that is to the hurting soul.

Meditating on God's lovingkindness and compassion should produce repentance and confession of sin (Ps 51:1-2), reflecting on the many blessings received from Christ in the Scripture will prompt thanksgiving (Eph 1:3), and realizing God will give what is truly needed when Christians seek him will drive them to supplication (Luke 11:9-13). In fact, the ACTS pattern of prayer—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication—is a helpful means to pray with biblical balance.

The Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13) is the perfect example for prayer given by the Savior as a means of offering worship, submission, and petition. In this most famous of New Testament prayers, the believer seeks forgiveness and asks for power to forgive

¹⁴ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 57.

¹⁵ Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2009), 109.

others and battle against sin. Using the Lord's prayer as an example, it is helpful to learn to compose and pray personalized prayers.

In the Psalms one can sing the same praises and pour out the same sorrows as the human author; thus, this entire book can serve as a model and stimulus for prayer. When reading the Psalms, not only can one speak and sing to God, but one can also listen to God. He is heard speaking through the Psalmist. Author and speaker James W. Sire speaks about reading and hearing God in the Psalms: "Let it paint it's holy picture on your soul. You are listening to the voice of God through the voice of the Psalmist."¹⁶ Pastor and author Tim Keller talks about this intimate dialogue with God in this way: "Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him."¹⁷

It is also valuable to learn how to personalize New Testament prayers and the promises of God in Scripture, remembering and reciting his many attributes. Further, many find it helpful to keep lists of items for prayers, perhaps a different list for every day of the week. Finally, one must always remember that the ultimate motivation in prayer should be for God's glory (John 12:28), seeking that his will be done in all things (Luke 22:42).

Fellowship. Gathering with other believers in the name of the Savior is commanded and modeled throughout the New Testament. Hebrew 10:24-35 tells Christians to gather together with other Christians "to stir up one another to love and good works" and encourage each other. Fellowship is the means by which believers practice the "one

¹⁶ James W. Sire, *Learning to Pray through the Psalms* (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 19.

¹⁷ Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 48.

another” in Scripture¹⁸: loving and serving the members of Christ’s body. It is also one of the ways the world will identify Christians—by the love they have for one another (John 13:35). Different forms of fellowship allow for the practice of the disciplines of Bible intake and prayer with brothers and sisters in the body. Four ways to formally engage in fellowship include congregational worship, home groups, accountability groups, and one-one-one disciple-making.

In congregational worship, Christians gather as the local body of Christ to hear the preaching of the Word, pray together, corporately worship through song, and share the Lord’s Supper together. It is wise to learn to take notes during the sermon, especially points of application, which can transform the heart, mind, and actions. Author David Mathis declares, “Few practices will energize and affect your Christian life as much as sitting attentively under faithful preaching.”¹⁹ In the classic book *Life Together*, theologian, pastor, and author Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes about the beauty and mystery of singing praises together with other believers: “The fact that we do not speak it [the Word of God] but sing it only expresses the fact that our spoken words are inadequate to express what we want to say, that the burden of our song goes far beyond all human words.”²⁰ In another wonderful and mysterious activity, believers partake of the Lord’s Supper, enjoying communion with Christ and one another. Sunday morning worship is not an optional activity for the true Christian.

Home groups, sometimes referred to as community groups, life groups, or home Bible studies, provide opportunities for families to gather to “do life” together. In *Life in Community*, author Dustin Willis paints a beautiful picture of a loving, disciple-

¹⁸ Some of the “one another” passages in the New Testament include Rom 12:13, Heb 10:24, Gal 5:13, Eph 4:32, Col 3:16, 1 Thess 5:11, 1 Pet 4:9, Gal 6:2, and Phil 2:4.

¹⁹ David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 165.

²⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper Collins, 1954), 62.

making home group. It is a place where food is shared, a Bible passage or sermon is discussed and applied to hearts and lives, and members confront sin and pray for one another. A home group perseveres through suffering together, helps meet each other's needs, and practices hospitality.²¹ Home groups are a place to know others and be known. As professor and author Jeremy Pierre says in *The Pastor and Counseling*, "We should strive to make church a place where being anonymous or nominal is difficult to pull off."²² Home groups help make church such a place. They can also be missional communities with a focus of service and evangelism of others.

Small accountability groups with members of the same gender are another means of practicing *koinonia* with one another. These are times of the study and application of the Word and deep sharing and prayer for each other. Committed friendships are formed and many Christians see tremendous spiritual growth by participating in this type of fellowship. One-on-one disciple making is the most concentrated method of discipleship. In this format, general and specific areas of spiritual growth are learned and applied to one's Christian life. Biblical counseling is often referred to as "intensive discipleship." Author Paul Tautges defines biblical counseling this way:

Biblical counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside one another for three main purposes: first, to help the other person to consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning their spiritual friend, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that brother or sister to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she, too, may become a spiritually reproductive disciple-maker.²³

Biblical counseling and disciple-making are very closely related.

²¹ Dustin Willis, *Life in Community: Joining Together to Display the Gospel Community* (Chicago: Moody, 2015), 13.

²² Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 106.

²³ Paul Tautges, *Counsel One Another: A Theology of Personal Discipleship* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2009), 20.

Each counselor must learn the importance and benefits of fellowship to be able to instruct and encourage those they counsel to appreciate and participate in corporate worship, home groups, accountability groups, and individual disciple making.

“Sanctification is a Christ-centered community journey,”²⁴ comments professor, author, and speaker Robert Kellemen. Good counselors know how to utilize the community of the church for their counselee’s growth.²⁵ In this way, they may equip one another “for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). Whitney defines the common thread in all these fellowship contexts:

It is this vibrant, vigorous word *koinonia* that the Bible uses when it describes the spiritual bond and dynamic between people in the body of Christ. Together we are participants in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have communion in eternal life. We are partners in the Great Commission and the work of the kingdom of God. We share a common gift—the indwelling presence of the Spirit.²⁶

The Holy Spirit indwelling each Christian is building believers together into a “a holy temple in the Lord” and a “dwelling place for God” (Eph 2:21-22). Becoming Christ-like is a community building project.

²⁴ Robert W. Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 33.

²⁵ Heath Lambert and Stuart Scott, eds., *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God’s Resources in Scripture* (Nashville: B & H, 2015). In almost every case presented here, different varieties of support and fellowship are employed from within the church and are invaluable to biblical change in the counselee. The counseling relationship is where the one receiving counsel receives the primary instruction in sanctification. Other fellowship structures support the counselee with friendship and accountability during formal counseling and after it concludes. Benevolence and care ministries help practical needs. “Advocates” are employed in the counseling process, which are people who attend the counseling meetings, know the counselee well, understand the issues being discussed, and commit themselves to continued care after formal counseling comes to an end.

²⁶ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 49.

Counseling Application

Because so many Christians who receive biblical counseling have never been explicitly taught spiritual disciplines, nor faithfully practice them, they are ill-equipped to handle the difficult issues of life they face. Counselees need modeling and instruction from biblically literate, spiritually mature counselors who regularly practice the disciplines, understand their importance to sanctification and overcoming life's problems, and are equipped to intentionally teach them to others (2 Tim 2:1-2).

When counselees and counselors engage daily in Bible intake and prayer they are spiritually fed by the Word of God and equipped by God “with every good thing that you may do his will” (Heb 13:21). In the Scripture, they learn the foundational doctrines of Christianity: the gospel, salvation by faith, the attributes of God, the role of confession and repentance, forgiveness, and practical instruction in every area of life—marriage, family, work, etc. Through the practice of prayer, both counselor and counselee enjoy communion with God and are prepared for spiritual battle. By the Word of God and prayer, they are both empowered for righteous living and able to “put on the whole armor of God that you may stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11-13).

Combining the private disciplines of Bible intake and prayer in a daily devotional time, ideally first thing in the morning, is a joyful habit that yields great rewards.²⁷ Scripture encourages the follower of Christ to go to a private place (Matt 6:6), ask for insight (Ps 119:18), read the Bible (Ps 1:2), pray (Matt 6:9), and meditate upon what was read (Josh 1:8). Meditation and prayer about the morning's Scripture reading can continue “without ceasing” throughout the remainder of the day (1 Thess 5:17).

Learning to daily practice Bible intake and prayer privately, and participate in these disciplines corporately, equips both counselor and counselee. By these biblical means they can experience freedom from anxiety (Phil 4:6-7), victory over sin (1 Cor 10:13), and restoration through confession (Ps 51). Well-equipped counselors strengthened through

²⁷ Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 140.

the Holy Spirit can instruct those they counsel in the spiritual disciplines to grow in the likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18) and overcome the challenges of life in a fallen world, “strengthened with power in their innermost being” (Eph 3:16).

The Peculiar Application of the Disciplines

Biblical counselors sometimes overlook the significance of the general practice of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship to support those they counsel in favor of focusing on their specific issues. However, as seen previously, the importance of the disciplines cannot be overstated in supporting biblical change in both the sanctification and the circumstances of their counselees. Therefore, there is tremendous value in counselors learning how to instruct counselees in the specific (peculiar) use of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship to address both important doctrines related to biblical counseling, and the individual issues that have brought them to counseling in the first place.

The Bible speaks to the various issues of life, including sin and temptation. It declares the importance of the heart for biblical change, the cure for idolatry being true worship, and a desperate need for confession and forgiveness. The Scriptures teach how to honor God and love one’s neighbor, live at peace with one another, and how to overcome the different problems of life. Specific prayer empowers positive changes in areas of difficulty and employing the different contexts of Christian fellowship are vital to these changes.

Sin, Temptation, and the Heart

The root of people’s problems is sin. Paul says in Romans 3:23, “The wages of sin is death,” and there is no one who does not sin (Rom 3:10). One’s own sin brings consequences. Being sinned against by others causes pain, suffering, and sinful responses. Life in a sinful, fallen world is a daily challenge with unexpected crisis. It is easy to forget that sin and suffering are normal parts of life, but as authors Timothy Lane and

Paul Tripp write, “We shouldn’t be surprised when suffering and difficulty come our way; in fact, we should probably be surprised when they don’t.”²⁸

Temptation to sin is ever-present and the source of all conflicts (Jas 4:1). These evil desires originate in the heart—the center of a man’s soul—that is responsible for thoughts, emotions, and choices. The Bible speaks about the deceitfulness and sickness of the human heart (Jer 17:9) and the various evils that proceed from it (Matt 15:19). This worldview is what makes biblical counseling different from secular therapy, which knows little about the depraved heart of man from the perspective of Scripture. Bonhoeffer teaches, “The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the Cross of Jesus.”²⁹ Author, speaker, and one of the fathers of biblical counseling, David Powlison, compares the two viewpoints: “Instead of ‘psychopathology’ and ‘syndromes’ we see sins against this Person (Christ), and we see sufferings that are ‘trials’ revealing our need for a true deliverer and refuge.”³⁰ A biblical perspective on sin and suffering is imperative and why the Christian needs to guard his heart “for from it flow the streams of life” (Prov 4:23).

Counselors do well to teach the Bible clearly to their counselees about the realities of their sinful condition, the problem of temptation, and the source of their sin that proceeds from their hearts and the hearts of others. Counselees also need to be encouraged by the intake of Scripture that teaches heart change is possible (Ezek 11:19), and that there is not any temptation that is not common to man (1 Cor 10:13). Their particular struggle has been experienced by myriads of Christians over the centuries and somehow God uses suffering as a means for their good and his glory. Jerry Bridges, a famous

²⁸ Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2006), 101.

²⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 93.

³⁰ David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 4.

author and speaker and former staff member of the Navigators, states, “All pain we experience is intended to move us closer to the goal of being holy as He is holy.”³¹ The effects of sin will somehow lead to sanctification.

Idolatry

John’s final exhortation at the very end of his first epistle is, “Little children keep yourself from idols” (1 John 5:20). “An idol is anything or anyone that captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God,”³² says pastor, author, and biblical counselor Brad Bigney. These idols are the lustful desires that proceed from the heart—the sins beneath the sins. These heart idols are false worship and “who we love above all else is who we worship, and who we worship controls us,”³³ claims author and musical artist Ed Welch. Followers of Christ must choose the object of their worship wisely.

