

The answers provided below are for instructional purposes alone. Everyone who desires to pursue ACBC certification must do their own work and provide their own answers.

As a pastor and an equipper, I've provided these answers to help instruct God's people with the truth, so that they then can formulate their own convictions based solely on the Word of God and then write those answers clearly and concisely.

More thorough answers can be found in my personal doctrinal statement and on various teaching sessions (both audio and handouts) on my website: [www.biblicalexpositor.org](http://www.biblicalexpositor.org).

I trust these answers will edify the readers, as we study the Word of God together and seek to put it into practice, for the glory of God!

1. What issues should be covered in an introductory session with a counselee regardless of the counseling issue? Explain the importance of each issue.

I would say that the three big elements in an introductory counseling session are data gathering, ministering hope, and effective biblical homework.

In the case of data-gathering, we are only as good as the information we are given. Solomon warns us that “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him” (Prov 18:13). We cannot speak truth into someone’s life and help them apply the life-transforming Word, without knowing all of the connected issues. We desire to deal with folks holistically, as body and soul, thus the need to gather background information about their physical, as well as spiritual condition. As disciplers and counselors, we want to cultivate good listening skills to know where people are coming from. This also includes learning to ask good questions to draw them out (Prov 20:5), figuring out who is in front of us, whether he/she is the unruly, fainthearted, or weak (1 Thess 5:14). Finding out this vital information is what sends us in a particular trajectory towards their need. No stone should be left unturned as we gather data about their physical life experiences, relationships, emotions, actions, and thinking.

A second vital element in the initial visit is the matter of instilling hope. From the very moment that the person is met, the biblical counselor should express confidence in God, pray with him/her, and take him to the sufficient Word of God. This is special opportunity to motivate perseverance and shift their focus from their problems and circumstances to our Lord. We can point out that in spite of the many mysteries that might surround the issues, one thing we know for sure is that that God is working it all for good to the end that we’d be conformed to our Savior’s image (Rom 8:28-29). Often we don't know what God is going to do but we can encourage and help them to trust in our all-sufficient Savior and gracious Father (Prov 3:5-6). Having received much vital information for the direction of future sessions, and pointed the counselee to Christ, the session should be ended with helpful biblical homework that facilitates change. Homework provides the resources towards obedience as they seek to work out their salvation (Phil 2) and become actively engaged in the change process. Our meeting together are not just to provide conversation as some sort of therapist, but to help them apply the biblical principles discussed into action. We interact with them not as a helpless victim of circumstances, but as a responsible child of God who is accountable to bring their lives into conformity with

Scripture. Counselors cannot change people but the Spirit does so through the Word, as the counselee puts it into practice.

2. Describe at least six biblical strategies to develop a caring relationship with your counselees. Clearly identify each strategy and ground its use in specific passages of Scripture, explaining its practical utility in building a relationship.

Biblical counseling is nothing more or less than discipleship. It is such discipleship that is active and intentional, rather than the often-times overlooked part of local church ministry. Christ commissioned His Church, all His followers, to make diligent followers of the Lord Jesus. There are a plethora of ways in which Paul exemplifies compassionate involvement in the lives of others. He developed the elders and other saints at Ephesus with tears (Acts 20:31), showed intense concern for the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:29), granted a spirit of gentleness to those in Galatia (Gal 6:1), was genuinely concerned for the Philippians (Phil 2:19-21), and tenderly cared for the Thessalonians as a nursing mother (1 Thess 2:7-9).

So how do we pursue a friendly relationship with the counselee and show ourselves friendly (Prov 27:6, 9)? It starts by being **available**. Again, Paul is our example. He ministered to the saints at Ephesus night and day for a period of three years (Acts 20:31). Furthermore, he maintains the tension that we are to help bear each other's burdens (as everyone in the church needs others in his life as tools of sanctification), and yet each person will bear his own load (Gal 6:2, 5).

Second, the counselor must exhibit **compassion**. The old adage holds true that they don't care how much you know (even as a biblical counselor that has many biblical answers and solutions to life) unless they know how much you care. Jesus Christ, as in every other Christian virtue, models compassion. He could have manifested power in any other way than He did, but chose to heal people (Matt 9:35-38). He felt compassion (Matt 14:13-14). Furthermore, as our great high priest, He was tempted in all ways (lust of flesh, lust of eyes, and boastful pride of life), yet without sin. Additionally, we see Paul expressing grief for his fellow Israelites who were separated from Christ (Rom 9:1-13). Our compassion, or lack thereof, influences how people receive our instruction.

Third, we should **take the counselee seriously**; never minimizing the difficulty of their problem, but always maximizing Christ's sufficiency (Col 3:1). Teach him/her that Christ is all and in all.

Fourth, **be persuasive**, not manipulative (2 Cor 1:24; Philemon 8-9). We don't want to lord the truth over them, but be workers with them for their joy.

Fifth, we can **express confidence** in the disciple's ability to change and obey the Scriptures (Rom 15:4; 2 Cor 7:16; Phil 1:6). Showing confidence helps in our marriages, parenting, ministry, and this special ministry of biblical counseling.

Sixth, we need to **receive the counselees' oppositions without becoming defensive**. We are to be committed to one another in love (Rom 12:10; 1 Pet 2:17).

3. Provide a biblical theology of emotions. What role should a counselor allow a counselee's emotions to play in counseling? How can one tell the difference between sinful emotions and righteous emotions? How would you use Scripture to help a counselee change improper emotions?

One theological foundation that biblical counseling is a proper view of the heart; mission control center. While we are not interested in mere behavior modification, we are interested in the change at the heart level. When we read the host of verses referring to man's heart, we see it consisting of affections, will, conscience, thoughts, and even emotions (Prov 23:7; 2 Cor 10:5; Ps 139:23; Rom 12:2; 1 Tim 1:5; Titus 1:15; Heb 10:22; Josh 24:15; Isa 7:15-16; Job 7:15; Ps 37:4; Gal 5:16-26). Emotions are an essential component of personhood. This is part of the immaterial part of man, for which God holds us accountable for. Emotions are not neutral, but are driven by heart attitudes (1 Cor 4:5; Jer 17:10; Heb 4:12). This is where it is crucial to change our thoughts, which determine our emotions.

Emotions are part of our human experience, but are very fickle and misleading. They can be liars. We need to direct counselees to live by fact, faith, feeling, in that order. Feelings are not the deciding factor. We are to respond in obedience to the Word of God, allowing it to inform our thinking. The feeling may be there or not. Feelings do not always accompany obedience, yet does not negate the obedience.

So when someone speaks of healing of emotions, they are using a psychologized concept that needs to be gently corrected. Not only can feelings not be wounded, the real issue is the thinking behind the emotions. Is that thinking in accord with Scripture, or is it in direct opposition to biblical commands or examples?

Since attitudes of the heart are what drive emotions, we need to recognize the moral culpability that Scripture clearly attaches to them. The Scriptures address benevolence, contentment, gratitude, love, pity, anger, hatred worry, pride, confidence, and a host of others. We need to bring the heart attitudes in line with a biblical morality, for the glory of Christ, making sure we keep the balance between emotionalism and passionless Christianity.

