

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 1 – Competent to Disciple

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Introduction

The Scriptures are clear that all believers (those who have exercised true saving faith) are able to use the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit to address their own and others' life issues and sin. This is not an activity reserved for an elite group of professionals ("experts") or those who have received special training or certification. In recent times, this care is termed "Biblical Counseling". In the times of the Apostles, it was called disciple making.

The purpose of these studies is to equip each of us so that through the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures we can mature, grow in our ability to apply the Scriptures to our own life issues and sin, and also bring Biblical care to one another.

The class plan over the next year is to begin with several areas of systematic theology and the implications for addressing sin and difficult life issues: God's attributes, sin, salvation, worship or Spirit-filling, the sufficiency of Scripture, Biblical change, and the church's role in addressing sin. Then we will address specific areas of struggle like forgiveness, pride, anger, temptation, trials and suffering, decision making, sexual sin, anxiety and worry, depression, fear of man, marriage, and parenting. All this material will be posted on the VBC Biblical Counseling web page.

Psychology

There are three questions that secular psychology seeks to answer regarding man: "Who is man?", "What is wrong with him?", and "How do we fix him?" The world seeks to answer these questions with theories that address symptoms and not the root cause. Since "psychology" means "study of the soul", it would make sense to be concerned with how God answers these questions. The place we go to answer them is the Bible. Here is a short comparison of psychology and the Bible, but we will answer these more fully throughout our studies.

Who is man?

Psychology – Man is an evolved animal born morally neutral (or good); governed by instincts.

Bible – Man is a created being in the image of God for the purpose of glorifying God.

What is wrong with man?

Psychology – Environmental factors (family, religion, trauma victim, etc.) have influenced man to cause psychological problems. Man is not at fault, he is not responsible.

Bible – Man is sinner by nature and choice; he is responsible for his own sin and responses to experiences.

How do you fix man?

Psychology – Man is fixed by medication designed to attack behavior and/or re-education and changing of emotions and thinking by self-actualization, improving self-worth, eliminating self-defeating outlooks on life, etc.

Bible – Man requires freedom from the penalty and power of sin through salvation in Jesus Christ; then growth (progressive sanctification) through the Holy Spirit and Word of God.

❖ How do I answer those three questions?

Presuppositions

We will identify six basic presuppositions of discipleship.

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.

This is **THE** basic presupposition since we derive all other understanding from the Bible. God is the source of Scripture. The Bible is the inspired (God-breathed), plenary (inspired in equal parts), verbal (extending to the very words), infallible (completely incapable of error), inerrant (completely without error) in the original manuscripts Word of God! The Scriptures are God's complete moral will for us. An appreciation of the Scriptures' qualities is necessary to understand the need for obedience to God's Word. It is impossible to neglect the Bible when we truly accept it as the very Word of God. We will speak more on this in later lessons.

¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is **inspired** by God and profitable for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **training in righteousness**; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:14-17

“Teaching” denotes what is taught or doctrine (i.e. the entire body of theological truth).

“Reproof” means bringing to light; telling someone when they are out-of-bounds (Negative).

“Correction” means straightening up again; a restoration of something to its original and proper condition (Positive).

“Training” means habit-forming behavior moving toward maturity.

2. The Scriptures are authoritative and fully sufficient for all matters of faith and conduct.

This presupposition flows from the first. If the Bible is God's inspired Word, then it is fully sufficient to meet all the spiritual needs of God's people. And, it is only Scripture that is able to meet these needs. The Bible is authoritative (see Matt 4:4, 7, 10) and therefore the standard for faith and practice for every person. In addition, the Bible accomplishes its purpose (Isa 55:11; Heb 4:12) for which God sends it forth. It is powerful and therefore able to accomplish God's desire in the lives of people. Unlike any other writing, the words of Scripture are able to perform the work their intended result (1 Thess 2:13) because the author, the Holy Spirit, is at work in the lives of the readers.

⁸“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.

⁹“For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; **It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.** Isa 55:8-11

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12

¹³For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, **which also performs its work in you who believe.** 1 Thess 2:13

❖ How high is my view of Scripture?