In 1 John 2:16, the Bible teaches about three categories of idolatry: the lust of the flesh (comfort), the lust of the eyes (power and possession), and the boastful pride of life (significance). These were also the temptations of Christ by Satan in the Wilderness (Matt 4:1-11). The making of bread was an enticement to bodily comfort. Acquiring all the kingdoms of the world and their glory would be the temptation of power and possession. Significance was a false idol offered to Jesus if he threw himself from the top of the temple to be saved by the angel. It is important to note how God thwarted Satan’s temptations, with the quoting of specific Scriptures related to that particular idolatry.

In James 1:14-15, false worship begins with the enticement of the heart by evil desire. Starting in the heart, this evil produces thoughts and emotions that lead to evil

³¹ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace: God’s Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2018), 238.

³² Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2012), 24.

³³ Edward T. Welch, *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 29.

behavior and finally death. The adage is true: a man is the product of what he thinks (Prov 23:7). James 4:1-2 teaches that the evil passions of hearts are at war within the believer and are the source of all his quarrels with others, ending in murder. Christians are not content with God but rather attempt to find satisfaction in idols. This false worship is the cause of their problems. “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:24).

Learning to understand the fundamental problem of life’s issues from the Word of God taught by a competent biblical counselor is crucial for a counselee to begin real biblical change. Counselees learn that there is no lasting satisfaction in idolatry (Isa 55:2a) and false worship is the problem and Christ is the answer.

True Worship

The good news of Jesus Christ is the foundation of true worship. The belief and application of the gospel in the Christian’s life enable him to worship God “in Spirit and in Truth” (John 4:24). Because “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1), and sin no longer has dominion over the believer (Rom 6:14), he may now worship freely.

Christ’s death and resurrection are not only the impetus for true worship, but for biblical counseling as well. Powlison asks and answers the question, “What is the place of Christ’s good news in biblical counseling? That is rather like asking, ‘What is the place of water and carbon in human physiology?’ The Gospel of Jesus is the fundamental stuff of biblical counseling.”³⁴

To experience true worship, one must “put off your old self” through confession and repentance, be renewed in the spirit of the mind (the heart), and “put on the new self,” which is Christ and his righteousness (Eph 4:22-24). This daily practice of renewal allows

³⁴ David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2005), 44.

Christians to walk in the Spirit and exhibit his fruits. With the forgiveness of Christ, a clean heart, and a right spirit (Ps 51:10), he can now “buy wine and milk without money” (Isa 55:1), “that his soul may live” (Isa 55:3). The believer can now begin display the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe” (Heb 12:28).

The call to “worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness” (Ps 96:9) is a critical first step in the counseling process that leads to the instruction of practical theology concerning biblical change and holy living. Theology matters, in both worship and counseling. Philosopher and writer Dallas Willard concurs: “A thoughtless or uninformed theology grips and guides our life with just as great a force as does a thoughtful and informed one.”³⁵ Counselees who learn good theology through Bible intake in the context of the counseling relationship, understand and receive forgiveness, know how to have their hearts renewed, and can now “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). They understand how the true worship of Christ transforms their thoughts and emotions, which result in righteous living.

Specific Issues

Finally, Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship are key to overcoming the specific issues of life in a fallen world and the competent counselor knows how to apply them to the lives of those they counsel. The Bible speaks explicitly and implicitly to all the problems Christians face. Examples include specific instruction about addiction to substances (Eph 5:18-21), anxiety (1 Pet 5:7), depression (Psalm 42), anger (Eccl 7:9), conflict (Jas 4:1-10), marriage roles difficulties (1 Pet 3:1-12), and parenting problems (Eph 6:1-4), just to name a few. Complex issues such as abuse, PTSD, OCD, DID, and

³⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Family Christian, 2001), 14.

bi-polar disorder can be biblically framed, addressed, and overcome.³⁶ The Scriptures are truly sufficient for all of life.

Applying their understanding about the theology of biblical change, good counselors teach how Bible reading, study, memorization, and meditation that leads to effectual prayer help solve the difficult life problems people face. They also effectively employ the different types of fellowship available in the church for the good of those they counsel. Understanding the importance of the disciplines and the biblical teachings that relate to counseling people's specific issues are essential to be an effective biblical counselor. For the best outcomes of those they counsel, these truths must be taught with biblical methods and practiced within biblical frameworks.

The Procedural Application of the Disciplines

Various models, frameworks, and templates are important to organize the instruction of the spiritual disciplines by counselors with the goal of holiness in the life of the counselee. Used effectively, they bring structure and consistency to the process of biblical change in the lives of those receiving counseling.

Love, Know, Speak, Do

A general biblical model of counseling practice that teaches the spiritual disciplines is essential to counseling success. In *Instruments in the Redeemers Hands*, Paul Tripp lays out a counseling framework with four components: love, know, speak, and do.³⁷ Counselors must be intentional to "love" their counselees by walking beside them, serving them, praying for them, showing compassion, and giving them hope (1 John

³⁶ The competent counselor understands that many serious issues sometimes have physiological and medical conditions that exacerbate them. This in no way diminishes the sufficiency of Scripture, which instructs Christians to seek appropriate medical intervention for bodily illnesses (1 Tim 5:23). Biblical counselors often work cooperatively with physicians for the overall health and wellbeing of those they counsel.

³⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping Others in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 108-12.

3:18). The competent counselor spends every effort to get to “know” their counselee by spending adequate time with them, asking many questions and follow up questions, and listening attentively with their ears, mind, and heart (Prov 18:13).

The third component of this model is for the biblical counselor to “speak” biblical truth into the lives of their counselee (Eph 4:15). These truths must include a complete explanation of the gospel and the need to repent and believe in the Jesus of the Scriptures. Counselees need to understand the many attributes of God, a biblical anthropology, a theology of sanctification, and passages related to their specific life issues. Most importantly, they must be taught to practice the spiritual disciplines: to read and study the Bible for themselves, memorize it, meditate effectively upon it, and pray its content back to God, as well as the biblical truths related to the practice and blessings of communing with other believers.

Finally, the counselee learns how to “do”: to do good works, to do the hard work of becoming more like Christ, to implement what he has learned in his heart and his life. This will happen through assigning effective homework that will include Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. This “learning by doing” is the workshop where God works to sanctify their soul. The “love, know, speak, do” counseling model promotes the kind of active learning and spiritual growth author Kenneth Boa speaks about in *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*: “Christian maturity does not spring out of isolation but is nourished through involvement.”³⁸ Active engagement in relationship, instruction, and action is crucial to the counseling process.

The 4 Gs

A comprehensive framework that includes the important biblical theologies and teachings necessary for sanctification and victory over sin, suffering, and conflict, is

³⁸ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 426.

explained by author and speaker Ken Sande in *The Peacemaker*, the seminal work on living lives of peace, love, and joy in a broken, fallen world. Sande categorizes the vital elements of peacemaking truths and practices in what he terms “The 4 Gs”: glorify God, get the log out of your eye, gently restore one another, and go and be reconciled.³⁹

In a version of the “4 Gs” specifically adapted for counseling,⁴⁰ to “glorify God” includes instruction in loving “the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” (Mark 12:30), and loving “your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). This section includes teachings about the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. It also explains biblical communication (Eph 4:25-32), which is especially helpful in marriage counseling.

“Get the log out of one’s own eye” begins with instruction about identifying, repenting, and confessing sin. Sande’s “7 A’s of Confession” are a powerful tool toward restoring relationships.⁴¹ One must Address everyone involved, Admit specifically, Avoid “ifs, ands, buts, and maybes,” Acknowledge the hurt done to the other, Accept the consequences of your sin, Alter your behavior, and Ask for forgiveness. There is teaching from Matthew 18 about biblical forgiveness followed by a thorough understanding of idolatry and true worship.

In the third “G,” Gently restore, tools are taught on how to gently confront sin with the goal of reconciliation. The “PAUSE Principle” is explained; Prepare carefully, Affirm the relationship, Understand the other’s interests, Seek creative solutions, and Evaluate options objectively. Listening skills and learning to ask questions for genuine understanding are taught and practiced at this stage. Teaching about the process of church discipline (Matt 18:15-20) is explained here.

³⁹ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Restoring Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 38.

⁴⁰ See appendix 11.

⁴¹ Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 126-34.

Lastly, in “Go and be Reconciled,” counselors and counsees learn to overlook minor offenses (Prov 19:11), agree to disagree (Rom 14:13-19), and “live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:18). Being reconciled does not mean Christians must see eye-to-eye on every detail, but rather they must choose to love one another despite differences of opinions. The 4 Gs are a powerful tool to organize counseling instruction toward sanctification and relational reconciliation.

The Counseling Room

A regular meeting routine is helpful in the counseling process for making the counselee feel comfortable and knowing what to expect. Templates for both the first session and succeeding sessions can be a good guide for consistency and flexibility in counseling meetings.⁴² They are helpful tools for the counselor to plan meetings and for promoting calibration among counselors in a counseling ministry regarding best practices in the counseling room.

The first counseling meeting is a time to get to know one other by sharing mini life stories and explaining the biblical counseling process. It is important to begin building relationship and trust at this meeting and to start getting to know the counselee. The counselor will explain the Consent to Counsel form⁴³ which talks about limits on confidentiality and how any conflict will be resolved within church leadership. It also clarifies that biblical counselors are not “professionals” nor state certified. The counselee is asked to describe the main reasons they sought counsel and the counselor gives some hope and encouragement from the Scriptures.

At the end of the first session, basic homework for developing Bible reading habits is assigned as well as weekly church attendance and note taking from the sermon.

⁴² See appendix 12.

⁴³ See appendix 13.

The counselor and counselee schedule their following meetings together and the counselor concludes with prayer for the counselee.

Subsequent sessions will begin with a short informal check-in about how things are going in the life of the counselee in general. This is followed by prayer and reviewing homework. It is important for counselees to learn to explain what God is teaching them in the Scriptures, through prayer, and in his various fellowship contexts. They are also learning to describe how God is using his Word to address the specific issues that brought him to counseling.

After reviewing and discussing homework is biblical instruction and practice about general themes of sanctification and addressing specific issues. It is also a time for counselors to model and teach counselees how to do effective Bible intake, meditation, and prayer for themselves with the goal of heart and life application. Biblical narratives are engaging and effective means to teach biblical truth and help counselees learn how to mine the Scriptures for themselves. In *Crosstalk, Where Life and Scripture Meet*, physician, biblical counselor, and author Mike Emlet talks about how Bible stories draw one in, help a Christian empathize with the characters, and emulate their positive traits and faith. Narratives also help a believer to identify with biblical figures and the same types of problems that they faced.⁴⁴ Counselees can also learn from the ways biblical characters pray and apply the Word of God to their lives. Didactic and poetic portions of the Word are taught and assigned as homework as well.

After instruction, homework is given in a variety of ways depending on the current needs of the counselee.⁴⁵ There is always a special emphasis on the importance and practice of the disciplines. Homework examples might include reading, scribing, and memorizing the Scripture, praying a pattern daily, and action items such as apologizing to

⁴⁴ Michael R. Emlet, *CrossTalk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009), 34-35.

⁴⁵ See appendix 14.

someone, going for a daily walk, or going on a date. Biblically based books and booklets may be assigned for reading and fellowship opportunities like church, community group, and one-on-one or small group discipleship in same-gender groups might be required. Service opportunities and writing assignments involving journaling biblical meditations, sin journals, items for which to be thankful, letters, and prayer journals may be assigned. The counseling meeting should always conclude in prayer by the counselor or counselee, or both.

During the meeting, counselors must take good notes about what is said and taught and fill out a Case Report form⁴⁶ soon afterwards to be reviewed by the counseling director. Between meetings they should review the instruction from the last session and plan for the next meeting. Counselors must commit to pray regularly for their counselee.

Counseling in community, or team counseling, is a structure that promotes counseling effectiveness.⁴⁷ An experienced counselor is paired with a newer counselor in a mentor/protégé relationship. In the beginning, the protégé will not have much involvement but rather observes and learns. Later, he or she may take a more active role, making comments, praying, and teaching small sections. Mentor and protégé debrief after each session. Team counseling is a wonderful way for new counselors to learn and gain confidence. This structure also provides another advocate and opportunity for fellowship for the counselee. As Kellemen suggests, ongoing training in the form of trainings and conferences, required reading of selected books, and the discussion of ongoing cases is important for counselor's growth and practice.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ See appendix 15.