Man loves, hates and rejoices. He experiences sorrow and wrath. If he loves his wife, Christ, or the lost, his emotions are in line with Scriptural mandates, but when pursuing love for self, he

must repent. When man hates indwelling sin or the sinful world system, his passions line up with God's agenda, but when not, he must repent. Paul told the Ephesian believers to be angry and yet not sin. We are to let Scripture inform us of godly emotions.

Recently a brother at church told me he was having trouble with anger and thought that his pain medication was what was needed to regulate it. When he has severe back pain he is agitated, with a short fuse and I told him we can't 'medicalize' what God has 'moralized.' In other words, God holds us accountable for any moral issue that Scripture addresses. Thus, I exhorted my brother in Christ to put off anger and that I'd work on it with him as he reads through Stuart Scott's booklet on anger and works on the discussion questions.

Further, another ongoing counseling situation is with a couple who are facing serious marital obstacles. Much of the discussion and their responses revolve around how each feels. So as the other biblical counselor and I work with them we keep trying to focus them not on how they feel like responding, but "What does the Bible say?" We'd like each counselee to make obey to the Bible an obsession, not an option. Feelings come and go, but are not the final expression of obedience. We don't want emotionless worship, but obedient worship that also engages man's affections from the heart.

4. Provide a biblical definition of anger. Describe manifestations of anger in both the inner and outer man. Explain the biblical factors that drive anger. Detail several biblical strategies to respond to anger.

Anger is a subject almost defies definition, though the Scriptures are quite clear in describing what it looks like and how it operates. We find it in Paul's second admonition to the Ephesian believers, as he warns them of the dangers of unrighteous anger that is to be put off. Yet, he also, in the same passage, shows the appropriateness to righteous indignation (Eph 4:26-27). In other words, though anger is a vice to be shunned, it is also a virtue to be embraced if it is righteous zeal for God's glory (cf. Ps 4:4; Deut 32:21; Matt 21:12-13; Mk 3:5; Ps 119:53). Yet, we must also remember the seductive nature of anger, that it must be dealt with quickly, especially since righteous anger can quickly turn towards trespassing God's law, even though at first it may have been zeal for His law and glory. Furthermore, we must notice that in Ephesians 4:31 the Apostle outright condemns anger.

Notice in Ephesians 4:31-32 Paul uses five terms to show the progression from the inner disposition of bitterness to open display of uncontrolled and hurtful speech.

There are five ways of handling anger, some correct and others incorrect. People can clam-up (internalize), blow-up (vent), confront, confess, and control.

With the many biblical injunctions to deal biblically with anger (Prov 29:8, 11; Eccles 7:9), we can put together a biblical strategy for dealing with anger, according to the past, present, and future.

Concerning the past:

- Confess past anger and ask for forgiveness (Matt 5:23-24).
- Pray for God's help (2 Cor 9:8).
- Write out biblical thoughts to replace wrong thoughts (Rom 12:2; Phil 2:3-4).
- Memorize appropriate verses (Eph 4:23).
- Seek to put on loving and humble thoughts (Jn 13:35; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 5:5).
- Determine godly desires and goals to be fixed upon (Ps 40:8; 1 Cor 10:31).
- Study God's patience (Numb 14:18; Ps 145:8).
- Be alert, even putting a list together (1 Cor 10:14; Lk 17:3; 1 Pet 1:13).

- Ask others to keep you accountable (Gal 6:1-2).
- Do not associate with angry individuals (Prov 22:24).
- Seek God's enabling grace (2 Cor 9:8).

Concerning the present, or during the actual experiences of life:

- Pray, pray, pray (Heb 4:16).
- Put off being angry (Prov 14:17).
- Put on, or replace it with righteousness (Jas 1:19; Prov 16:32).

Concerning after the events:

- Ask yourself, "What have I done?"
- Follow up the question with another; "What should I do differently?"
- Take care of sin as soon as possible (Eph 4:26).
- Confess and ask forgiveness of God and all others affected (Ps 32:5; Jas 5:16).
- Tell God and others your plan for the future.
- Be on guard once again.

Lou Priolo offers some helpful fodder on the inward and outward manifestations of anger. When a man's thoughts are dwelling on ungratefulness rather than gratitude, the overflow can be further anger. When a man is bitter, due to unresolved conflict, anger manifest itself in words that are not gentle or kind. Many times it can be helpful to assign a heart journal so he/she can jot down the surrounding circumstances to the outburst of sinful anger (or the slow burn) including what they desired the most (many times personal glory or winning the argument at the expense of God being glorified). Longing for personal autonomy and pride fuel the fire of anger and we must constantly unsheathe the sword of the Spirit and bring passages like 2 Cor 5:9 to bear on the moments leading up to where we have typically responded in sinful anger. He must increase and I must decrease!

5. Provide a biblical definition of depression. Describe manifestations of depression in both the inner and outer man. Explain the biblical factors that drive depression. Detail several biblical strategies to respond to depression.

Depression is something that is only possible in a fallen world (Gen 3; Rom 5:12-21), yet deliverance is possible, but only through the redeeming work of Christ and His indwelling Holy Spirit. However, in many cases, this deliverance is not automatic, as with other affects of the Fall (Phil 2:12-13; Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 3:16; Phil 2:5; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Heb 12:1-2; Jas 1:2-5).

We find terms of depression in places like Psalm 42, with those who are downcast, despairing, disturbed, or disquieted in soul. Specific biblical cases studies that help us develop a biblical theology of depression are Cain (Gen 4), Elijah (1 Ki 19), the Psalmist (42, 43), Jonah (Jon 4), Job, David (Ps 32, 38), and Paul (2 Cor 1, 4).

We need to carefully remember that all man experiences, he does so in a dual fashion. God made us living souls in a body of flesh. So everything we experience, we do so physically and spiritually. Sometimes, depressive symptoms can originate from certain disease states and medications. Oftentimes medical professionals make subjective assessments of a patient's behavior, based on the flawed criteria of the DSM, which is subjective and the 'professionals' can't even agree among themselves what constitutes depression. And since he is a medical doctor, he prescribes medication as the answer. That is well and good if in fact we are dealing with brain injuries, MS, epilepsy, hyper or hypothyroidism. Many diseases can alter mood and behavior and though they can contribute to the problem, they must never become an excuse for sinful behavior. Low serum potassium or sodium and infections can change brain function and depression can be seen (see Dr. Charles Hodges' *Good Mood, Bad Mood* for more details). Pancreatic cancer can first manifest itself in a depressed mood, along with a host of other systemic diseases. Thus, this is not a fast and easy "diagnosis" or issue, when talking of depression.

In contrast to the medical and all psychological models of counseling, man is not a helpless victim, but is a responsible creature, created in God's image, and is responsible to honor God even in dire issues. Physiology cannot cause sin or prevent him from responding in a godly

manner. It may be easier to sin when sick, fatigued, and in pain, but we still must be sober and vigilant.