3. Only Christ can set people free from the penalty and power of sin.

Satan is currently the “god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4). His worldwide system of deception and wickedness leaves God out and is opposed to Him. It is demonic (James 3:15). Satan’s aim is to make the values of this godless system seem attractive, appealing to all that is in the world (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life – 1 John 2:15-17). Clearly, Satan’s world system has no power to free people from the penalty and power of sin.

The Scriptures are clear that this is only possible through Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-10 (I am a sinner saved by grace through faith)

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

Romans 10:8-17 (salvation from sin is through faith in Jesus presented in the gospel)

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” Rom 1:16-17

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17

Romans 6:15-23 (the believer is freed from the power of sin)

⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6

❖ Do I look somewhere other than Jesus to be freed from the penalty and power of sin?

4. Every believer has the resources necessary to live a life glorifying to God.

There are many Christians who are looking for the next method for spiritual success. They read book after book, listen to sermon after sermon, search the internet and read blog after blog only to continue to struggle in their Christian walk. The Scriptures tell us something different. We do not need to look for some new gimmick to walk in a manner that glorifies God. A true believer (one who has exercised true saving faith) has all the recourses now (through the Spirit and Word) to walk in a manner that glorifies God.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love Eph 1:3-4

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

³seeing that **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.** ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Peter 1:2-4

❖ Do I believe at the heart level God’s promise of the resources to walk in a way that glorifies Him and am I acting on it?

5. Making disciples is the responsibility of every believer.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matt 28:19-20

This “Great Commission” is our Lord’s last command to His disciples (i.e. us). The only imperative in this passage is “make disciples”. “Go”, “baptizing”, and “teaching” are participles that modify or describe the main verb of “making disciples”. These activities characterize disciple making; they are the “how” of disciple making.

“Go” is literally “having gone”. It assumes an active pursuit of the lost (Luke 19:10). To whom are we to go? “All the nations”, which includes family, neighbors, workmates, strangers, and even different countries. This going is to increasing spheres or relationships personally removed from myself (Acts 1:7-8): near, farther, even farther, and very far.

“Baptizing” has to do with identifying individuals with Jesus Christ. An act of obedience by the new disciple that shows their desire to follow Jesus with their entire life. It is an outward expression of what has happened in the inner person. It is a sign of entrance into God’s family and of pledged submission to His Lordship.

“Teaching” is not just giving knowledge, but teaching a lifestyle – “to obey all that the Lord commanded”. Those that surrender to Christ for salvation, identifying themselves with Him in baptism, must be trained to observe all that He commanded. This process continues until each believer is presented “complete in Christ” (Col 1:28). Movement towards Christ-likeness marks a believer; a professed conversion does not make a true disciple. Jesus said, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine...” (John 8:31).

This is not a trivial effort. Jesus made disciples by **personal effort and time**.

¹³And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. ¹⁴And He appointed twelve, so that they would be **with Him** and that He *could* send them out to preach, ¹⁵and to have authority to cast out the demons. Mark 3:13-15

The goal of discipleship is not to make replicas of ourselves, but of Christ. Therefore, all disciple makers must be pursuing growth in their own relationship with the Lord.

¹Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. 1 Cor 11:1

❖ Am I putting personal time and effort towards obeying Jesus’ command?

6. Every Spirit-filled believer is capable and commanded to disciple one another using the Bible.

a. The result of Spirit-filling is teaching and admonishing other believers.

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹**speaking to one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; Eph 5:18-19

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing** one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Col 3:16

We will talk in more detail about the filling of the Spirit in a later lesson. For now, it is sufficient to discuss that Spirit-filling results in teaching and admonishing one another.

Teaching means to provide instruction, impart positive truth, in a formal or informal setting. Inherent is the intent to influence understanding with the aim to shape the will of one taught.

“Admonish” conveys the ideas of encouraging, advising, and warning people of the consequences of their behavior. It speaks of encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming punishment; counsel with a warning involved. The word implies a definite exhortation, correction, and warning. When it is used, there is always the implication of a problem. It presupposes an obstacle that must be removed or changed.