⁴⁷ Mark E. Shaw, *Strength in Numbers: The Team Approach to Biblical Counseling* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2010), 21-22.

⁴⁸ Robert W. Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church: The 4E Ministry Training Strategy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 296-97.

Conclusion

Wise biblical counselors, being sanctified in the Spirit by their regular practice of the spiritual disciplines and taught well in how to instruct these disciplines to others will be excellent models and teachers to those they counsel. Because they understand from the Scriptures what the disciplines are and why they are important, they will “rightly handle the Word of Truth” (2 Tim 2:16) for their benefit and the benefit of their counselees.

Counselees, taught by competent counselors in biblical frameworks, will learn to feed daily on the Word of God, enjoy communion with God through prayer, and experience support, encouragement, and accountability in fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Learning the basics of the gospel, the attributes of God, and the theology of biblical change and reconciling relationships, counselees will be kept from being “ineffective or unfruitful” in the faith (2 Pet 1:8) and be “equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17). Understanding and applying biblical instruction, prayer, and fellowship to the issues they face will help them conquer persistent sin, difficult circumstances and suffering, and conflicted relationships. Resembling the man in Psalm 1:3, the counselee will become “like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers.”

CHAPTER 4

A STEP-BY-STEP COURSE AND CHURCHWIDE PLAN FOR TEACHING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO SUPPORT COUNSELING

The project had two components. The first part of the project was to train the counselors at Grace Bible Church to practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, and then learn to effectively teach these disciplines to those they counsel. The second component was a churchwide plan to increase the practice and instruction of these important disciplines in the various ministries of the church.

The Course

The core of this project was a course called “Desiring the Disciplines.” This course intended for counselors to increase their understanding of the importance of the spiritual disciplines to the Christian life, to learn to love, practice, and desire the disciplines more, and to become well-equipped to effectively teach simple spiritual discipline activities to those they counsel and disciple for the purpose of sanctification and overcoming life issues. The length of this project was four weeks, one class per week, with one-and-a-half hours of instruction and active learning in each class.

Participants

The twenty-five participants in “Desire the Disciplines” were selected based on the following criteria. Participants must have completed the coursework for the ACBC Fundamentals Course or be in the current Fundamentals Class at our church that concludes in March 2022. These criteria accounted for twenty-two of the twenty-five participants. Exceptions were made for three spouses of qualifying participants because of their interest and understanding of biblical counseling and involvement in the discipleship of others.

Thirteen participants are actively counseling in the biblical counseling ministry and ten are leaders of the twenty community groups at Grace Bible Church. Nine were men and sixteen were women.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Pedagogy

Training materials included a Bible, pen, and copy of the course handbook.¹ The handbook begins with an introductory letter to participants inviting them to learn the importance and blessings of practicing the disciplines and to engage in the upcoming learning experiences. Seven different Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship activities follow that promote growth in the disciplines and sanctification in the Christian life. Reflection questions about the participants' experiences and learning outcomes from the course conclude the handbook.

Each spiritual discipline was introduced, and each activity taught and modeled. Together we practiced activities and then students did them again individually as homework. This teaching methodology is known as the "Gradual Release of Responsibility" method, or "I do, we do, you do." We utilized various discussion protocols such as "Circle Share," "Turn 'n' Talk," and "Popcorn" to process material, deepen understanding, and provide for long-term retention of the content of the course material.

The sharing and discussion of homework with myself and classmates provided formative evaluations of each person's work. Timely, specific, and constructive feedback was then given, which enhanced the learning of all participants.

Week 1

Important activities in the first class focused on building inclusion in the table groups, introducing students to course content and learning goals, and learning and practicing two activities that log spiritual discipline activity. Homework was also explained

¹ See appendix 5 for handbook.

and assigned. The class began with my self-introduction and a brief welcome and overview of the course. In the table groups, each participant was asked to give a short introduction that included their name, family situation, length of time at Grace Bible Church, employment information, hobbies they enjoy, and a favorite dessert. This began the process of building a positive learning community in each group. These groups stayed together throughout the course and participated in many cooperative learning protocols. An experienced facilitator was assigned to guide each table group.

A pre-assessment survey that measured the student's engagement in spiritual disciplines and level of confidence to teach these disciplines was filled out by each student.² They then engaged in a text rendering protocol of the introductory letter at the beginning of the handbook. This protocol, called "Little to Large," promotes engagement with the text by asking students to identify a key sentence, phrase, and word and then sharing that portion of text and why they chose it with their table group members. The letter also served to give an overview of the disciplines and activities, and to invite engagement in the learning to come.

Two graphs that log spiritual discipline activity were introduced, modeled, and practiced together. After receiving instruction about the components of a quality devotional time students created a table in their notebooks and tracked each day that they practiced at least fifteen minutes of private Bible intake and prayer in the last week. The students then looked for patterns and areas of growth and shared ideas for improvement with table group members. This activity is called "Chart Your Progress" and is one of many activities in the handbook.

The "Fellowship Journal" helped track four different types of fellowship activities in the previous week: (1) church attendance, (2) community group attendance, (3) participation in a small, same-gender discipleship group, and (4) one fellowship

² See appendix 2.

experience with a spiritual friend that included the discussion of Scripture and prayer together. Participants recorded these activities and shared experiences with one another.

The class concluded with the assignment of homework—to complete one week of logging devotional times in “Chart Your Progress” and logging at least one of each type of fellowship activity in their “Fellowship Journal.” Students also did a short sharing of appreciations and reflections of their time together using the “Popcorn” protocol. Everyone made a brief statement, but after “popping” they could not speak again.

Week 2

The second class started with a review and processing of homework experiences. Students were diligent to fill out the “Chart Your Progress” table that logged the number of devotional times they completed. With partners, they discussed the quality of their devotional experiences and what they might do to make them more meaningful in the current week. After sharing “Fellowship Journal” entries with each other, partners shared their most significant fellowship experience of the week and why it was so meaningful. They then chose one fellowship activity to which they would give more effort this week.

After an introduction of the spiritual discipline of Bible intake, participants evaluated seven benefits of Bible intake identified in Scripture and chose one they have experienced in a significant way. They then discussed their choice with their partner and why it was important to them.

The first Bible intake activity in the handbook called, “Journal the Bible” was taught and modeled using the second half of Psalm 19. Students learned the value of “scribing” Scripture, copying a section of the Bible word-for-word in their notebook. They learned how to think deeply (meditate) about the text they scribed in three categories: light bulbs, question marks, and arrows, sometimes referred to as the Swedish Method. Light bulbs are thoughts inspired by Scripture that include connections to one’s life, the world, or other scriptural references. Determining importance, creating visual images, identifying emotional responses, and connecting content to previous understanding, are more examples

of light bulbs. “Question marks” take the person on an adventure of discovery to satisfy curiosity and queries. “Arrows” are applications to one’s heart and behavior. Together students practiced scribing and journaling the second half of Psalm 19 and shared responses.

The second Bible intake activity was “Memorize the Bible.” After talking about the importance of hiding the Scripture in our hearts for encouragement, inspiration, and battling temptation, a memory game was introduced. Psalm 119:9 was written on the white board and the class read it out loud in unison. Several words were erased and together students again read the entire verse aloud. This process was repeated two more times until all the words were erased. Almost all students were able to recite the verse at the end of the activity. They then practiced this activity using Psalm 119:11 in their composition books.

Homework was assigned that included scribing and journaling 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and memorizing 2 Timothy 3:16. Students were also assigned entries in their Bible reading log and fellowship journal. In the “popcorn” reflection at the end several students commented on how much they enjoyed the process of scribing Scripture. They mentioned how every Word of God grew in importance and “slowing down” helped them think more deeply.

Week 3

The week 3 class began again by reviewing and discussion homework, updating “Chart Your Progress” logs, “Fellowship Journals,” the “Memorizing the Bible” activity, and “Journal the Bible” entries. All but one student was diligent to complete the homework. One of the elderly students excitedly shared how she taught the memorization activity to a friend this week. Several commented on how the simplicity of this activity was advantageous to successful memorization. Some participants shared their increasing appreciation of the discipline of fellowship. Various students commented that scribing

and journaling the Bible was slow, hard work but worth it. Another common response about Bible journaling was, “It really made me think about what I was reading.”

It took most of the class to do a shared learning experience with the “Study the Bible” handbook activity, an inductive method of studying Scripture. After lecturing on the elements and importance of correctly interpreting and applying Scripture in the counseling room, students opened up Philippians 2:1-5 and scribed the passage in their journals. They then practiced together the first phase of inductive bible study:

“Observation”—“what does it say?” Students circled key words and recorded comparisons and contrasts, lists of items, and cause and effect clauses. Participants also defined difficult words that were important to the understanding of what was being said in the passage.

In the “Interpretation” section—“What does it mean?”—students answered important questions about the text to determine the intent of the author’s writing to the audience who received it. Questions included: What is the literary form? What is the main point? Why did this audience in this culture need to hear this? How does the context of the chapter, book, and entire Bible enhance an understanding of the interpretation of the passage? Determining what the text does not mean helped to avoid inappropriate interpretations of this passage of Scripture.

After seeking to determine the correct interpretation of the passage the students moved to the “Application” phase of inductive Bible study—“What do I do?” Questions in this section asked why Christians today needed to hear this Scripture, to what area of our lives it speaks, and how our hearts and mind should conform to the truths revealed. Again, several students expressed how time consuming and arduous this type of task was, but how rewarding it was to see the truths of the Scripture revealed so clearly. A guided class discussion followed about the importance of not only teaching biblical hermeneutics correctly to counselees, but also teaching them to correctly mine the truths of Scripture for themselves.

Homework for the next class included choosing a paragraph of Scripture four to ten verses long, scribing it in their journal, and completing all three phases of inductive Bible study in their journals as instructed in the “Study the Bible” activity in the handbook. At the beginning of the next class students were told they would teach their passage to a partner and get their feedback. Students were also instructed to update their devotional and fellowship logs in the week ahead.

Week 4

At the beginning of the final class, homework was reviewed that included the students’ devotional time and fellowship logs. Students responded to the discussion question: “What did you notice in the frequency and quality of your practice of these spiritual disciplines the last four weeks?” Almost every student commented that they had improved the frequency of their practice of the disciplines and were encouraged by an increased depth of understanding and awareness of God in their Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship encounters.

Each student then taught a partner the texts they exegeted in the “Study the Bible” activity. They shared their observation pages of the scribed text they chose and the details of their observations. Next, they taught their interpretation of the passage and how they came to their conclusions by answering the questions in this section. Finally, applications based on good observation and interpretation were shared and feedback was given by their partners. Many commented that this in-depth inductive method had opened their eyes to understand better how to study and understand the Scripture and apply it to their hearts and lives. They also talked about how valuable this study method would be to those they disciple and counsel.

The three prayer activities in the handbook were then taught and practiced: “The ACTS Pattern,” “The Lord’s Prayer,” and “Praying the Bible.” Participants appreciated the structure, support, and creative opportunities of learning to pray in patterns and pray

the Scripture back to God. As my supervisor and mentor Donald Whitney says, “We don’t have to pray the same old things about the same old things!”

The class concluded by each student filling out the post-assessment and reflection questions at the end of the handbook and sharing appreciations of our time together. The results of the post-assessments were compared to those of the pre-assessment and reflected strong growth in the participants’ practice of the disciplines and in their confidence to teach them to those they counsel. These results are summarized and explained in chapter 5.

Finally, using the “Popcorn” protocol, positive appreciations about the course were shared included comments such as, “Knowing what the word says and means is important to life application,” “The logs were a great help for accountability,” “Scribing the Scripture slowed my mind down to be able to think about every Word,” “Learning the disciplines will help our counselees walk on their own,” “Fellowship must be intentional and purposeful,” and “I learned to seek the Lord through the spiritual disciplines.”

The Plan

The second portion of the project was a ministry plan to improve the practice and instruction of spiritual disciplines in the different ministries of the church, including women’s ministry, young adults, biblical counseling, community groups, worship, youth, and preaching. Through an interview process with the leaders of the various ministries, an assessment of the leaders’ practice of spiritual disciplines and the current instruction of the disciplines in their ministry was conducted. A ministry plan with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) goals was drafted for improving the instruction of spiritual disciplines within each ministry. The plan was then evaluated by elders and suggested revisions were included in the final churchwide plan.