Depression is still an issue of the heart (the inner man) who is capable of idolatry, unbelief, guilt, etc. When we do wrong, of course we're going to feel bad. But when we honor Christ above all, there is no condemning conscience and our right living can lead to the proper emotional response.

We must be convinced and then teach God's people that Christ and His Word are sufficient (2 Pet 1:2-4), even when they 'feel' like the odds are insurmountable. Yes, He does give us more than we can handle so we will turn to Him in humble trust. Teach them in the counseling/discipleship times to serve (Eph 1:3-2:10; 5:18-6:9), obey (Phil 2:12-13; 3:12-14; 4:11-13), to be a good steward (1 Cor 10:31; 1 Tim 4:1-5; Ps 3-4), and have a Gospel perspective (Rom 3:9-20; Eph 2:11-12; Col 3:12-14). Help them identify any sin, that they might confess and repent (1 Jn 1:9; Prov 28:13), because the goal is to honor God and please Him no matter how we feel.

Some of the more helpful tools to use would be walking them through Bob Summerville's *If I am a Christian, Why am I Depressed* and in the homework get them on a schedule, analyze biblical examples of depression, serve the Lord in writing notes of encouragement, maintain a thought journal (to change wrong thoughts), memorize passages like 1 Corinthians 10:31, and study 'big God' passages like Job 38-42 and Isaiah 40-48.

6. Provide a biblical definition of anxiety and fear. Describe manifestations of anxiety and worry in both the inner and outer man. Explain the biblical factors that drive anxiety and fear. Detail several biblical strategies to respond to anxiety and fear.

Fear and anxiety is a broad topic and would take a long time to cover the whole thing, including the sinful fear of man, but we need a concise, basic working model to shepherd folks through worry biblically.

Anxiety can be of godly concern that causes you to attend to business in a responsible way (see 2 Cor 11:28; Phil 2:20; Gal 4:19). Ministry has a pressure or weightiness to it. Worry is NOT proper planning (Jas 4:13ff.). Since we know the transitoriness of life, we are admonished to predicate everything we attempt to do on His will. However, worry IS being over-anxious about the future or things (Matt 6:25), like what we will eat or drink. It is being divided in our attention (Matt 12:25; Mk 6:41; 4:19). There is a fine line between proper concern in being diligent and that of stepping over the line to be overly anxious. Insurmountable issues of life that are meant to heighten our walk of faith and obedience and move us closer to our Savior, could also lead to sinful anger, lack of gentle speech, or lessened sleep.

There may be physical manifestations of anxiety, like an increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, a myriad of gastro issues, increased muscle tension, rapid breathing, and sweating. There may be emotional symptoms, like feelings of dread, guilt, or racing thoughts that seem uncontrollable, irritability, or difficulty sleeping.

Concern becomes worry, thus sin, when our thoughts are focused on changing the future, which we are incapable to do. Thus, we need to dethrone self, who thinks he is in control, and recognize who the Lord is and remember this time and time again. Concern also becomes sin when our thoughts are unproductive. We have a tendency to dwell on things, so we must win the battle at the thought level, knowing that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Study Matthew 6:19-34 to understand from our Savior's teaching why worry is wrong. It is unproductive, in that it accomplishes nothing (v27), robs time (v34), controls your mind so thoughts are unproductive, blurs your vision (v22-23), wastes your energy, and damages your body. Because of the 'blurring factor', biblical counselors and the rest of the body at Church need to share wisdom for direction in their body life activity. Worry is also unnecessary since God is trustworthy (v28-30), and concerned (v26 cf. Matt 10:28-30). Thus, worry is unbelief! It

is practical atheism, for worship and worry cannot coexist! Finally, worry is unbecoming. Like unbelievers, it focuses on what one does not have (v31), focuses on earthly values not eternal (v25), focuses on the gift and not the Giver, has no hope, and thus is idolatry (v24).

Alongside Jesus' teaching on the subject, bring Paul's teaching into focus, even for Scripture memory (Phil 4:6-9). To root out worry, we need right praying (v6-7), right thinking (v8), and right action (v9).

7. List several reasons for concluding a counseling case. For each, describe how you would go about ending the counseling.

We know that every heart needs one of two changes: either salvation or sanctification. If offering pre-counseling to an unbeliever, though you have been faithful to bring them to the cross, the only hope of salvation, you reach a point at which you must terminate meeting with them. You reach a point in which you need to put the brakes on when the sinner refuses to turn to Christ and do the hard work of repentance and submitting to Christ as absolute Lord. We must preach the whole Gospel, which includes His requirement of being Lord of all (Lk 9:23). If all they want is a god who is a genie in a bottle, a pet savior that they can domesticate, then they need to go talk with someone else, and you the biblical counselor needs to better invest yourself in those that the Spirit may be drawing to Himself, as they seek to find out what it means to truly follow the Lord Jesus. We cannot waste our ministry among those who will not bow the knee, as we cast pearls before swine. We need to seek the Lord's wisdom in prayer as to when that time is, but we must be willing to make the break and even leave the door open for them to come back when they mean business with Christ. They must be willing to respond not as the rich young ruler (Matt 19), but as the prodigal son who finally came to himself (Lk 15). A good indicator of when the time is ripe to conclude the meetings is when the message is mocked and rejected (Matt 7:6). What about the believer who has submitted his life to Christ? Well, the most rewarding aspect of biblical counseling which points to the right timing to end formal counseling and discipleship meetings is when the counselee begins acting biblically. He/she does not have to be perfect, but simply headed in the right direction. He now has the toolbox of the Word of God which he knows is all-sufficient, presenting to him an all-sufficient Savior who helps him stand (Eph 6). He can now find the right answers as he properly exegetes both the Scriptures and his life circumstances. He is now triumphing in progressive sanctification and we can see biblical habits form, as he puts off sin and replaces it with righteousness, for the glory of Christ. Being able to terminate counseling in this situation brings great joy in the counseling ministry. However, what brings great sadness and grief is when the sessions must be concluded because they are not manifesting a humble heart of teachability. When the counselee continues to manifest sloth in his homework, we need to exercise tough love in reminding them that not only can we not do the change for them, but if they will not do the hard work in disciplining

themselves to godliness we need to turn our attention to others, as stewards of our time and talents.

8. Describe in biblical categories the operations of the devil. Is there a difference between Believers and unbelievers regarding the activity of the devil? What is a biblical methodology for responding to the demonic in the context of counseling?

Sobriety towards the Lord's archenemy is admonished, recognizing he is out to destroy us if he could (1 Pet 5:8-9). The apostle Paul instructs us to stand against the wiles of the devil, having put on our spiritual armor (Eph 6:10-18), living lives of intense prayer.

Many people, especially those coming out of charismatic circles, believe that if something bad happens to them or weird events surround them, it is due to satan. Though he is very alive and working on planet earth as prince and power of the air, he is on a leash. As Luther claimed, "the devil is God's devil." We should be discipling folks to be living under the sovereign watch-care of God, rather than satan. This mystical view of satan has consumed much of evangelicalism, with the exorcisms, a plethora of fiction books, and deliverance ministries. Much of the warfare movement is Arminian and man-centered. It's about ME regaining authority in life and giving ME relief, rather than an emphasis on the glory of God alone.

