

Workshop Session 1

Integrating a Biblical Counselling Approach in the Local Church



Steve Midgley

Which local church?

Process varies

- Leadership supportive or unaware
- Trained individuals or not
- Church size small or large
- Small groups or not
- Pastoral care team or not

Four workshops

- 1. Foundation:** Identifying a biblical counselling approach
- 2. Structure:** Supporting pastoral care
- 3. Vision:** Casting and maintaining vision
- 4. Managing:** Misunderstandings, suspicions and barriers

Foundation: discussion

- How would you define biblical counselling?
- What *is* 'a biblical counselling approach'?

Biblical Counselling: two meanings

1. An overall approach to ministry in which 'the treasures of scripture are brought to bear upon the troubles of life'

Biblical Counselling: two meanings

2. The specific activity of interpersonal ministry, where the truth of God's word is communicated between individuals to promote spiritual growth – particularly in the context of more complex struggles.

Interpersonal Ministry

Intentional ministry where the truth of God's word is communicated between individuals

(this can encompass both 'conversational ministry' and 'counselling ministry')

Conversational Ministry

Interpersonal ministry happening in the ordinary, everyday life of Christians and churches.

This is the informal end of interpersonal ministry

Counselling Ministry

Interpersonal ministry where a more experienced carer helps someone with what are usually more complex struggles.

This is the more formal end of interpersonal ministry.

Definitions: discussion

What do you think of these definitions?

A biblical counselling approach

1. Is biblical

A biblical counselling approach

1. Is biblical

2. Involves the whole church (not a subsection of it)

A biblical counselling approach

1. Is biblical
2. Involves the whole church (not a subsection of it)
3. Is (still) distinctly counter-cultural

Some history: Puritan pastoral care

- A high point
- See Tim Keller: *Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling*

Puritan pastoral care

Why should those seeking to develop a truly biblical counseling approach give special consideration to the Puritans? Because they were the first Protestant school of Biblical Counseling.

Tim Keller: *Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling*



Puritan pastoral care

The Puritans were masters at understanding the nature of human beings and applying Scripture in practical ways to help people with their struggles and problems. In the truest sense of the word they were psychologists, students of the inner person, before there ever was a field of secular psychology.

Mark Deckard:

Helpful Truth in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling



The psychological revolution

For 1900 years:

- The relevance of God
- The authority of scripture
- The place of the church

The psychological revolution

- A new science with enlightenment thinking
- A new authority for 'problems of living'
- The church responds...
 - Defer to the new 'knowledge'
 - Refer to the new 'experts'
 - Adapt and adopt – integrative Christian counselling

Biblical Counselling Movement

- Jay Adams began (rekindled?) a biblical counselling movement
- 1968: CCEF established
(The Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation)
- 1970: Competent to Counsel

A developing movement

- First generation: polemical; behavioural; antagonistic
- Second generation: (David Powlison; Ed Welch, Paul Tripp)
 - exploring motivation;
 - seeing suffering as well as sin;
 - less authoritative, more collaborative approach

A developing movement

- No parallel work in the UK
- Brief interest among neurologists in 1970s
- Biblical Counselling UK (2015)

A biblical counselling approach

1. Is biblical
2. Involves the whole church (not a subsection of it)
3. Is (still) distinctly counter-cultural

Culture: discussion

Which aspects of biblical counselling are most counter-cultural today?

Which would seem most counter-cultural in your own church?

Six features

Six convictions...



1. Convinced of the sufficiency of Scripture

The Bible *does* speak to our life struggles

- *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3 ESV)*
- *From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 3:15)*

2. Convinced of the severity of our struggles

Honest about suffering
in all its forms



3. Convinced of the centrality of the heart

Moving beyond behaviours to identify motivations

'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' (Mark 7:6)

'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.'

(Matthew 23:25-6)

3. Convinced of the centrality of the heart

Moving beyond behaviours to identify motivations

'For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of' (Luke 6:45)

'Each tree is recognised by its own fruit.' (Luke 6:44)

The biblical heart

- The seat of the mind, will *and* emotions
- It thinks, decides *and* feels
- It forms allegiances
 - It trusts
 - It believes
 - It commits
 - It worships



4. Convinced of the relevance of idolatry

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry

(1 Cor 10:14)

Why motivation matters

When we do not think about characteristic motivations, the counselee's 'relationship with God' tends to be approached chiefly through outward disciplines: devotional life, church attendance, and the like. When we do address the motivational issues biblically, the counselee's relationship with God becomes a counselling issue we can get our hands on.

David Powlison

The Biblical Counselling Movement: History and Context

4. Convinced of the relevance of idolatry

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry

(1 Cor 10:14)

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God

(1 Thess 1:9)

5. Convinced of the importance of emotions

Expulsive power of a new affection

(Jonathan Edwards)

Want to get rid of weeds? Plant grass!

6. Convinced of the role of the church

Restoring Christ to counselling and counselling to the church

The means is the church

'One-anothering' ministry

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 4:15)

The means is the church

The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the words of his brother.

Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Culture: discussion

- Which of these six convictions are least evident in your church?
(Or which would it be hardest to convince people of)?
- And why?

A practical conclusion

Ephesians 4:1-16

1. Progressive Sanctification
2. The priority of God's word
3. 'One-anothering'