Women's Ministry

The first ministry leader interviewed was the women's ministry director. She is a faithful, daily practitioner of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. If she had to pick one area of improvement it would be in the practice of prayer. The benefits she enjoys as a result of her diligence in the disciplines keep her focused on eternal things, give her a better understanding of God, and improve her relationship with Him. Her fellowship encounters give her encouragement and keep her from "being a hermit."

In this ministry, the importance of reading, understanding, and applying God's Word is consistently instructed and discussed. Inductive Bible study methods are taught, as well as different books of the Bible, alternating between New and Old Testament books. In these classes, fellowship is built into small group discussion and projects. Prayer within each group occurs at the end of every lesson.

Special events in the women's ministry promote fellowship. During these times, special topics from a solid biblical foundation are taught and discussed. Women thoroughly enjoy these events where they have a chance to learn and grow in the Word, and fellowship and pray with other women.

The ministry leader believes one way of improving her teaching of spiritual disciplines would be in the area of Scripture memorization. Her SMART goals are as follows:

1. The ministry leader will teach, and students will practice, at least one method of Scripture memorization in every course.
2. Eighty percent of classes will include Scripture memorization connected to the curriculum.

These activities will be recorded monthly and reported at the meeting with her supervisor (me) on the first Tuesday of every month. She believes this emphasis on hiding God's Word in the heart of the women she teaches will be transformational for them and their families.

Young Adult Ministry

This ministry leader is also diligent in the disciplines. His daily routines involve Bible reading, journaling, and prayer. These personal devotion times set his mind on “what really matters,” “give him life,” and “keep him dependent” on the Lord. His weekly attendance at Sunday service and community group brings him encouragement, reminds him that he is not alone, and allows him to see transformation in other believers’ lives.

In the young adult ministry, various spiritual disciplines are often discussed, and members are challenged to increase their devotion to these disciplines. At the young adult annual retreat, participants earnestly assess their spiritual habits and create specific spiritual goals, including the practice of spiritual disciplines, for the upcoming year.

Because there has not been a method of accountability with the spiritual goals created at the retreat, one SMART goal will address this issue. Many members of this group are not informed about how to structure an effective devotional time so another goal will help students understand how to read, meditate on, and pray the Bible.

1. Three times a year participants will review and discuss with a partner their progress toward meeting their spiritual disciplines’ goals. A plan for improvement of one goal will be created.
2. On March 17, 2022, the Director of Discipleship will teach a class to the young adult group on how to scribe, meditate on, and pray the Scriptures from the “Desiring the Disciplines” handbook.

This ministry leader believes these goals will help develop lifetime habits that will promote spiritual growth in the lives of the young adults in his group. He will be accountable to his supervising pastor for the completion of these goals in the year to come.

Biblical Counseling

I am the leader of this ministry, and the spiritual disciplines are very important to my life as a Christian. Typically, after 30-45 minutes of Bible intake and meditation, a phrase or verse is chosen as the meditation for the day. Using the Scripture and meditation content prayer follows for 10-15 minutes. Throughout the course of the day the Scripture and meditation is remembered, prayed, and applied to life situations. Church and

community group attendance is rarely missed and counseling sessions throughout the week keep the Word fresh in my heart and encourage me daily.

The eighteen counselors in this ministry include Bible intake, prayer, and church and community group attendance as weekly homework for counselees. This emphasis on spiritual disciplines has been fairly intentional and consistent in the counseling room but could be emphasized more.

Because the majority of the counselors took the “Desire the Disciplines” course, the frequency and variety of spiritual discipline instruction and practice should increase in the counseling rooms. The SMART goal for the counseling ministry is as follows:

1. Each counselor will demonstrate, instruct, and assign at least three Bible intake activities, two prayer activities, and the Fellowship Journal activity from the “Desire the Disciplines” handbook to each counselee over the course of their counseling together.
2. Each counselee will be assigned at least one Bible intake activity, prayer activity, and the Fellowship Journal from the handbook for homework at the end of every counseling session.

The implementation of these goals should help increase the counselees’ spiritual maturity and promote a closer relationship with Christ, which will in turn help give them victory over the life issues that brought them to counseling. Counselees will be accountable to me through observations and case reports.

Community Groups

This community group ministry is also under my supervision. Explicit instruction in the spiritual disciplines has been sporadic at best with the twenty community groups leaders at Grace Bible Church. The main focus of instruction has included other areas of discipleship, basic counseling, group facilitation, and the nuts and bolts of managing a small group.

There needs to be more emphasis on modeling, teaching, and practicing the spiritual disciplines during the training portion of the regular leader meetings and during

the meetings of the community groups. These are the SMART goals to help accomplish this increased attention on the disciplines in the church's community groups:

1. At each of the next three leader meetings at least one Bible intake or prayer activity from the *Desire the Disciplines'* handbook will be taught and practiced.
2. Leaders will be encouraged to take a four-week break from regular community group activities to teach spiritual discipline activities to their group members from the *Desire the Disciplines'* handbook.

Accountability for the implementation of these goals will be monitored by the four other community group coaches over the next year. Through these efforts there should be a substantial increase in the practice of the disciplines and the blessings that follow in the community group membership of the church.

Worship

The director of musical worship spends 15-20 minutes every morning reading Scripture and praying from the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*. Another book in the Anglican liturgical repertoire is *Compline* which is a compilation of evening prayers he reads before bed. These Scripture and prayer times bring him closer to the Lord and inspire meditation throughout the day and night. They also give him strength and encouragement. As an elder, he and his wife enjoy close fellowship with the other elders and their wives and make a habit of inviting church members and attenders to their home for dinner two Friday nights a month.

The worship team always prays together before leading worship on Sunday and a devotion from Scripture is occasionally given. Pre-COVID, the entire worship ministry team would meet several nights a year to hear a biblical devotion from the leader, pray together, share a meal, and enjoy fellowship with one another. This has been curtailed the last couple years. To revive the modeling and practice of the disciplines in the worship team these SMART goals will be implemented:

1. The ministry leader will provide a biblical devotion related to one of the songs for the service and pray for the team at least twice a month. When this pattern becomes consistent different team members will be invited to lead the devotional and pray for the team before service.

2. The worship leader will schedule a minimum of two evenings a year for the entire ministry team to gather for Bible intake, prayer, fellowship and the sharing of a meal together.

I will provide accountability for implementing these goals at regular staff meetings. The expectation is that successful completion of these goals will bring a stronger sense of community and serving the Lord together among the team members. They will also develop a deeper understanding of musical worship and how it leads God's people into His presence.

Youth and Children's Ministry

This ministry leader is regular in his practice of the disciplines as well. After getting a freshly brewed cup of coffee early most mornings, he enjoys thirty minutes of Bible intake as well as prayer inspired by his Scripture reading. He also uses a prayer journal to make sure he prays on the same day every week for the individuals and groups for whom he has committed to pray. When this Bible reading, meditation, and prayer is regular, he is more content and grateful to the Lord for all his provision, especially the giving of his Son, Jesus Christ.

In the youth ministry there is biblical teaching and small group discussion focused on application of the teaching every Wednesday night. Once a month is Doctrine and Donuts Night, which focuses on bibliology, studying Scripture, and understanding the importance of being in the Word. There is a strong emphasis on Scripture memorization in children's ministry. Bible verses are set to music with fun songs and hand motions. Sticker charts provide motivation for children to work hard on hiding the Word in their hearts.

Almost 60 percent of youth group attendance are students from outside the body at Grace Bible Church. To more effectively serve youth whose parents attend Grace, the youth ministry leader chose to focus on goals for their spiritual growth. These SMART goals include:

1. Two classes, one for young men, one for women, will be offered in March on Sunday mornings. The curriculum will be the “Desire the Disciplines” course to learn the importance and practice of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship.
2. Starting this Spring in a local coffee shop the ministry leader will keep “office hours” once a week available to youth so they can study the Bible in a small group community.

The expected outcome of these goals will be to equip students with spiritual tools they can use the rest of their life for a closer walk with Jesus. How to study the Bible in community will be demystified and students will learn what to expect when gathering together around the Word. I will provide accountability for these goals at regular staff meeting once a month.

Preaching

The lead pastor directs the ministry of the Word and preaches the sermon most Sunday mornings. Besides his weekly study of the Word for sermon preparation, he reads the Scripture every morning and is doing a “Walk through the Bible” using a chronological system this year. He also spends devotional time every morning with his wife and children. He uses a journal to pray “different prayers on different days.” This ministry leader talks about how his time in prayer, Bible study, and meditation every day reminds him of his dependence on God and the Lord’s love and care in his life. These daily times give him wisdom and help set the direction of his day. “I couldn’t do ministry without it,” he says. Staff members, elders, and their wives provide regular fellowship, encouragement, and accountability for he and his wife.

Expository preaching every Sunday teaches the congregation how to hear and apply the Word of God to their lives. When coming upon the different prayers recorded in the Scriptures, the lead pastor encourages the flock to pray these prayers themselves. To encourage the learning of the foundational doctrines of the faith and deeper understanding and consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines he suggested these SMART goals:

1. At least once a month classes from the Core Discipleship Series will be promoted from the pulpit and attendance will be encouraged for all members and attenders, especially those new to the faith.
2. At least once a month the importance and step-by-step practice of one spiritual discipline activity will be explained from the pulpit. Examples may include different ways to read, meditate on, and pray using the Scripture, and how to intentionally seek and participate in different types of fellowship.

The outcomes of these goals will be the inspiration of the congregation to diligently seek a better understanding of God and his Word, sound theology, and the beauty and blessings of practicing the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. I will provide monthly accountability at staff meetings.

Conclusion

The targeted instruction of the spiritual disciplines in the “Desire the Disciplines” course and the creation of a churchwide plan to emphasize the disciplines in the different ministries of the church have already begun to reap spiritual benefits. Counselors are more consistent in practicing the disciplines and teaching them to those they counsel, and ministry leaders are strategizing and implementing ways to emphasize the instruction and practice of the discipline in their lives and in their areas of ministry.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

The two-fold nature of the project had several desired outcomes, to instruct and encourage the saints at Grace Bible Church of Bend to increase their love for God, the Scriptures, and their brothers and sisters, to grow in sanctification, find victory over sin, and to enjoy healthy Christian relationships. They would do this by learning to regularly practice the basic spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship and to model and teach these disciplines to others.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase Grace Bible Church's capacity to teach and practice select spiritual disciplines for increased spiritual growth of members, especially the counselors and those receiving counseling. In the counselor's course this purpose was accomplished and evidenced by the post-survey using the Assessment of Spiritual Disciplines (ASD) which showed significant improvements in the counselors' practice of spiritual disciplines and their ability and self-assurance in teaching others. Following the training course, an increase in the instruction of spiritual disciplines to counselees was also observed.

The interviews of the leaders of the primary ministries at GBC, the SMART goals we created together, and the accountability routines put into place, prompted leaders to improve their practice of the spiritual disciplines and to integrate the modeling and teaching of the disciplines into their various ministries. This part of the project significantly contributed to the accomplishment of the project's purpose. The success of the project was also verified in the successful completion of the five stated goals.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

Five goals determined the effectiveness of the project. Means of measuring the success of each goal was outlined. The first goal was to assess the church's instruction of the selected spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship in the various ministries of the church. This goal would be considered successful when each of the key ministry leaders had been interviewed and summaries of their interviews were compiled, yielding a clearer picture of the current level of instruction of the disciplines in their individual ministries. Through a series of interview questions an accurate assessment was made of the current level of each leader's individual practice of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship and how they benefit their walk with Christ.¹ I also determined and summarized the different ways they modeled and instructed the disciplines to those affected by their ministries. Through these interview questions and responses,² the goal to assess the instruction of disciplines in the different ministries was met.

Goal 2 was to assess counselors' current knowledge and practice of the selected spiritual disciplines and their capacity to teach these disciplines to their counselees. The goal would be considered successfully met when each counselor completed the survey, and the results were analyzed to gain a clearer perspective on the pre-project status of counselors. Goal 2 was accomplished through the implementation and analysis of the pre-survey called the Assessment of Spiritual Disciplines (ASD) completed by all counselors. Next is a summary of the important pre-survey findings.