One particular resource that exemplifies much of what's wrong with this movement is Neil Anderson's *Bondage Breaker*. In it he has a skewed view of sanctification, satan, and the believer's authority. First, he teaches that the Christian no longer has a sin nature, but that it was exchanged at the point of justification. Along with that teaching, he believes that fallen man is primarily deprived, rather than depraved. Sound like tabula rotha? In this view, the focus is on the fight with satan, rather than with remaining sin. If satan is the root, then we'll pass the buck to him rather than focusing on our tendency toward sin and the constant need to align ourselves in obedience to God's will.

Second, his view of satan teaches that Christians can be demonized and thus they need to speak out loud to him, naming every sin specifically in order to break any strongholds.

Third, is the mistaken view that the believer can and must "bind" satan with a complex system of strategies, including verbally addressing him and his demons with formulaic prayer.

How does a biblical counselor unteach these wrong concepts? By instructing in the proper rules of biblical hermeneutics. We must deal with all the different accounts in Scripture and be consistent with our hermeneutics. We also need to recognize the difference in mode between Jesus and us. His casting out of demons was constantly presented as healing and miracles.

Obviously we are He. Don't think that just because Jesus and the apostles, in their unique era prescribe our present journey. Their interaction with demons was unique. Study the book of Acts in context. It was descriptive of what happened, not prescriptive of what should be normative for the Christian experience.

When speaking of being demon-possessed, which is impossible for a believer, who is indwelt by the Spirit of God, we must recognize the distinction between being sick and one who is possessed, or owned by a demon (cf Matt 4:24; Mk 1:32). Again, only unbelievers can be possessed. Scripture precludes demonic indwelling (Rom 8:37ff; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 2:14; 1 Jn 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:18; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 4:30).

9. Define, describe, and provide a biblical evaluation of each of the following: 12 step recovery programs, cognitive-behavioral therapy, the biogenic theory of mood disorders, and electroconvulsive therapy.

Recovery programs have been used with a degree of “success” and though there are some reasonably “good” things that AA has accomplished, helping people get sober, scores of people have kicked the alcohol without its aid. Many programs suggest that they are spiritual but they don’t go far enough, in that the transformation of the heart is not their scope. Having people admit to their need is good, but what is really needed is biblical confession and repentance. While the recovery programs talk of “addiction,” the Bible addresses enslavement to sin and bondage. Using the disease model, they try to medicalize what God has moralized in the Scriptures. They see alcoholism as a disease, but what hope is there in a disease, which you can’t repent of, nor is there empirical evidence to support their disease model. We need to run to Scripture and recognize sin and idolatry deal with heart issues. They use a worldly mindset rather than a Christian program pointing to the sufficiency of Christ.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the most popular techniques out there. They try to change the way people act by changing how they think. It is a subjective practice catering to “what’s helpful.” It’s tied up into behavior-modification, so if the person stops doing something, the program looks successful. But the real issue that biblical counseling is after is heart change and true worship. Rather than entering into a program to change what I want changed, I need to consider what does God want done? The goal in biblical counseling is Christlikeness, not just change for change’s sake.

Much of the flawed medical model includes the suggestion of chemical imbalance. They hypothesize that mood disorders are due to a lack of certain transmitters like noradrenaline/norepinephrine and dopamine, or serotonin.

Electroconvulsive therapy is administered under general anesthesia, as small currents of electricity are passed through the brain to intentionally trigger a brief seizure. They theorize that this process changes the brain chemistry and in turn reverses the symptoms of some illnesses.

The problem with most of the above issues can be categorized as the failure of the medical model. Yes, we encourage counselees to have a physical and we work with their medical doctor, knowing that man is a dual being of body and soul. The secular models do not deal with man

being a living soul, created in the image of God, and housed in the tent of a body. The medical model only deals with man in the physical realm, while the psychological 'sciences' try dealing with soul issues, which are better left to the biblical counselor who specializes in bringing the Word to bear on man's immaterial part. When addressing issues of the soul, we evaluate man's symptoms based on a biblical morality, not on a medical basis. One of the big failures of the secular or medical model is the victimization of the person being treated. The so called 'alcoholic' can say "I'm an alcoholic (getting his medical label), so it's not my fault." Yet the Scriptures hold man accountable and teach that God has promised His children that there is no drive over which a person can have no control (1 Cor 10:13). No matter what serious disorders or addictions that the person has been labeled with, he only faces temptations that other people experience. They are not supernatural temptations. The apostle Paul writes about obsessions, abuse of alcohol, overeating, and sexual 'addictions' (1 Cor 10:7-8).

10. Describe the role you believe church discipline should play in biblical counseling.

I remember during a class on biblical counseling, Dr. John Street mentioned that church discipline puts the teeth in biblical counseling. In other words, it provides a mode of accountability in the local church setting.

Biblical counseling should be squarely centered within the walls of the local church. For this reason, every Christian is biblically bound to join a local church where he can serve the Lord through his giftedness. The church is where believers are bound together to spur each other on to love and good deeds. Since they cannot allow unrepentant sin to remain, there is the discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matt. 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; Tit. 1:10-16; Heb 10:24-25).

There are five main reasons to practice corrective discipline:

1. For the good of the person being disciplined.

1 Corinthians 6 can be used to show that though he thinks he is headed to Heaven, since he's practicing sin, he may not be headed there. This text is a very important in counseling the many 'professors' of Christ, that they may not possess Him, if in fact their lives do not manifest that newness of life.

2. For the good of others; that they'd see the seriousness of sin.

1 Timothy 5:20 instructs us that it's a hope-giving thing as they see the danger of sin.

3. For the health of the church.

Paul informs the church in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 to have no leaven of sin; no tolerance whatsoever.

4. For the corporate witness of the church.

Our Savior shows us in John 13 that the world will see our good deeds. Our lives are different.

5. For the glory of God, as we reflect His holiness.

11. Describe what you believe to be the role of confidentiality in biblical counseling. What kind of commitment to confidentiality should a biblical counselor make? What biblical and practical considerations limit confidentiality? What is the responsibility of a biblical counselor to report to civil authorities on matters of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other illegal matters? How should biblical counselors cooperate with the authorities about these things?

So often people are on a crusade to protect person autonomy, which shows itself in reluctance to submit to others, contrary to the mutual submission in the church that the Apostle Paul exhorts the saints to have at Ephesus (Eph 5:21). Sin's natural bent is towards secrecy and cover-up, never wanting others to find out. Yet James instructs us towards confessing our trespasses to one another (Jas 5:16). In a similar vein, counselees can come in asking their counselor to swear to confidentiality, though it is taught nowhere in Scripture. Since I desire to fulfill my vows and obligations, I never promise secrecy, though I am discreet. As a pastor, I'm a mandatory reporter if I find out about abuse of children. Furthermore, if I begin counseling a believer who persists in sin, I'm bound by Scriptural mandates to pursue steps of church discipline and at that point it could escalate to be very public. Also, if the person is engaged in something illegal, it must come to light. Thus, if someone is breaking the law, through abusing their mate, law enforcement should be called in line with Romans 13. Abuse may not be grounds for divorce, as it is not sexual infidelity or desertion by an unbeliever, but it is someone that calls for immediate intervention either by the elders of the church, law enforcement, or maybe both.

