

Biblical Counselling: An Introduction

A woman in her 20s, with severe anxiety, is struggling to be at church. She has a background of sexual abuse and is finding release in pornography. They've come to you for help ... **how would you respond?**

- Panic?
- Find a woman?
- Refer on to GP?
- Find a professional counsellor outside the church?
- Thank God for the privilege of serving, knowing he has equipped you to help ... ?

It wasn't supposed to be this way (Genesis 1-2)

But it is this way (Genesis 3). And it's not going to change until the new creation (Rev 21-22)

Everyone in the room, everyone on our teams, everyone in our congregations and everyone in our communities are going to be broken in some way. It's a constant context for both evangelism and discipleship.

How much of a priority can addressing this context of brokenness take in a church planting environment?

Meet Kate, an active team member in a church plant ...

Meet Steve, a church planter

What biblical counselling isn't!

It's not Christianised secular counselling

- There's value in medicine
- There's value in a common grace understanding of humanity
- But we don't try to put a spiritual veneer on these things ("non-integrationist") – it's wholeheartedly biblical

It's not new

- The early church had a culture of sharing lives and "one-anothering"
- The Puritans had a "a sophisticated and sensitive system of diagnosis for personal problems, distinguishing a variety of physical, spiritual, temperamental and demonic causes". (Keller)
- It saw a resurgence with Jay Adams (1960/70s) – nouthetic counselling
- Now the key organisations are: ccef.org (US) and biblicalcounselling.org.uk (UK)

It's not just for Christians

- All live in God's world, under God's sovereignty and love, in need of God's salvation and help. There's a real joy in pastoral evangelism.

What biblical counselling is

'God-centered, Bible-saturated, emotionally in-touch use of language to help people become God-besotted, Christ-exalting, joyfully self-forgetting lovers of people.' (Piper)

Biblical counselling is not a system. It's not about finding a verse for every problem. Biblical counselling is personal ministry done from a biblical worldview. It means seeing the complexity of life and people in the light of the gospel of Jesus. It means seeing each of our personal stories in the light of God's big story. (Midgley)

Where, in Scripture, are the obvious passages to go for teaching on anxiety and purity?

- Avoiding the "ditch passages" – enjoying the "canyons" (Mike Emlet – CrossTalk)
- Beware the lilies and sparrows! Enjoy God's big picture ...

Assumption of biblical counselling

1. Life hurts
2. Our vertical relationships matter: God is Lord of all aspects of our life
 - a. God knows (Psalm 139)
 - b. God cares
 - c. Jesus' work has reversed the effects of the Fall
 - d. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life (2 Peter 1:3)
3. Our horizontal relationships matter: the local church is the place of transformation and hope

Scan some of the following chapters (quickly!)

- Ephesians 4 - 5
- Romans 15 – 16
- 1 Peter 4 – 5

Identify some of the many ways we are called to minister to one another

4. We are all counselling each other all the time
 - a. Every conversation about the struggles of life conveys opinion
 - b. Every act of care in the tough times conveys a worldview
 - c. The question is not: are we counselling? The question is: is it biblical or not?
5. Words are transformational – worship is central
 - a. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

The position of biblical counselling

It's part of word ministry

- Public – private – interpersonal

It's part of pastoral ministry

- Spectrum ranging from “ministry of the coffee table” to “specialised counselling”

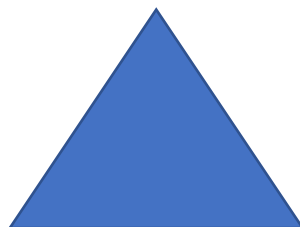
It's part of every member ministry

- Equipping the saints for works of service (Eph 4)

It's part of evangelistic ministry

The models of biblical counselling

- Sinner – sufferer – saint (Ed Welch)



In what way is our lady a saint who needs encouragement / a sufferer who needs comfort and a sinner who needs challenge?

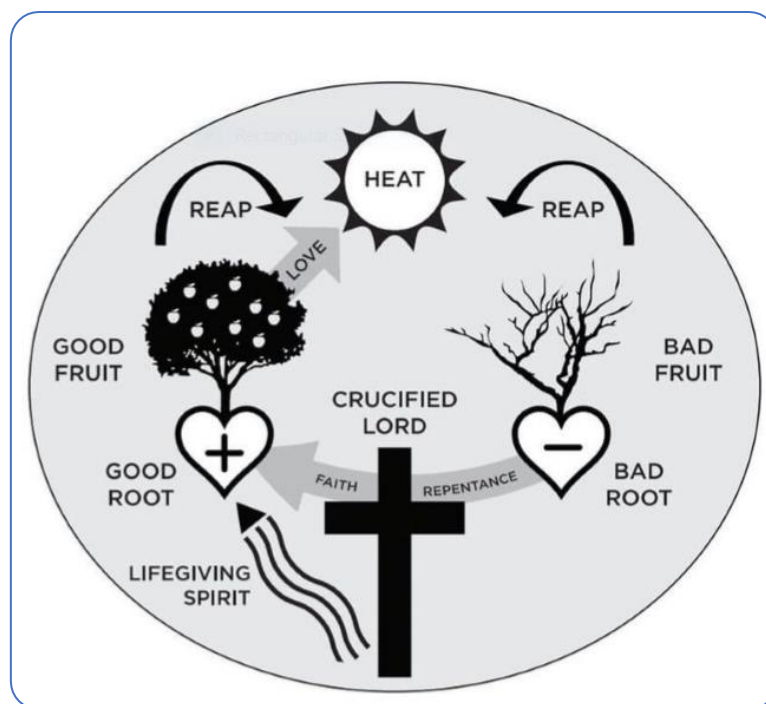
- Love – Know – Speak – Do (from Instruments in a Redeemer's Hands – Tripp)

How can we love, know, speak and practically walk alongside our young lady?

- Ephesians 4:22-24 – changing our clothes (one item at a time)

How could we help our young congregation member to “take off”, “be transformed” and “put on” in ways that will impact her heart and her behaviour?

- Jeremiah 17:5-14 – becoming a tree that flourishes (Real Change)



How can we understand our lady's heat, roots and fruit? What biblical truths does she need help to grasp?

Our case study: how the stories ends