The ASD pre-survey revealed some expected results.³ Total scores for each of the 20 questions from all 16 participants were compiled using a six-point Likert scale. Each question's total score on the pre-survey fell in a range from 32-91 points, low scores reflecting poor practices and instruction of the disciplines, higher scores representing better

¹ See appendix 1.

² See chap. 4.

³ See appendix 7.

practices and instruction. Responses to questions 1 (daily Bible reading, 91 points), 9 (church attendance, 93 points), and 10 (community group attendance, 95 points), showed that participants practiced these disciplines the most consistently. This is not surprising as the students invited to take this course were spiritually mature believers and examples for those they counsel and disciple. Regarding the instruction of the disciplines to others (questions 15-20), the highest scores were on questions 19 (75 points) and 20 (76 points), which asked counselors to rate their belief that teaching spiritual disciplines to their counselees was helpful to improve their problems and their walk with God. Though not unexpected, I was encouraged to see both the regular practice of the disciplines by the counselors and their high level of confidence about the importance of teaching the spiritual disciplines to those they counsel and disciple.

I was somewhat surprised that the least consistent practice of the disciplines from the pre-survey was question 4 (32 points) regarding the counselor's regular practice of Scripture memorization. I would have assumed that these mature Christians would value the discipline of Scripture memorization more highly. The lowest result regarding the instruction of the disciplines to others was question 16 (50 points), which was about the frequency of teaching others to pray. This result was not a surprise to me. Unfortunately, the spiritual discipline of prayer seems to be one of the most neglected disciplines regularly practiced by many Christians. The information from these two questions provided good data to inform instruction of the course.

The third goal in the project was to develop curriculum for instructing the counselors to increase in their knowledge of the selected disciplines, improving their own practice of these disciplines, and advancing their ability to instruct these disciplines. This goal was to be measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. The panel members included three Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) who are staff members and directors of biblical counseling ministries at other churches. The goal

was to be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the “sufficient” level. This curriculum, titled “Desire the Disciplines,”⁴ was approved by the expert panel with all three evaluators returning scores exceeding the 90 percent benchmark on all indicators, thus achieving success for goal three.

The “Desire the Disciplines” handbook became the guide for counselors to grow in the understanding and importance of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. Specific activities for these disciplines were outlined in the handbook and were modeled, practiced together, and assigned as homework to students. Charts in the handbook provided accountability for increased practice of these disciplines by participants, and students grew in their understanding and confidence to teach the disciplines to those they counsel and disciple as they practiced these activities and taught them to other students.

Goal 4 was to assess the improvement of the counselors’ knowledge and practice of the selected disciplines and their capacity to instruct these spiritual disciplines after participating in the “Desire the Disciplines” course. This goal would be considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. The ASD post-survey was administered at the end of the course and was compared to the ASD pre-survey data.⁵ The results proved the successful completion of goal 4. The teaching of the practice and instruction of the identified spiritual disciplines to the select group of counselors made a statistically significant difference in their own practice of the disciplines and their capacity and confidence to teach them to those they counsel ($t_{(15)} = 5.72, p < .05$).⁶

⁴ See appendix 5.

⁵ See appendix 8.

⁶ See appendix 9.

Specific data was also revealed in the ASD post-survey regarding the growth of the counselors. By far, the largest improvement in the practice of the disciplines by counselors between the pre-survey and post-survey was Scripture memorization, with a 96.9 percent increase in weekly time spent working on memorizing the Word. This was encouraging because Scripture memorization is one of the most powerful tools for battling the temptation to sin, a benefit to both counselor and counselee. Other areas of significant individual growth included learning to pray a pattern regularly (38.5 percent increase) and developing the habit of praying the Scriptures back to God (51.2 percent increase). Because consistent prayer is often lacking in many Christians lives, I was strongly encouraged by these results. The areas of least improvement in the practice of the disciplines by counselors were in questions 1 (0 percent), 9 (3.2 percent), and 10 (1.1 percent), Bible intake, church attendance, and community group participation. These results were not surprising or discouraging because their pre-survey results were very high to begin with.

According to the ASD post-survey results, the counselors' capacity and confidence to teach these spiritual disciplines to others grew in every area. The largest growth was in their competence to teach prayer (69 percent increase) and fellowship (36.4 percent increase) to their counselees. It was a blessing to see that the instruction of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship at every counseling session increased by 44 percent. The rate of improvement in question 20 (5.3 percent), regarding the confidence of counselors' belief that the instruction of the disciplines helps counselees with their problems, did not grow as much as I had expected. I hope that as a result of this course counselors will increase their instruction of the disciplines to those they counsel and gain more confidence in the value of instructing these disciplines to others to help not only with general sanctification, but also with the issues of life.

Overall, the average improvement in questions 1-14, which were related to the individual practice of the spiritual disciplines by counselors, increased by 22.3 percent. The average improvement of the ability to teach spiritual disciplines to those they counsel

increased to 33.4 percent. The relationship between these two components of the survey was not only a confirmation of the successful completion of goal 4, but also an affirmation of the primary goal of the spiritual disciplines course, which was to increase GBC’s capacity to teach and practice select spiritual disciplines for increased spiritual growth of members, especially the counselors and those receiving counseling. The significant increase in the individual practice of the disciplines by counselors and their improved capacity and confidence to teach the disciplines to others will be a great blessing to those receiving counseling and discipleship at Grace Bible Church.

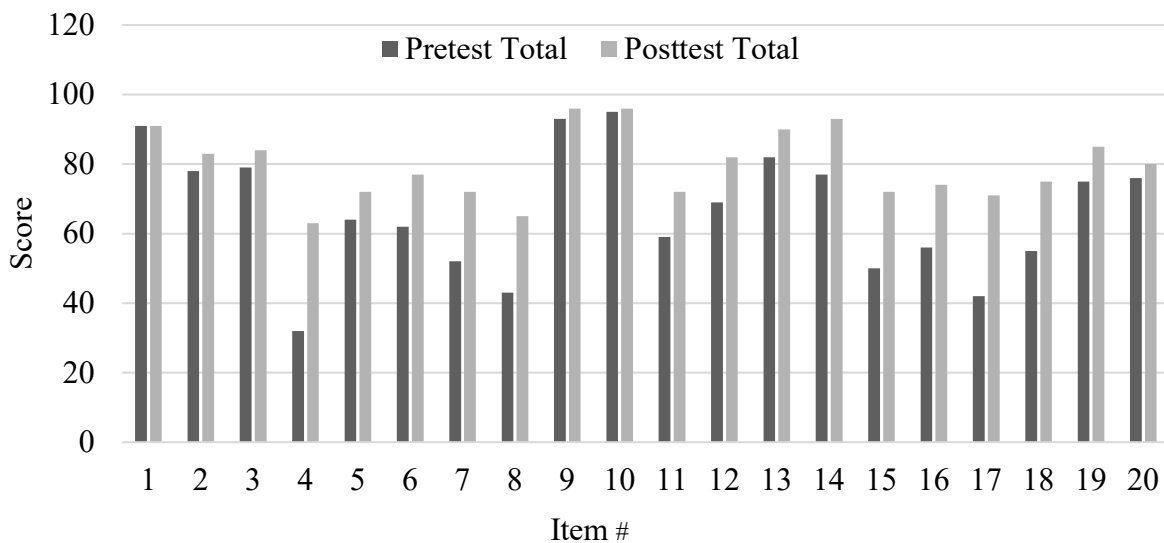


Figure 1. ASD pre-and post-survey scores

The fifth goal was to create a ministry plan to improve the instruction and practice of the selected spiritual disciplines in the different ministries in the church. The goal would be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the “sufficient” level as determined by three elders at church. After meeting with the individual leaders of these ministries and assessing the current levels of their practice of the disciplines and the current degree of modeling and instruction of the disciplines in their ministries, a ministry plan containing two SMART

goals personalized for each leader was created.⁷ Each of these individual SMART goals was designed to increase their modeling and instruction of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship within their individual ministries and included an accountability system to encourage effective implementation and continuity of spiritual discipline instruction. This fifth and final goal was completed successfully by the endorsement of a panel of three pastors/elders at GBC who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, provision of resources, and action steps.⁸ All three elders determined that the plan exceeded the 90 percent benchmark for meeting or exceeding the “sufficient” level for all rubric evaluation indicators.

Project Strengths

A primary strength of the project was including both a course to effectively teach counselors how to instruct others in the practice of spiritual disciplines, and a churchwide plan to promote the instruction of the disciplines by key ministry leaders, which effectively served as a “pre-counseling” effort to reduce the need for formal counseling.

Strengths of the counselors’ course included a step-by-step experiential system of learning Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship activities. This methodology of instruction included teaching, modeling, cooperative learning, and individual practice, sometimes referred to as the Gradual Release of Responsibility Method. I spent a short time in every class introducing and explaining one of the disciplines and its benefits and then model one of the several spiritual discipline activities, often using a whiteboard and referring to the handbook. The students would then do an activity together followed by another opportunity to learn and practice the activity in small groups or partners. Finally, the students would practice the activity as homework. At the beginning of the next class

⁷ See appendix 6.

⁸ See appendix 4.

students shared their examples with partners for encouragement and constructive feedback. This system of active learning gave the students both information and opportunities to practice the skills involved with each activity. They also practiced the cooperative social skills needed to effectively teach and counsel others. By the end of the course, each student had learned and practiced seven different spiritual discipline activities that both enriched their life and gave them confidence to teach the skills to others.

The “Desire the Disciplines” handbook provided information, instruction, and diagrams about how to learn and practice the disciplines and effectively teach them to others. The examples for each of the activities made the activities easy to understand and complete. The handbook was a great resource in class, for homework assignments, and for the future instruction of others in the spiritual disciplines.

Another strength of the class was the close relationships among participants that existed before the class began and that grew even closer as the course continued. Through the cooperative activities students shared and discussed important personal and spiritual issues in their lives. They also learned to better work as a partner and as part of a team, and to listen attentively and ask good questions, all of which are important social skills. Having been in leadership at the church for the last nine years, these were people I considered friends and with whom I enjoyed teaching and spending time. The students were made up largely from the counseling team that often spends time together in training and team counseling. These close relationships provided for a relaxed and productive learning community.

The interviews with ministries leaders about their personal practices of spiritual disciplines and their instruction and modeling of spiritual disciplines to those in their ministry sphere produced thoughtful reflection and conversation. The result was specific goals for improvement in these areas and accountability for implementation of these goals. These were significant strengths toward the creation of a ministry plan to promote the practice and instruction of spiritual disciplines at Grace Bible Church.

The strengths of the ministry plan and spiritual disciplines course combined to effectively encourage the increase the practice of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship by the congregants of GBC, especially among those who counsel and disciple others and those who receive counseling and discipleship.

Project Weaknesses

Weaknesses of the project included some confusion over a delayed start to the spiritual disciplines course, an inaccurate assessment of the time needed to most effectively teach the curriculum, and the lack of a more thorough method of assessing the students' reflections on the course.

The increased rate of COVID-19 infections in the fall of 2021 prompted a delay of the course from October to January. Though active, engaging cooperative learning is quite possible in an online environment, I was convinced some of the effectiveness of the course would be lost by meeting on a virtual instructional platform. I made the last-minute decision to postpone the class and meet in-person after the New Year, hoping COVID-19 cases would be on the decline, which fortunately they were. Because the course was announced for the fall, it may have caused some misunderstandings and challenges among those considering attendance on the earlier date.

Because the counseling team is always busy, especially these last couple years, I wanted to complete the instruction in four long classes of 90-120 minutes each, instead of five or six shorter classes. I realized toward the end of the course that students were eager to attend each class and that more classes with shorter meeting times would likely have had more impact on student learning than the shorter, longer classes. Even though the total time in classes would not have changed, students would have had more time to process and practice the activities learned over a six-week period, instead of just four weeks. This would likely have led to even deeper understanding of the material, better long-term retention, and increased capacity to practice and teach the activities to others.

The course provided many opportunities for reflection on learning in pairs, small groups, and during whole class discussions. Students were specific and positive about the content and pedagogy of instruction during these times but a more formal means of surveying feedback following the course would have provided additional important information, especially for the improvement of future classes. I will not neglect to implement this important component in upcoming courses.