I have had situations where someone comes in and is quite apprehensive about me finding out about all the details of some sordid situation, but after explaining that I am only as helpful as the information that I have been given, they have typically been willing to remain in counseling, as they know they can trust me to be faithful to Scripture and do what is right.

One issue that comes to mind on the need to notify church leaders is in issues of sexual sins.

When counseling a man who is seeking to put off sinful habits of pornography, I would encourage my fellow elder who oversees music to have this young man step down from musical participation up front until he has his private life better disciplined so he can be an example of godliness as he leads the congregation in worship.

Another issue would be when counseling a man who came to Christ after being a pedophile. There would be notification to the elder who oversees children's ministry. This man's past is not determinative and pedophilia is not the unforgiveable sin. However, he needs to bring fruit in keeping repentance to show forth his transformed heart. There would be a period of time that demonstrates faithfulness to Christ that is required as part of our "due diligence" in protecting children in ministry.

A third scenario comes to mind. In thinking through the seven commitments of a peacemaker, provided by Peacemaker Ministries, they talk about not bringing up past breeches. But if a person demonstrates a track-record of sinful patterns, love requires that I bring that issue up. If the person begins going to another church due to not wanting to deal with a sin issue, it is my responsibility to talk with his/her new pastor so that he/she can be shepherded in the issue that they are trying to flee.

## Case Studies

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### Erik

Erik is a 20-year-old Believer who has been struggling with pornography for the last three years. Before that time he knew that pornography existed, but had never seen it because his parents carefully monitored all the technology in their home. Erik discovered porn on a trip out of town when some of his friends from High School showed it to him on their phones. Since then Erik has frequently looked at pornography. The problem became worse when he moved to college and had unfettered access to the Internet on his laptop computer. Several weeks ago, Erik became convinced that as a Christian he must begin to deal aggressively with this sin. He did the hardest thing he had ever done and told his dad about the problem. Erik's dad loves his son and wants to help him, but has no idea what to do about a problem like this. They came together to meet you for counsel.

12. Assume that the information you have here is a straightforward presentation of the facts and write down the homework assignments you want Erik to complete after this first meeting with you. After you list the homework explain the specific issues you will address with Erik in counseling sessions. Please include the categories of “put off” and “put on” in your answer.

Initially, we'd probably begin with damage control. What I mean by that is we'd establish certain stop-gap measures that are essential, like not perusing the internet alone or late at night, installing Covenant Eyes or another protective device to help during weak times, and establishing an accountability partner to intercede and even be the point of contact when he is going through the time of temptation. However, we also recognize that accountability partners do not live with us 24 hours a day and seven days a week, nor can they get into our heart where the war rages. The goal would be to increase his fear of God, enlarge his perspective of the holiness of God and accomplish this by studying the attributes of God. Part of this particular God-focused approach is in providing a copy of Christ and Your Problems for him to identify at least 10 parts that stand out to him while reading. He needs to return after the first visit planning on sharing those insights. During the first visit, we'd also work through Religious Affections, seeking to ascertain authentic saving faith. He'd be sent home to studying the passages and ask the Lord to confirm to him that, though he's sinned grievously, that there's transforming grace evident in his life of progressive sanctification. Among the passages to memorize, we'd start with 1 Cor 6:9-10, Phil 2:13-14, Jas 1:14-15, & 1 Pet 3:7.

As he learns to put off pornography and lust, he will learn to guard his heart and take radical action against temptation and sin through studying passages like Ps 101:3-4; 119:9, Prov 4:23-27, 6:23-29, Matt 5:27-28, 15:19, Gal 5:16-18, Col 3:5-7, and 2 Tim 2:22.

Another homework assignment early on would be to listen and take notes on Jim Newheiser's "Pain of Porn". He will be required to share some insights in the following session.

Another assignment will be, after working through the "Y Chart" during a session, that he comes in ready to explain it to me. I'll also want to have him journal what his thoughts and response is when he gives in to temptation.

Two of the resources I would consider having him read and dialogue on would be "The Way of Purity" and "Finally Free."

## Sarah

Sarah is a 34 year-old married mother of three who comes to you for help with depression. She says that she has been feeling “terribly sad” for the last six months, and has had a lot of trouble “keeping up with life.” She came to you seeking the opinion of a biblical counselor on what she should do. Sarah has several friends who received anti-depressants from their family doctor. The medicine seemed to help for a while, but they also experienced some unpleasant side-effects that she is concerned about. She asks you explicitly, “Do you think I should see my doctor about taking an anti-depressant?”

13. How would you respond to this question? Write out your answer exactly as you would provide it to Sarah.

“Sarah, I am thrilled that you came in to talk with me. As your pastor, I desire to be a resource to you and walk with you through the issues of life. I notice that you did not fill out the PDI form that I sent home with your husband, so let me ask you, when was the last time that you had a physical? The reason that I ask is that my doctorate is not in medicine and even if it was, that’s not why you came to see me. I’d like you to schedule a routine physical with your doctor, just to rule out any physical, bodily ailments. Remember that God’s Word reveals to us that we are dual creatures, consisting of body and soul. We’re material and immaterial. What that means is that everything we experience, we experience in both dimensions. If we are physically sick, we’re not going to be skipping merrily through the day. Similarly, when all is well with our soul, even if we are physically incapacitated, we can more than triumph through Christ. In contrast, if we are battling sinful anxiety and worry, it can have a bearing on our sleep, cause ulcer’s, and a host of other things. In other words, there may be physical contributors, as well as spiritual ones.

As another starting point, would you please share with me your testimony of conversion....

Sarah read with me 1 Corinthians 10:13. Do you believe that our sovereign Lord and loving Father has provided you the means to bear up under this trial? Please memorize it and be ready to recite it to me next week.

Further, please take this copy of Bob Summerville’s book with you and we’ll read a chapter per week and discuss the salient points, along with you doing the homework sections.”

Let me share a few concluding thoughts to help you look at this through a biblical lens. For one, depression is something that is only possible in a fallen world (Gen 3; Rom 5:12-21). I

understand that life is difficulty, but that’s the reality that Scripture presents to us in a world filled by sin. The good news is that even though difficulties can span several years, it’s only in this time, not eternity. Second of all, deliverance is only possible through the redeeming work of Christ and indwelling work of the Spirit. That’s why we spent time discussing the Gospel and the abundant life that is ours through Christ. Third, come to terms that practical and experiential deliverance is not automatic, as with other affects of the Fall (Phil 2:12-13; Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 3:16; Phil 2:5; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Heb 12:1-2; Jas 1:2-5). Discipleship counseling is a process of equipping you to live for the glory of God even when life hurts and falls apart. Notice I said it’s a

process; a hard struggle in putting off sinful habits that many times contribute to life's difficulties and somber times. In other words, I can't just dole out "prescription" principles to make it all go away, but I can promise that God will meet you in the struggle and as you trust and obey Him, He draws near to the crushed in spirit and will help you think properly about the issues of life.

