

PASTORAL COUNSELING

Online Syllabus

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Course Objectives

This is a course designed to equip future pastors and interested lay people to counsel the poor in spirit by using the Bible as their help manual. Counseling is intensive and remedial discipleship which means it belongs in the church and is a ministry of the people of God. Students will be exposed to the Bible's approach to counseling and be taught how to biblically intervene to help those who struggle with the issues of life. Communication skills, listening techniques, use of forms, and biblical paradigms will be learned throughout the course. A theology of pain, a biblical anthropology, and a model of counseling will be presented to aid a pastoral counselor in dealing with hurts, disappointments, and unmet longings of a counselee. Biblical admonitions and meaningful repentance will be stressed. Lectures, readings, discussions, and lab work will challenge students to sharpen themselves as counselors to think biblically about the content and process of the counseling relationship.

Required Texts

Bridges, Jerry. *Trusting God*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992.

Stuart, Robert D. *The Jonathan Ministry: A Manual for Biblical Counseling*. 1992.

Tripp, Paul David. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002.

Recommended Supplementary Texts (not required)

Fitzpatrick, Elyse. *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 2002.

Brandt, Henry. *Breaking Free from the Bondage of Sin*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994.

Lane, Timothy, and Tripp, Paul David. *How People Change*. Greensboro, NC, New Growth Press, 2008.

Course Requirements and Grading Method

Lecture Outlines: Turn in a lecture outline for each of the course lectures. Outlines should have at least two levels of subordination (e.g., I. A.) and should cover well the main topics discussed in the lectures.

Book Reports: Write 1000-word book reports for *Trusting God* and *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. These reports should summarize well the contents of each book, chapter by chapter (75%) and include your own evaluation of what you've read (25%). You will also be required to make an online oral presentation to your professor on a single chapter of your own choosing from one of these two assigned books.

Self-Analysis: Using the paradigms and skills learned in the class, write a five-page analysis on who you are, your family background, the problematic patterns that caused certain life commandments to be formed, your present struggles, how they relate to the ministry, the effect (both positive and negative) your patterns have on the people closest to you, and your plan to overcome them. Plan to discuss this analysis with your instructor during your final conference.

Exercises: Complete the exercises below labeled Chapters 4, 5, and 9. Submit each as indicated in the appropriate module.

Course Grade: Your course grade will be weighted as follows:

- Lecture Outlines: 20%
- Book Reports: 30%
- Self-Analysis: 20%
- Exercises: 30%

EXERCISES FOR THE COUNSELOR

CHAPTER 4

Rotten to the Core

The Four Core Issues

Genesis 3 and 4 list the core issues with which every human being will struggle. Recognition of the sin issues is the first step to recovery; repentance is the necessary step for restoring relationships.

- (1) Explain your struggles with any or all of the four core issues. What makes it difficult for you to overcome the issues?
 - a. Guilt/Shame
 - b. Fear
 - c. Unmet Longings/discontent
 - d. Anger
- (2) To which negative patterns have you been enslaved? What plan will you make to help overcome them?

Helping Others

Understanding the Onion Paradigm will help the counselor diagnose the core problems within the counselee, which in turn affects various aspects of his or her life.

- (1) A person comes to you and says that she has gone before the Lord a number of times for forgiveness of a certain sin she committed against her husband. She confides in you that she does not feel forgiven. What would you say to her?
- (2) Many people become discontented because they do not obtain their desires. In what way is discontent the sin of coveting? How would you approach a counselee with this information?

EXERCISES FOR THE COUNSELOR

CHAPTER 5

The Peeling Process

Whatever happened to sin?

If a counselor is to help others, he must be aware of his own sin nature and confess and repent of these sins. Otherwise, he will be like the blind leading the blind.

- (1) Explain where you may be currently sinning. What do you propose to do about it?
 - a. Missing the mark
 - b. Overstepping a boundary
 - c. Leaning rather than standing straight
 - d. Diminishing that which should be rendered in full
 - e. Ignorance
- (2) In what way does your pride ensnare you and cause more problems and frustrations? How do you repent of pride?

Helping Others

Most people do not like the peeling process. They want relief, but do not want to expend the effort it takes to become right with Christ. In fact, they may even rationalize their sins by reimagining God as a “Teddy Bear” who does not want them unhappy.

- (1) How would you determine if your counselee formed a different Christ in their minds, which leads them to follow the Christ of their imagination rather than the Christ of Scripture?
- (2) How would you determine if pride was a problem that the counselee had? In what way is a poor self-image prideful?
- (3) How would you explore whether a person demonstrates the marks of a believer as expressed by Christ? Once you determine that your counselee may not be a believer, how would you approach counseling him or her?

- (4) How would you determine whether a person is remorseful or repentant? If only remorseful, how would you explain repentance to him or her?
- (5) If after a number of sessions you determine that the counselee is not serious about peeling away the patterns of his own self-protection or dealing with the core issues confronting them, how would you terminate the relationship with him or her?

EXERCISES FOR THE COUNSELOR

CHAPTER 9

You Don't Know What Pain Is!

Pain is a Gift

Pain is a major reason that many people are discontent. By focusing on our aches and pains we are saying that Christ is not enough, not sufficient to meet our needs.

(1) How has pain in your life caused you to question the love of God?

(2) How has adversities in your life drawn you closer to Christ?

Helping Others

Empathy must be shown to the counselee, especially when the pain in his life is severe and unexplainable. The counselor must plug into the pain without losing sight of God's purposes.

(1) How would you show empathy to a hurting counselee?

(2) How would you explain 2 Corinthians 1:4 to a counselee that can't see past his pain?

(3) If God is in control of all circumstances, how would you determine the right time to explain the goodness of God in these painful situations?