Theological Reflections

I have been struck afresh that living the Christian life is simple but not easy. That must be why they call these spiritual habits “disciplines.” Though every good effort of the Christian is prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit, believers must cooperate in His plan to please Him and love others. They must work out their salvation with fear and trembling, all the time trusting God who works in them for His good pleasure (Phil 2:12-13). Believers in Christ can also be encouraged by remembering that there is great blessing in obedience (1 Sam 15:22).

I saw this theology of faith, works, and blessings throughout the course of this project. Ministry leaders got excited considering creative ways to bring the spiritual disciplines into their own areas of ministry knowing from experience the benefits their ministry members would receive by practicing the disciplines faithfully. Benefits that include the blessings of an increased awareness of God’s presence, a clean conscience, power for righteous living, and supernatural joy and peace.

Counselors in the course on spiritual disciplines worked hard memorizing, scribing, journaling, and studying the Scripture only to be refreshed and encouraged. They found themselves closer to God as they practiced praying biblical patterns and the Scriptures themselves back to God. They enjoyed more fully the fellowship of other believers as they intentionally sought to gather together in the name of the Lord. They are excited to more faithfully teach the disciplines and their benefits to those that need them

most. The counseling team has already seen these blessings experienced by counsees in the ministry with the increased focus on the instruction of the spiritual disciplines.

Personal Reflections

This project is the result of some serious concerns I developed over fourteen years of biblical counseling. I was concerned that counselors have been so focused on “fixing” peoples life issues that they have not given enough attention to their general discipleship and sanctification; understanding and applying the gospel to their lives and abiding in Christ by learning to effectively practice the spiritual disciplines. I saw again and again that combining counsel on specific issues with instruction of the disciplines helps counsees overcome their problems and become more like Jesus. I was also concerned that a large percentage of those seeking counseling were either unbelievers, poorly taught Christians, or saints quenching the Spirit through serious sin. They were coming to counseling with limited understanding of the gospel and the Scriptures and a host of problems from not walking with the Savior by His Spirit.

Biblical counselors have to work on the issues and hurts that people bring when they meet with them. Competent counselors biblically frame these issues, help them see the idolatries that hinder them from true worship of the Savior, and teach them to put off their sin, renew their mind, and put on Christ. Scripture has much to say about every life issue and part of a counselor’s mission is helping them find freedom from life dominating sin, relational crisis, depression, anxiety, addiction, and other difficulties through the understanding and application of Scripture and the power of the Spirit. This process is helped tremendously by also teaching them to understand and practice spiritual disciplines in a holistic fashion, not just in relation to their issues, but also to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18); in other words, basic discipleship.

When a counselee has been effectively taught and has learned to practice Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, they overcome their issues faster, grow in grace, and become vital members of the local body. They then learn to serve and disciple others in

the process. Some of the most skilled and gifted counselors in our ministry were once counselees themselves in the counseling ministry at Grace.

When a counselee shows little interest or love for God’s Word, prayer, or Christian fellowship, then I know it is time to challenge them about their salvation and make a clear presentation of the gospel with an invitation to receive Christ. I am concerned that there are too many “cultural Christians” in churches that are not really Christians at all. This is why counselors sometimes have the joy of seeing people become truly regenerate during the counseling process as they encounter Christ through the Word and a loving biblical counselor who walks beside them instructing them in the way of the faith. This is another reason to emphasize spiritual disciplines in counseling practice.

Though I have been championing the explicit teaching of the disciplines in church and through biblical counseling for some time, it a joy to develop a ministry plan and a course and handbook for counselors to become better equipped to effectively guide counselees in the practice of the disciplines. It has been a pleasure and privilege to implement this project, see the excitement and growth of counselors and ministry leaders, and already be able see the fruit that is being produced as a result.

Conclusion

One wonderful outcome of the project came about two weeks after its completion when a counselor shared a journal entry with me from one of her counselees. The journal entry included thoughtful responses and applications from Psalm 1 and a beautiful diagram of a tree planted next to a river soaking up its water and nutrients causing the tree to bloom.⁹ This was evidence to me that the project had been beneficial to both counselor and counselee.

May the Lord continue to increase the capacity of the counselors, ministry leaders, and members at Grace Bible Church in practicing, modeling, and instructing the

⁹ See appendix 10.

disciplines for the benefit of the saints at Grace and those in the Central Oregon community, now and for eternity.

APPENDIX 1
MINISTRY LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Ministry Leader _____

1. Three important spiritual disciplines are Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. How are each of these beneficial in your Christian walk? In what ways?

2. Are you a good example of a Christian who practices these disciplines well? Which ones do you practice regularly? Where could you improve?

3. Do you teach or talk about each of these three spiritual disciplines with the members in your ministry? What does that look like? How often does it happen?

4. Do you think it could be valuable to emphasize the practice of the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship more regularly with the members in your ministry? If not, why not? If so, then in what ways? How might you be more intentional in encouraging your members in these disciplines?

5. How would increasing the practices of these disciplines by the participants in your particular ministry benefit them individually and your ministry as a whole?

APPENDIX 2

ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES PRACTICED BY COUNSELORS

Directions: Please mark your response using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I read the Bible daily. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. When I read the Bible, I think deeply about what I'm reading. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. When I read the Bible, I consider how to apply what I'm learning to my life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I spend time every week memorizing Scripture verses or passages. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I schedule time to pray daily. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. I pray at least 3 or 4 times throughout the day. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I pray using a specific pattern at least once a week. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I pray the Scriptures back to God at least once a week. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I go to church every Sunday. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I go to community group most weeks. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I participate in a small discipleship group with people of the same gender as myself at least once a month. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I do Bible study or prayer with my family at least once a week. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. Overall, I am consistent in practicing the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 14. I have received training in the spiritual disciplines. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. I teach the spiritual disciplines to those I counsel or disciple at every meeting. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. I competently teach the spiritual discipline of Bible intake to those I counsel or disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. I competently teach the spiritual discipline of prayer to those I counsel or disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I competently teach the spiritual discipline of fellowship to those I counsel or disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. Teaching the spiritual disciplines to those I counsel or disciple helps them improve their walk with God. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. Teaching the spiritual disciplines to those I counsel or disciple helps them solve their problems. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 3

EVALUATION OF COUNSELOR
TRAINING CURRICULUM

Counseling Training Curriculum Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
Curriculum content is biblically and theologically sound.					
Christ is central in the instruction and applications.					
Scope and Sequence					
The course content sufficiently covers all essential instruction.					
The lessons progress in a logical, sequential manner.					
Teaching Methodology					
Teaching is engaging using a variety of instructional strategies.					
Formative assessments are used to inform instruction.					
Practicality					
Learning will be transferable to counseling contexts.					
The content and delivery are designed to increase understanding, confidence and success.					

APPENDIX 4

EVALUATION OF MINISTRY PLAN

Ministry Plan Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Functionality					
The plan makes sense.					
The plan is easy to follow.					
Communication Processes					
Regular communication strategies are part of the plan.					
Meetings are timely and support accountability and creativity.					
Training Elements					
Essential training is articulated and scheduled.					
Needed resources are provided.					
Action Steps					
The plan progresses in a logical, productive manner.					
Steps and Goals for success are articulated and measurable.					

APPENDIX 5

“DESIRE THE DISCIPLINES” HANDBOOK

The handbook in this appendix is the primary written curriculum for the course titled, “Desire the Disciplines.” This material was taught to biblical counselors at GBC as part of this project. The handbook includes a biblical rationale for the importance of practicing and teaching the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, as well as step-by-step instructions to learn seven key spiritual discipline activities. This course aimed to increase the practice of the spiritual disciplines by the counselors and increase their capacity to teach these disciplines to those they counsel.

Desire the Disciplines!

(A Handbook for Spiritual Growth)



Dear Christian,

Would you like to enjoy a life of blessing and peace? Experience the presence of God in a wonderful way? Find power for righteous living? Have victory over sin and the difficult issues of life? Enjoy loving relationships with your brothers and sisters in the faith?

Desire the Disciplines!

The spiritual disciplines are not means by which we earn God's favor but rather an opportunity to practice obedience and enjoy his blessings. Though there are several other important spiritual disciplines, learning and practicing the foundational disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians will help provide these wonderful blessings and produce the fruits of the Spirit in your life; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

In this booklet you'll find instruction and activities to help you grow in God's love and truth by practicing these spiritual disciplines. I recommend you find a good spiritual friend, mentor, or counselor to help you walk through this journey. They will encourage you and provide accountability for your growth and change.

Like any new skill it takes hard work and regular practice. But if you persevere in your faith and effort God will increase your love for these spiritual disciplines, provide the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11), and help you grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Pet 3:18).

This is my prayer for you. So grab a friend, a notebook, and a Bible and get started!

Sincerely,

David Robinson

David Robinson

Spiritual Discipline #1: Bible Intake

The spiritual discipline of Bible Intake is perhaps the most important discipline of all. There are many benefits of practicing Bible intake:

1. It is food for the soul (Matt 4:4).
2. We understand everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3).
3. The path of our life is illuminated (Psalm 119:105).
4. It keeps us from sin (Psalm 119: 9-11).
5. It teaches, reproves, corrects, and trains us in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).
6. Prosperity and success are the results (Joshua 1:8).

Bible Intake Activity #1: Journal the Bible

Writing responses to our Bible reading helps us reflect thoughtfully (meditate) on the truths and commands of Scripture. Think in terms of three different types of responses:



Light Bulbs: Things that strike you as interesting or important



Question Marks: Things you want to understand or know more about



Arrows: Things that apply to your heart and life

Instructions:

1. Read a short section of Scripture several times.
2. Record at least one “Light Bulb” in your notebook.
3. Record at least one “Question Mark.”
4. Record at least one “Arrow.”

Bible Intake Activity #2: Memorize the Bible

Memorizing Scripture is another means of meditation to help the Bible penetrate our hearts and minds. It is especially important in times of temptation or trial to have God's Word stored in our heart. Repeated reading of a verse or verses is necessary to be able to commit it to memory and recall it when needed.

Instructions:

- Write the verse(s) you will memorize in your notebook. Read it out-loud 3 times.

Ex. I have stored up your word in my heart, that I may not sin against you (Psalm 119:11)

- Write the verse again but leave out 3-5 words. Read it 3 times filling in the missing words by memory.

Ex. I have stored __ your word __ my heart, ____ I may __ sin against you.

- Write the verse leaving out 3-5 additional words. Read it 3 times filling in the missing words by memory.

Ex. I ____ stored __ your _____ __ my _____, ____ I ____ sin _____ you.

- Without looking at the verse, repeat it by memory 3 times.
- Write the verse on a card and review it and recite from memory every day this week.

Bible Intake Activity #3: Study the Bible:

We must study the Bible to better understand what it says (observation), what it means (interpretation), and how it should affect our lives (application). This method, called inductive Bible study, will help us rightly handle the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15).

Instructions (Observation):

1. Choose a section of the Bible to study (about 4-10 verses in length)
2. Write out the Scripture passage on the left pages of your notebook
3. Circle 8-12 words that seem important
4. Record any contrasts you see (two things that differ)
5. Record any comparisons (two things that are similar)
6. Record any lists of items in the passage
7. Record any cause-and-effect relationships
8. Note any words that need clearer definition (look them up in a dictionary)

Instructions (Interpretation):

Answer these questions in your notebook:

- What is the literary form (historical, prophetic, didactic (instructive), poetic)?
- What is the main point of this portion of Scripture?
- Why do you think the audience to whom it was written needed to hear it?
- How do the verses before and after this section help explain the meaning?
- How do other passages in Scripture help explain the meaning of this section?
- What doesn't this passage mean (what are potentially wrong interpretations)?
- What do the verses teach us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

Instructions (Application)

Answer these questions in your notebook:

- Why do we need to hear this portion of Scripture?
- To what circumstance of your life does it speak?
- How will it positively change your head (thinking), heart (attitude) and hands (actions)?

Bible Intake Activity #4: Chart Your Progress

It’s vital to learn the habit of daily Bible intake and prayer. Many people find the first thing in the morning the best time to read, meditate, memorize, and study God’s Word in preparation of the coming day. We must take up daily the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to do battle in this fallen world (Eph 6:17).