Though I don't see the answers or benefits of medication in your circumstance, I will not say not to take the meds. That's something for you to work out with your doctor. My wife would even be willing to go to your appointment with you and I can be a sounding board for your questions. What I want to focus you on in living of Gospel sufficiency every day, making righteous decisions, which will greatly influence your depressive moments.

14. What means would you use to find out more information about Sarah's current problem?  
What information would you seek?

Before she came in, I'd have her fill out my PDI form in advance so I could try to orient my thoughts toward the situation. If possible, I'd have her husband come with her, like the last depressed person that I counseled. By having the spouse come, I'm able to multiply efforts. He/she is getting the same tools taught so that he/she can better live with their spouse in an understanding way and be their biggest cheerleader in pointing them to Christ and His sufficiency. This is a time of discipleship, so if they both can learn together, they can better learn how to be ministers of comfort after they successfully come through this difficulty. Furthermore, he could help her communicate what has really been going on. If her husband can't come, I'd see if a friend from the church would consider coming with her.

Further along in the counseling, I'd have her do some journaling. I've found that journaling is a great source of information that helps me enter in to the difficulties, as I hear what the person was thinking during the moments (to gently correct any unbiblical thinking) or what they were doing wrong, which added to the 'frustrations', because many times people "feel" bad and their countenance has fallen because their actions aren't right in the first place. For instance, they are not being faithful in church attendance or grateful service to their Lord, or slack in their devotional times. Those actions in themselves cause a guilty conscience because they know they are being disobedient. Then, to compound issues, they might continue to isolate themselves or not do their house-work, or get out of bed late, which causes them to spiral downhill even further. So journaling is a great source of information and so is the spouse who lives with them and can, at times, see things more objectively.

My PDI has a section on physical health, as I want to know what is going on physically. I really appreciate the helpful Appendix B in the back of Hodges "Good Mood, Bad Mood" that goes through the various physical diseases and organic issues that can manifest themselves in various ways. Further, many side-effects of medications are the resulting depression. Just look at the list of side-effects on the labels. I don't want to be spinning tires in talking with the person about their supposed anxiety, if, in fact, they are dealing with hyperthyroidism, but are unaware of it. I'd also explore Sarah's diet, her sleep patterns, and overall daily routine.

15. Carefully describe whether and how you would want to work with a physician to help Sarah through this ordeal? As part of your answer to this specific question describe, in general terms, how you believe biblical counselors should cooperate with medical professionals.

Yes, I encourage the counselee to work with both myself and their physician. I do, however, caution them that many times the doctor is quick to run to anti-depressants. I'd give her some suggested questions to pose to her doctor as to why he wanted to put her on medication, for we don't want to medicalize what God has moralized. For instance, maybe it will come out in counseling that she engaging in unrepentant sin. If so, she ought to feel the pangs of depression, for things are not healthy with her soul. Further, though she may have depressive times that we cannot figure out the "why", if sinful worry and anxiety are uncovered, she needs repentance and forgiveness, not medication. So I'm not anti-medication. But I am in favor of it only being utilized for an express bodily disease; something that is clearly organic and not spiritual. Like I'd mentioned earlier, I would suggest my wife go to the doctor with her. In discipleship-counseling, there is a great need for involvement. I would also walk her through some questions to pose to her physician. For instance:

-What test was run to prove that a physical problem is present, since physicians are doctors of the physical body?

-And how do those tests prove the presence of physical illness or organic disease that needs to be medicated?

-Is this a demonstrable fact, or a mere theory?

Further, I'd encourage Sarah to be teachable and use me as a soundboard for her questions as she seeks to think biblically and use biblical terminology. If her physician were to put her on medication, I'd check out the side-effects in Dr. Smith's Medical Desk Reference and inform her of the repercussions of taking the said medication.

I would want my counselee/disciplee to clearly understand our dual dynamic of material and immaterial; of souls created in the image of God which are housed in a body of flesh. Their medical doctor has been trained to look for medical disease, leaving issues of the soul/heart/mind to us biblical practitioners who administer the life-giving words of Scripture from the One who created us, for He knows us best. I'd want to present myself as working with their medical

doctor, not in substitute or contradiction to him, even though he many times dabbles in my world of the soul, or at least tries to.:)

## Tim and Emily

Tim and Emily come from a church across town, and have asked to meet you because of some help that you offered their friends several months ago. They are coming because of a persistent problem they have had in their marriage. They explain that in their six years of marriage Tim has always had a “short fuse.” He regularly “loses it” when he comes home from work which fills the evenings with tense communication. Their weeks are filled with arguments about everything from dinner being ready on time, to whether they should have kids. Tim thinks Emily is a good wife, admits the problems are his fault, but says he just doesn’t know how to “maintain control.” About a year ago Tim went berserk screaming at Emily, kicking the kitchen table and throwing plates on the floor in response to Emily’s complaint that he came home late without calling. Emily was always uncomfortable with Tim’s previous pattern of outbursts, but this was different. She was truly scared. Tim was too. In tears she told Tim that something had to change.

Tim talked to his pastor who told him that he needed to see a professional therapist. Tim followed the advice and made an appointment with the Christian counselor whom his pastor recommended. Tim met with the therapist for a few sessions, who ultimately recommended he see a psychiatrist for medical care. When Tim met with the psychiatrist he was told that he had bi-polar disorder and began to take the medications prescribed by the physician.

Tim was initially discouraged to learn that he had a disease that would likely last his entire life, but he was thankful to have a plan to deal with problem. Emily was also encouraged that there was now at least something they could do.

Their encouragement quickly gave way, however, when after several months on the medication Tim had still not really changed. While his temperament seemed milder in general the loss of control, and screaming were still present. It was at this point that Emily began to regret ever marrying Tim. All the arguments together with the couple’s lack of children were taking their toll. She realized she was in a marriage that she did not want to be in, but didn’t think she had any options.

Then last week Tim “went completely crazy.” Emily suggested on a Saturday morning that Tim should cut the grass because he had not done it the week before. Tim did more than scream and throw things this time. As he yelled and became more “worked up” he threw the phone at Emily. He missed her, knocking a hole in the wall, but they both knew he had crossed a line.

Emily said she couldn’t take it anymore and wanted out of the marriage. She told him that if something didn’t change very quickly she was going to leave. That is when he reached out to his friend who recommended you.

Tim and Emily both profess faith in Christ, and relate their testimonies of conversion in their teen years. Both are also terribly discouraged. Tim doesn’t know how to treat Emily better since he is “plagued” by this disease. Emily loves Tim and would like their marriage to work, but she is worn out with the lack of change. She feels badly about wanting to leave because she knows he has an illness, but she is increasingly convinced that God is telling her to divorce Tim.