It’s best to have a Bible reading plan so you will know what to read every morning. Reading through the Bible in a year or reading the same book of the Bible repeatedly for a month are good ideas for your Bible reading time.

Instructions:

Draw a blank copy of the monthly chart below in your notebook.

1. Read, meditate, study, and/or memorize the Bible at the same time every day.
2. Spend time in prayer (see “Spiritual Discipline #2” on the next page).
3. Every day you spend at least 20-30 minutes in the Scriptures and in prayer, put an ‘X’ in the chart.
4. Try and increase your Bible times every week this month. Example:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	X		X	X		
X		X		X		X
X	X		X		X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Spiritual Discipline #2: Prayer

The fundamental spiritual discipline of prayer is a wonderful privilege for the believer. Prayer is simply talking to God. There are many benefits of practicing prayer:

1. We enjoy the privilege of praise and adoration for who he is (Psalm 29:2).
2. It draws us into a more intimate relationship with God (Jer 33:3).
3. We are conformed more into the image of Christ (John 17:16-17).
4. God is brought into the details of our life which comforts our soul (2 Cor 1:3).
5. We can confess sin and receive forgiveness (Psalm 51:1-2).
6. We give thanks and remember his many blessings (Psalm 9:1).
7. We can cast our anxiety on him remembering that he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).
8. Knowing God hears us, we can ask for what we need (Luke 11:9-13).

Prayer Activity #1: ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication)

It is often helpful to pray according to a pattern. When we pray a pattern, it brings balance to our prayer life. Instead of simply giving our grocery list of requests to God, we also must worship him, confess sin, give thanks, and then ask for what we need.

Instructions:

Write out a prayer in your journal that follows the ACTS pattern. Here's an example:

1. **A**doration: *Praise to you Father, for you are full of grace and forgiveness.*
2. **C**onfession: *I'm so sorry Lord for the angry words that I used towards my spouse last night.*
3. **T**hanksgiving: *Thank you for cleansing me through the shed blood of your Son.*
4. **S**upplication: *Give me a heart of gentleness and kindness towards my spouse. Amen.*

Prayer Activity #2: The Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13)

The Lord's prayer is a pattern of prayer given to us by Jesus himself. Personalize the Lord's Prayer by writing it in your own words. Here's an example:

1. Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name (v. 9, God's glory): *Thank you Lord, that you are my father, and I am your child. Because you are holy and perfect and are the king of heaven and earth, I give you praise and honor and adoration.*
2. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (v. 10, God's purpose): *Come quickly Father. This world is a mess, and I want you to reign in righteousness, truth, and love here on earth as well as heaven. Until that day, let your will rule in my heart as you lead me through this evil world.*
3. Give us this day our daily bread... (v. 11, God's provision): *Please give me what I need to live another day. With my physical needs, give me grace and strength to love and honor you and love my neighbor as myself. Thank you, Lord, that you give me all that I really need every day.*
4. ... and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (v. 12, Godly relationships): *I'm such a rotten sinner, Lord. Thank you for providing forgiveness through your son. Help me to remember what your son you did for me on the cross, so I will be faithful to forgive others.*
5. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil (v. 13, God's sanctifying): *Father, guard my heart and mind today to recognize and avoid sinful thoughts and behavior. Help me lay down my idols and worship you in joy and freedom. Amen.*

Prayer Activity #3: Praying the Bible

Besides the Lord's Prayer, we can pray all of Scripture. Psalms are especially good for composing your own prayers from the Bible.

Instructions:

1. Choose a meaningful portion of Scripture from your devotional time this morning.
2. Meditate on the verses you chose.
3. Using the content of the passage and your meditations, write out a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication. Here's an example:

The Scripture: 1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus... (Phil 2:1-5)

Meditations and Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for the encouragement that is in Christ, and for allowing me to participate with your Spirit. Thank you for loving me so much and sympathizing with my condition. Help me to know and extend to others your comfort, fellowship, love and care in a special way today (vs. 1).*

Encourage me to love my brothers and sisters as myself so we may enjoy sweet fellowship together. Thank you for the unity and harmony that results (vs. 2).

Lord, guard me from selfishness and pride. Help me display love for others and lead me to seek that which will benefit them, not myself. Thank you, Father, that you give us the mind and example of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen (vs. 3-5).

Spiritual Discipline #3: Fellowship

The spiritual discipline of fellowship is vital to a Christian's spiritual growth. Fellowship is the friendship and oneness that Christians enjoy with each other and with Christ when they meet together and practice the "one-anothers" in Scripture. Fellowship opportunities include congregational worship, home groups, small discipleship groups (2-5 people), and friendships with other believers. There are many benefits of practicing fellowship:

1. We build one another up in the faith (1 Thess 5:11).
2. There is the giving and receiving of encouragement (Heb 10:25).
3. There is a rich reward in working together (Eccl 4:9-10).
4. We sharpen one another (Prov 27:17).
5. Love and good works are prompted in our lives (Heb 10:24).
6. We bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2).
7. Our practical needs are met (Acts 2:44-45)
8. We give and receive good counsel (Rom 15:14)

Fellowship Activity #1: Fellowship Journal

Journaling is a discipline that can help us to record, reflect, evaluate, and meditate upon our spiritual activities with others (fellowship).

Instructions:

- Draw in your journal a blank copy the chart below.
- Each week record one of each type of fellowship opportunity (church [CH], home group [HG]), small discipleship group [SDG], and an encounter with a Christian friend [CF].

- Fill in the date, type of fellowship opportunity, one topic/truth/activity, at least one take-away (light bulb, question mark, or arrow), and at least one benefit of the experience. See four examples below:

Fellowship Journal

Date:	Fellowship type:	One topic, truth or activity:	Take-aways (light bulbs, question marks, and arrows):
10/10/21	CH	The church is a body and I am a member of the body.	It caused me to consider my gifting and how it's used in the church. It also helped me consider other ways I could serve the body.
10/10/21	HG	We all shared celebrations and challenges using a "community circle" discussion protocol.	I felt a strong sense of support and encouragement from my home group members. Felt like some of the weight of my burdens were lifted.
10/13	SDG	We shared the daily personal Bible passages we are reading and our meditations about them.	It was good for instruction, encouragement, and accountability to share about Bible passages we each are reading.
10/14/21	CF	A good Christian friend called to tell me about a blessing he received in the midst of a very difficult trial.	I wondered if there was anyone else he would have felt comfortable calling if I wasn't there? So glad I was available.

Conclusion: Reflection Questions

Instructions:

1. Take some time to reflect on each question.
2. Write a thoughtful response to each question in your notebook.

Reflection Questions:

Article I. In what ways did the Bible intake activities increase my understanding of God and myself? How did they change my heart and behavior? How did these practices improve my relationship with God?

Article II. In what ways did the prayer activities draw me closer to God, calm my fears, and bring joy and peace to my heart? How did they cause me to pray more than before?

Article III. In what ways did the fellowship activities help me give and receive love and encouragement? How did they provoke me to love and good deeds? How did they encourage me to seek more fellowship opportunities?

APPENDIX 6

MINISTRY PLAN SMART GOALS

Women's Ministry

1. The ministry leader will teach, and students will practice, at least one method of Scripture memorization in every course.
2. Eighty percent of classes will include Scripture memorization connected to the curriculum.

Young Adults

1. Three times a year participants will review and discuss with a partner their progress toward meeting their spiritual disciplines' goals. A plan for improvement of one goal will be created.
2. On March 17, 2022, the Director of Discipleship will teach a class to the young adult group on how to scribe, meditate on, and pray the Scriptures from the "Desiring the Disciplines" handbook.

Biblical Counseling

1. Each counselor will demonstrate, instruct, and assign at least three Bible intake activities, two prayer activities, and the Fellowship Journal activity from the "Desire the Disciplines" handbook to each counselee over the course of their counseling together.
2. Each counselee will be assigned at least one Bible intake activity, prayer activity, and the Fellowship Journal from the handbook for homework at the end of every counseling session.

Community Groups

1. At each of the next three leader meetings at least one Bible intake or prayer activity from the Desire the Disciplines' handbook will be taught and practiced.
2. Leaders will be encouraged to take a four-week break from regular community group activities to teach spiritual discipline activities to their group members from the Desire the Disciplines' handbook.

Worship

1. The ministry leader will provide a biblical devotion related to one of the songs for the service and pray for the team at least twice a month. When this pattern becomes consistent different team members will be invited to lead the devotional and pray for the team before service.
2. The worship leader will schedule a minimum of two evenings a year for the entire ministry team to gather for bible intake, prayer, fellowship and the sharing of a meal together.

Youth and Children

1. Two classes, one for young men, one for women, will be offered in March on Sunday mornings. The curriculum will be the “Desire the Disciplines” course to learn the importance and practice of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship.
2. Starting this Spring in a local coffee shop the ministry leader will keep “office hours” once a week available to youth so they can study the Bible in a small group community.

Preaching

1. At least once a month classes from the Core Discipleship Series will be promoted from the pulpit and attendance will be encouraged for all members and attenders, especially those new to the faith.
2. At least once a month the importance and step-by-step practice of one spiritual discipline activity will be explained from the pulpit. Examples may include different ways to read, meditate on, and pray using the Scripture, and how to intentionally seek and participate in different types of fellowship.

APPENDIX 7
ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
PRE-TEST DATA

Table A1. Pre-test results, questions 1-7

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
1	6	6	6	2	5	4	1
2	5	4	6	2	2	3	4
3	6	3	3	1	2	1	3
4	6	4	4	2	2	3	2
5	6	5	5	2	5	6	3
6	6	4	4	2	6	4	5
7	6	6	6	1	4	3	1
8	6	6	6	2	3	2	4
9	5	6	5	6	3	2	1
10	5	4	4	3	2	3	3
11	6	6	6	1	4	6	1
12	6	5	5	2	4	6	5
13	4	3	4	1	6	3	5
14	6	5	6	2	4	5	4
15	6	5	4	1	6	6	4
16	6	6	5	2	6	5	6
Pretest Total	91	78	79	32	64	62	52

Table A2. Pre-test results, questions 8-14

Participant	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14
1	3	6	6	4	2	5	4
2	1	6	6	6	5	5	5
3	1	5	5	1	1	5	4
4	3	6	6	6	3	5	5
5	3	6	6	1	6	6	5
6	1	6	6	1	4	4	4
7	1	6	6	6	6	5	6
8	4	6	6	6	6	5	5
9	5	6	6	5	5	5	5
10	3	6	6	2	3	4	4
11	6	6	6	2	1	6	6
12	2	4	6	6	5	5	5
13	2	6	6	2	4	5	3
14	5	6	6	6	6	6	5
15	1	6	6	2	6	5	5
16	2	6	6	3	6	6	6
Pretest Total	43	93	95	59	69	82	77

Table A3. Pre-test results, questions 15-20

Participant	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	PRE-TEST TOTAL
1	2	4	2	3	6	6	83
2	4	3	3	5	6	4	85
3	2	5	2	5	6	6	67
4	3	5	2	4	4	4	79
5	3	1	1	2	1	2	75
6	2	3	2	3	6	6	79
7	5	5	2	5	6	5	91
8	4	4	4	4	5	5	93
9	3	2	2	3	5	5	85
10	3	3	3	3	3	4	71
11	1	1	1	1	6	6	79
12	5	5	5	2	6	6	95
13	4	4	2	4	3	4	75
14	6	6	6	6	5	6	107
15	1	1	1	1	1	1	69
16	2	4	4	4	6	6	97
Pretest Total	50	56	42	55	75	76	

APPENDIX 8
ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
POST-TEST DATA

Table A4. Post-test results, questions 1-7

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
1	6	6	6	5	6	5	6
2	6	6	6	2	1	4	2
3	6	5	5	4	4	4	4
4	5	5	4	6	5	5	4
5	6	5	4	2	2	6	2
6	6	5	5	4	6	5	6
7	6	5	6	5	5	5	6
8	6	5	6	4	5	6	4
9	5	6	5	6	4	4	3
10	5	4	4	3	2	1	2
11	6	6	6	3	4	6	4
12	5	5	6	5	6	6	6
13	5	5	5	3	5	3	6
14	6	5	5	2	5	5	5
15	6	5	6	4	6	6	6
16	6	5	5	5	6	6	6
Post-test Total	91	83	84	63	72	77	72

Table A5. Post-test results, questions 8-14

Participant	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14
1	6	6	6	5	6	6	6
2	2	6	6	6	5	5	6
3	4	6	6	1	4	6	6
4	4	6	6	6	3	6	6
5	3	6	6	1	4	5	5
6	3	6	6	1	6	5	6
7	2	6	6	6	5	6	6
8	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
9	6	6	6	5	5	5	6
10	2	6	6	3	4	4	4
11	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
12	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
13	3	6	6	4	6	6	6
14	4	6	6	6	5	6	6
15	5	6	6	4	6	6	6
16	5	6	6	6	5	6	6
Post-test Total	65	96	96	72	82	90	93

Table A6. Post-test results, questions 15-20

Participant	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	POSTTEST TOTAL
1	5	5	5	5	6	6	108
2	6	5	5	6	6	5	92
3	4	5	5	5	5	5	90
4	4	5	4	4	5	4	92
5	3	2	2	2	2	2	64
6	4	5	5	5	6	6	96
7	4	4	2	6	6	5	97
8	4	5	5	5	5	5	100
9	5	5	5	5	6	6	100
10	3	4	4	4	4	3	71
11	5	5	5	3	6	6	101
12	6	6	6	6	6	6	110
13	4	4	4	4	6	6	94
14	5	5	5	6	6	5	99
15	5	4	4	4	4	4	97
16	5	5	5	5	6	6	105
Post-test Total	72	74	71	75	85	80	

APPENDIX 9

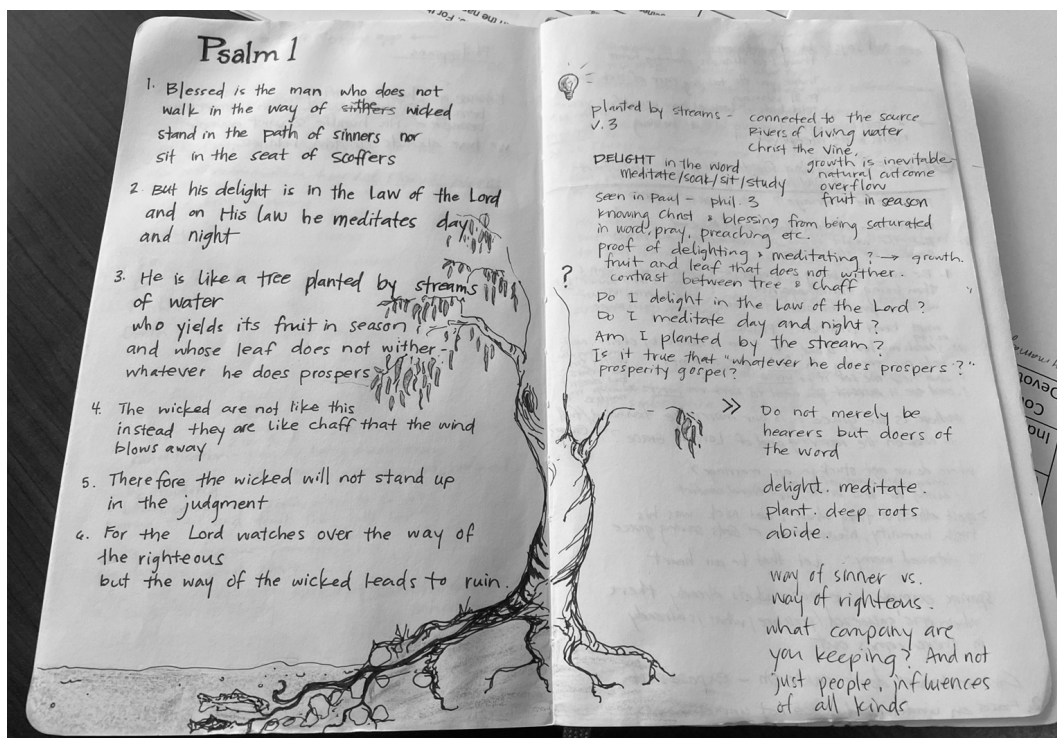
T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS

Table A7. T-test: paired two sample for means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	83.125	99.5625
Variance	123.9833333	161.8625
Observations	16	16
Pearson Correlation	0.542545526	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	15	
t Stat	-5.72000501	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.02782E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.753050356	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00004	
t Critical two-tail	2.131449546	

APPENDIX 10

COUNSELEE'S JOURNAL ENTRY OF PSALM 1



APPENDIX 11

THE 4 GS

A Framework for Counseling and Discipleship

- A. Identify the principles of the passage (homework)
- B. Summarize the principles together (meeting)
- C. Apply the principles (homework)

1. **Glorify God** (*Mark 12:30,31*)
 - a. Believe the Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-7)
 - b. Love God
 - i. Bible intake (John 15:1-11)
 - ii. Prayer (Matt 6:5-14)
 - c. Love your neighbor
 - i. Fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)
 - ii. Godly communication (Eph 4:25-32)
2. **Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye** (Matt 7:3-5)
 - a. Identify, repent and confess your sin (Psalm 51, Luke 19:1-10, 7 A's)
 - b. Forgive others (Matt 18:21-35, 3 Promises of Forgiveness)
 - c. Identify Idolatry (1 John 2:15-17, Jas 4:1-10)
 - i. Put off/Put on (Eph 4:22-24)
 - ii. Battle Card (activity)
 - iii. Practice true worship (Isa 55:1-9)
3. **Gently Restore** (*Gal 6:1*)
 - a. Plan a private, loving conversation (Matt 18:15-20)
 - b. Listening skills: 3-2-1 activity / 3 Question rule
 - c. PAUSE Principle
4. **Go and Be Reconciled** (*Matt 7:12*)
 - a. Agree to disagree (Rom 14:13-19)
 - b. Overlook an offense (Prov 19:11)
 - c. Live peaceably with all (Rom 12:14-21)

Adapted from Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Restoring Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

APPENDIX 12

COUNSELING SESSION TEMPLATES

The First Session (Gather data, Build involvement, Offer hope, Gain commitment)

1. General introductions and prayer
2. Short life-stories (Counselor first, 7-8 minutes each)
 - family of origin (birth order)
 - childhood
 - education
 - Christian conversion
 - career
 - marriage and children
 - church attendance
 - hobbies
3. Biblical Counseling explanation
 - Bible-based (1 Thess 5:14)
 - homework (2-3 hours weekly)
 - number of sessions (8-15) and length of sessions (1 hour)
 - session agendas (review homework, teaching/discussion, new homework, prayer)
 - goals (victory over sin, restored relationships, sanctification, etc.)
4. Go over the “Consent to Biblical Counseling” form together. Sign.
5. Briefly discuss the main issues for seeking counseling (Gather data).
6. Assign homework.
7. Schedule next session.
8. Pray.

Succeeding Sessions

1. Check-in (How are you? What’s new? Any recent crisis?).
2. Pray.
3. Review and discuss homework.
 - What did you learn?
 - How will you apply this to your life?
4. Teaching (Bible-based instruction and discussion about their issues and sanctification)
5. Assign homework.
6. Schedule next session.
7. Pray.

Between Sessions

1. Pray for counselee(s).
2. Review data.
3. Develop next session's teaching and homework.

APPENDIX 13

CONSENT TO COUNSEL



Consent to Biblical Counseling Grace Bible Church

Our Goal- Our goal in providing biblical counseling is to help you meet the challenges of life in a way that will please and honor the Lord Jesus Christ and allow you to fully enjoy His love for you and His plans for your life.

Biblical Basis- We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life. (II Peter 1:3 and Romans 15:4) Therefore, our counseling is based solely on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry.

Not Professional Advice- Although some of the pastoral or lay counselors of this church may be licensed in other fields, such as medicine or psychology, they do not practice as professional doctors, psychologists or psychiatrists in their role as Grace Bible Church Biblical counselors. In this role, they do not provide the same kind of professional advice and services that they do when they are hired in their professional capacities. Therefore, if you have significant legal, financial, medical or other technical questions, you should seek advice from independent professionals. Our pastoral and lay counselors will be happy to cooperate with such advisers and help you to consider their counsel in the light of relevant biblical principles. By signing this “Consent to Biblical Counseling” you agree to hold Grace Bible Church harmless in any and all matters associated with the biblical advice you have received.

Confidentiality- Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and we will carefully guard the information you entrust to us. However, because we are continually training others to be effective counselors, we ask that you agree to allow counselors in training to be present during your sessions. There are four other situations when it may be necessary for us to share certain information with others: (1) When a counselor is uncertain of how to address a particular problem and needs to seek advice from the counseling coordinator, or a pastor or elder in this church; (2) when a counselee attends another church, and it is necessary to talk with his or her pastor or elders; (3) when there is a clear indication that someone may be harmed unless we otherwise intervene; or (4) when a person persistently refuses to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation (see Proverbs 15:22; 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). Please be assured that our counselors strongly

prefer not to disclose personal information to others, and they will make every effort to help you find ways to resolve a problem as privately as possible. You too must agree not to discuss our communications with people who do not have a necessary interest in the counseling process. Furthermore, you must agree that you will not try to force any counselor to divulge any information acquired during counseling or to testify in any legal proceeding related to this counseling.

Resolution of Conflicts- On rare occasions a conflict may arise between counselor and counselee. In order to make sure that any such conflicts will be resolved in a biblically faithful manner, we require all of our counselees to agree that any dispute that arises with the counselor or with this church as a result of counseling will be settled with mediation within the church according to the principles of scripture and the authority of this local church.

Having clarified the principles and policies of our counseling ministry, we welcome the opportunity to minister to you in the name of Christ and to be used by Him as He helps you to grow in spiritual maturity and prepares you for usefulness in His body. If you have any questions about these guidelines, please talk with a pastor or elder. If these guidelines are acceptable to you, please sign below.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

APPENDIX 14

COUNSELING HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Scripture: Read, study, scribe, and/or memorize portions of scripture related to issues and sanctification.

Prayer: Pray for application of the assigned scripture in the counselee's life (thanksgiving and supplication).

Action: Activities that promote selflessness, discipline, reconciliation, and holiness.

- Begin a daily habit of scripture reading and prayer time.
- Create a daily/weekly schedule.
- Develop a budget.
- Apologize to someone you've offended.
- Go for a daily walk.
- Take your wife on a date.

Reading: Read and annotate biblically based books and booklets related to their issues.

Relationship: Develop healthy, biblical relationships with others.

- Attend church and community group.
- Meet with a spiritual friend or mentor.
- Disciple a less mature believer.
- Evangelize a non-Christian friend.

Offering: Devote your time, talent, and treasure in service to the body of Christ.

- Help in the church-maintenance ministry.
- Start a regular pattern of giving.
- Make and deliver a meal to a new mother.

Writing: Write journals, lists, letters, prayers, etc.

- Journal about times when temptation is strongest.
- List 5 things for which you are thankful.
- Write a letter asking forgiveness of a loved one.
- Create a model prayer for help in trials.

APPENDIX 15
CASE REPORT FORM



Counselor:
Date:

Counselee:
Next Mtg:

1. What was your overall impression of the session? Anything particularly important, interesting, or surprising? Any new data? Does it raise any questions?
2. What were the main problems discussed?
3. What Biblical instruction was given?
4. How was hope and encouragement offered?
5. Is the counselee progressing? Any positive changes occurring?
6. What unbiblical habits or behavior are still present? What are the idols of the heart?
7. What homework was given? How did it apply to the problems discussed?
8. What will be taught at the next session?

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO SUPPORT COUNSELING AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH IN BEND, OREGON

David Bruce Robinson, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Donald S. Whitney

This project sought to promote the effective instruction of three basic spiritual disciplines, Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship, to transform the lives of those receiving biblical counseling and discipleship at Grace Bible Church of Bend, Oregon, for their good and God's glory.

Chapter 1 introduces the context, rationale and goals for promoting the instruction of basic spiritual disciplines to those being counseled and disciplined. Chapter 2 gives biblical and theological support for teaching the spiritual disciplines to help transform the lives of counselees and disciples. Chapter 3 describes a framework for teaching what the disciplines are, why they are important, and how they bless the life of a Christian counselee and disciple. Chapter 4 describes the course curriculum for teaching counselors how to instruct their counselees in the disciplines. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project with reflections on successes and ideas for improvement.

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