16. How will you decide whether to pursue Tim and Emily as believers or unbelievers?  
What difference will their status as Christians make in your counseling?

The sad reality in Evangelicalism is the decision-oriented evangelism, where people rely heavily on a momentary religious experience or time of decision, rather than relying on religious affections. The Gospel plays a central role in biblical counseling and it is imperative never to take salvation for granted. We must pose various questions, that would reveal whether they are living lives under the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. If, after their sharing a credible testimony of conversion, they appear to be believers, who are relying on the finished work of Jesus rather than their own works, then these sinful events need to be pointed to as possibly invalidating their profession, or opening them up to the Lord's chastening. Further, Tim needs to be very aware, that if unrepentant sin continues, he will be subject to church discipline. Church discipline is what "puts the teeth" in biblical counseling, as true believers cannot live in a perpetual lifestyle of unrepentant sin and still be assured by the church that they are believers. Finally, if Tim further shows no change, no desire to honor Christ, and no teachability, he will be turned over to church discipline and if not repentant, will only be dealt with as an evangelistic prospect.

The goal of all biblical counseling is changing people at the level of the heart, for the glory of Christ. We don't want to merely make sinners into smarter hypocrites. Adams says it best in that "the only person who can really operate at a level of depth is the person who knows how to go to the heart of a man's problem. And the only way to go to the heart of a man's problem is through the Gospel of Jesus Christ ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, who transforms the heart of man and thus transforms his life patterns" (A Theology of Biblical Counseling). Thus, biblical counseling is only for believers. Everything else is evangelism. It takes hearts purified by faith bring glory to God and thus please Him. Often in counseling I've used the chart in the back of the MacArthur Study Bible to point out what man often holds up in their reliance on ministry or a time of decision, rather than religious affections that Scripture attests to (love for God, devotion to His glory, repentance, prayer, etc).

In counseling we point out how failure to follow Scripture, ignoring God, and sinful patterns are what have brought misery. If Tim and Emily persist in disobedience, they manifest that they are unbelievers, and thus there's not much more I can do for them until they bow the knee to Christ.

Initially, when meeting with unbelievers who come in, I'm holding out hope for their marriage and giving them teaching on roles and communication and conflict resolution, but it only makes sense and is empowered by the Spirit once they come to Christ. I include the hopelessness of life outside of Christ and living like there is no God, as presented in Ecclesiastes, but their privileged opportunity to repent and place their faith in Christ.

Again, if constant disobedience, there's the warning that the way of a transgressor is hard (Prov 13:15) and if no willingness to break with sin, there must eventually be a severing of the relationship, though leaving the door open in the future. Constantly there's the prayer for wisdom to discern if it is casting pearls before swine and spending time on those that could be spent with those who are humble and teachable.

17. Describe, as fully as you are able, your strategy to help Tim and Emily think biblically about his diagnosis and their use of bi-polar and illness language.

As stated in an earlier question, we cannot medicalize what God has moralized. That is, Tim cannot rename or minimize his sin that Scripture teaches must be put off. I'd caution the use of psychologized terminology, as well as holding up the victim card, especially since Scripture shows that the true believer is a victor in Christ.

I would first of all like to graciously question the so-called "diagnosis" of bi-polar, furthermore, whether it is considered #I or #II. Though the dx was made by a doctor, it is a "disorder", as it's not linked to a specific organic cause. Look at how it's cousin of depression is diagnosed in the DSM. The definition is imprecise, based on a constellation of symptoms, which are voted on by a committee. Though I have concerns over what had become named as clinical depression, I also recognize that God's people legitimately get downcast, disturbed, and experience sad moods, or what the Puritans called melancholy. As stated earlier, there are legitimate organic diseases that can cause depressive symptoms. Medications should be directly prescribed to help those underlying diseases, not some generic drug with a host of side-effects that is aimed at the particular mood. I've found Dr. Charles Hodges' "Good Mood, Bad Mood" helpful in sorting out some of these issues. I don't know that I buy into all he has to say about bi-polar, but he gives a helpful reference to Dr. Welch's lecture at CCEF's conference in 2011. He asserts that "our sin comes out of our own hearts and that mania could not cause him to sin" (Cited in Good Mood, Bad Mood, 177). And at the same time we present personal culpability for the individual Christian who may be at greater risk of making bad choices, we also emphasize to the corporate body of Christ their privileged responsibility to support such a one in their struggle. The church is one of the greatest tools God has provided for our sanctification, so it provides accountability, love, prayer, and walking with fellow sinners in need of change.

As we round the corner in our instruction on responsibility, there would also be a time to address the psychological system's presentation of man as a victim; one held hostage to their label and in Tim's case bi-polar. I want him to see the liberated truth of the Gospel, that God forgives our sins and we are no longer in bondage to our sins, past, or the hopeless future of my new category that I'll have to live with the rest of my life. Christ offers cleansing and healing through the Gospel. There's no sin, which I can't overcome, through the power of the Spirit, as I obey

Scripture for God's glory. In emphasizing biblical identity and biblical terms I want Tim and Emily to breathe deeply of being a child of God, a redeemed person, one who's been forgiven by God, a new creature in Christ, and a victor not just in eternity but in this present experience in a fallen world.

Again, I'm not a medical doctor, like the psychiatrist. I want to work with their doctor and even bring a medical doctor into the equation. Doc Smith advises, "When medications with definite physical benefits are used for subjective purposes [as they are often applied in the mental health industry], there is no laboratory evidence of any physical change producing the altered feelings and the number of psychotropic medications used for measurable physical purposes is few" (Smith, Medical Desk Reference, 118). So why bother with it?

18. Emily is “Convinced that God is telling her to divorce Tim.” Write out your word-for-word response to Emily on this matter. In your response, be sure to address the themes of biblical decision-making and permission for divorce and remarriage.

“Emily, what do you mean by the statement that ‘God is telling me,’ especially since your Bible is closed. Please open your Bible with me so we can see what God has indeed said about divorce. Though there is a host of passages that are pertinent to the subject at hand, we’ll just consider two. These two passages provide the only two biblical criteria for divorce, which are sexual infidelity (Matt 19:3-9) and desertion by an unbeliever (1 Cor 7). I think you know that your situation does not apply to either of these conditions set up by Christ or the Apostle Paul. If you proceed in disobedience, you open yourself up to the chastening of the Lord (Heb 12) and discipline of the church (Matt 18).

Now that we’ve seen what God’s answer is about divorce, I want you to know that that does not mean I want you in an unsafe environment. It’s going to take some time to work through these issues on a weekly basis, assuming you and Tim are still willing to meet. If there should be another occasion where you fear your husband, call the police. Romans 13 tells us that they are ministers of God to punish the evil-doer. Further, God has also provided the elders of the church, so there are clear stop-gap measures that the Lord has provided. I want you both to recognize the foolishness of talking about divorce, of pulling the divorce card and using as a billy-club towards each other when you are angry, and ask for forgiveness. Look at it like you’re on the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of a high-rise when a fire breaks out. Jumping out the window is not an option. You’re only option is to put the fire out. I know there are great difficulties that the Lord has allowed in your marriage, but look at it as a tool to produce Christlikeness (Rom 8:29). Don’t try to get out of the covenant of marriage that God sovereignly brought about. You have committed to one man for a lifetime.

Lastly, let me share my concern and conviction regarding how mystical so many Christians are in regards to God’s leading. Here’s a 2-part series that I taught on “Decision-Making and the Will of God.” Please take the handout, listen to the cd, take copious notes so that we can discuss it next time. I’d also like you to consider having Beth from our church listen with you so you can dialogue and even asks questions of her since she was at the class.” I want you to be instructed through it to live by biblical truth, the fact of the Word of God, rather than your feelings. Let

biblical revelation be your foundation, which informs your faith. God commands you to know His will (Eph 5:17) and you know, based on the Bible, that marriage is forever, not just when times are good. Here's a copy of "Found, God's Will" which is a short booklet on the subject which will help etch these truth's into your heart, that you might put it into practice in your thoughts, which establish reality and will help you capture disobedient thinking and bring it captive to the obedience of Christ."

19. What strategy would you employ to see repentance, reconciliation, and restoration happen between Tim and Emily?

Again, this hinges on them being believers, children of God. God is grieved by conflict (Matt 5:21-22) and wants His children to have no part of it. Instead, He desires them to pursue peace (Rom 12:18; 14:19; Eph 4:1, 3) and pursue love, pray for, and do good to those who sin against them, especially their spouse (Matt 5:44-45; Rom 12:21).

The two must be committed to forgiveness through repentance, similarly to how they came to faith in Christ. Thus, it must be Gospel-centered. Since they have been forgiven by the Father, they must bestow forgiveness, as that which lubricates the relationship. However, that forgiveness cannot be enjoyed without a change in mind through biblical repentance and confession of sin (1 Jn 1:9).

I'd walk them through a biblical view of these concepts as opposed to the world's understanding. "We've discussed repentance, which is a necessary component of true conversion (Lk 3:3; 2 Cor 7:10) and is also something that obedient believers partake of daily both with God and others (Ps 51; Lk 17:3-4). Having said that, you can't repent if you don't understand the issue. You must be convinced of your sin and not blameshift or make excuse, but own it. This change of mind regarding your sin will lead to change in action, as you stop living in the delusion that you are not at fault. If two people are in the same room, I must confess to being the bigger sinner and need of mercy. I must stop being right in my own eyes. So you are to comprehend the sin, confess it for what it is, and resolve to forsake it (even if you later end up trespassing in the same way). Once you begin putting on this new mindset towards your sin, your repentance will put on shoe-leather of reconciliation. When you are convicted over your broken relationship with your spouse, you will seek to do whatever you can to transform that conflict into a peaceful and edifying friendship (Matt 5:24; Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 2:7-8). This means you need to stop looking at each other as the enemy! Emily, do you realize he is in your corner? He's part of your team and the one who has pledged allegiance to you, forsaking all others. Even when he speaks in anger, though he is sinning, it is done in the context of the marriage covenant. And Tim, the same applies to you. You must acknowledge the immediacy of restoration that our Savior and Lord underscores in His Sermon on the Mount. You must also obey Paul's command to not let the sun go down without being rightly related to each other. To do so would be to give the enemy of

your soul and marriage a foothole. I want you to take this pamphlet from Peacemaker Ministries and read through it with each other, looking up every verse and discussing the points. Next week you need to give me 3 verses that you have memorized and put in your arsenal to battle the sinful approach to relationships. I'm seeking to disciple you in a 2 Timothy 2:2 sort of way that as God grants you victory in this area, you move from the counselee seat into the counselor seat. Part of biblical stewardship is for you not only to obey these truths we're studying, but to teach them to others. Biblical repentance, restoration, and reconciliation is so lacking not only in the home, but in the church. Seek God's face in humble petition asking Him to humble you at the foot of the cross, to smash pride, and give your spouse what they need the most in those conflicts, Jesus Christ. I remember Jim Newheiser saying some way that when at odds with your spouse, it becomes our privileged opportunity to show mercy."

20. Describe a detailed plan of restoring marital communication that you would pursue with Tim and Emily.

Coming out of looking at conflict, we would begin in James 4 and also talk of logs and specks (Matt 11). They would be encouraged to seek out intentionally to know their spouse well, appreciating him/her and understand their perspective (1 Pet 3:7). Learn to gather plenty of data before speaking (Prov 18:13, 17), especially knowing that communication was drastically affected by the Fall; we don't send out good communication, nor do we receive it well through listening properly. Need to pray, study, and think about the issue before speaking, if possible (Prov 15:28). They need to demonstrate and communicate love and care at the time of disagreement (Rom 12:9-10). Another habit to put on is listening more than you speak, though speak. In matters of sin, approach your spouse in love (Eph 4:15) and in matters of preference, prefer them (Rom 12:10). In other matters of conscience, suggest searching the Scriptures and getting godly counsel (Prov 11:14; 2 Tim 2:15). Resolve never to sin in your communication (Prov 8:6-8). Further, be more interested in God's glory and the other's good, rather than having your own way, or being right (Josh 22:5; Rom 15:2). Finally, give a gentle and caring answer to their angry words (Prov 15:1).

Tim and Emily, please recognize that communication was drastically affected by the Fall. It is not only hard, but it's also twisted, in that we are selfish and sinful souls who desire our own way and demean others to get it. There is no couple alive who is experiencing harmony that is not communicating well. In other words, biblical communication must take place for marital harmony to exist.

Effective biblical communication comes from our "non-verbals" (actions and behavior), our listening, and then our words and speech. First of all, regarding our non-verbals, have you ever tuned in to how you come across? Tim, you have told Emily verbally that you love her, but when she tries to talk to you, you keep walking away. What does that communicate? Disinterest, not engagement. Second, how good are you at listening? Emily, though Tim is not a man of many words when he's tried to engage in conversation you won't stop scrolling on Facebook, which communicates you aren't listening to the problem he's expressing. We can't answer a matter wisely or speak into an issue unless we have first

heard it (Prov 18:13). Listening to your spouse is one of the biggest ways you can serve him/her and express love. Time is a valuable commodity that must be shared in this way. Third, the words come after the proper attention spent on body language and listening, for we communicate without words much of the time. Our speech must be honest, putting off all falsehood, including deceit, exaggeration, evasion, and innuendo (Eph 4:25). Further, turn off the evening television and put on the practice of speaking regularly (Eph 26:27). By cultivating regular speech/communication, you won't be ignoring issues that would otherwise grow and multiply, but you'd do as Barney Fife and "nip it in the bud," dealing with the small things before they get worse and cause bitterness. Finally, covenant to only speak with the purpose of building up (Eph 4:29-30) and ministering grace to your spouse. For this week's homework I'd like to both to read together the chapter on communication in your marriage book by Wayne Mack and do the discussion questions that we'll discuss next week. Journal this week any positive traction in your communication, or where it was an abysmal failure.