The only requirement to be able to “teach” and “admonish” is to be Spirit-filled (allowing the words of Christ to richly dwell within us).

❖ Am I living a life of worship, consistently filled with the Spirit?

b. Spirit-filled believers are “able to admonish” other believers.

¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and **able also to admonish one another**. Rom 15:13-14

“Admonish” is the same word used in Col 3:16.

c. Spirit-filled believers are called to restore sinning believers.

¹Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness**; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²**Bear one another’s burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:1-2

“Spiritual” believers are those who are filled with the Spirit and, therefore, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. They are to restore those caught in any trespass (sin).

It should be noted that, whereas maturity is relative, depending on one’s progression and growth, spirituality is an absolute reality that is unrelated to growth. At any point in the life of a Christian, from the moment of his salvation to his glorification, he is either **spiritual**, walking in the Spirit, or fleshly, walking in the deeds of the flesh. Maturity is the cumulative effect of the times of spirituality. But any believer, at any point in his growth toward Christ-likeness, can be a **spiritual** believer who helps a sinful believer who has fallen to the flesh. MacArthur NT Commentary – Galatians

Spiritual believers are to bear the burdens of trespassing believers. “Bear” has the thought of carrying with endurance; sustain, uphold, or support. “Burdens” refers to heavy loads that are difficult to lift and carry; representing personal difficulty or problem. Love demands that we support believers who are struggling with difficulties or sin.

❖ What am I waiting for, what else do I need to care for a fellow believer?

d. The goal of every disciple-maker is to labor to present everyone who comes across their path as complete in Christ.

²⁸We **proclaim Him, admonishing** every man and **teaching** every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. Col 1:28-29

This effort is accomplished in the power of the Spirit with labor and striving by proclaiming Christ, admonishing, and teaching.

❖ Am I exerting energy, “laboring” and “striving”, to make disciples?

- e. All believers are to minister to other believers.

¹⁴We urge you, brethren, **admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak**, be patient with everyone. 1 Thess 5:14

“Unruly” describes people who are in rebellion against God. “Admonish” again describes alerting someone of the serious consequences of their actions; to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct.

“Fainthearted” describes people who feel their resources are too small for a given situation and therefore are despondent or discouraged. “Encourage” means to relate near, encourage, console (to serve as a source of comfort in disappointment, loss, sadness, trouble), comfort.

“Weak” describes people who struggle with abandoning sin and obeying God’s will. “Help” describes strongly laying hold of the weak with the idea of supporting them.

- ❖ Am I involved with my brothers and sisters in a personal way which gives me opportunities to minister to them?

- f. Believers do not need to experience the same difficulty as other believers to provide care.

Many people believe that it is impossible to care for some else to whom you cannot personally relate. The thought is, “I have to walk in their shoes before I can help them.” The Bible holds to a very different paradigm for providing care.

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Cor 1:3-4

The only requirement to provide Biblical care is a Spirit-filled believer. Because I am a believer, by definition I have received the Lord’s comfort for the purpose to be able to comfort others.

- ❖ Am I comforting other believers?

Challenge

The Scriptures are clear that all believers are able and commanded to use the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit to address their own and others’ life issues and sin. If we are going to use the Scriptures in this way, then the Scriptures need to be an integral part of our life.

¹⁶**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Col 3:16

¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth**. 2 Tim 2:15

⁹For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God *was* upon him. ¹⁰For Ezra had **set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances** in Israel. Ezra 7:9-10

- ❖ Where and how might I be involved in disciple making?
- ❖ Am I involved in disciple making?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 1 – Competent to Disciple – Additional Study

Read Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-16; and Psalm 119:9-11 and answer the following questions.

What can God's Word do powerfully in my heart?

Am I treasuring God's Word in my heart?

What does/would treasuring God's Word look like?

What differences would be evident in my life if I were treasuring God's Word in my heart (specific thoughts and deeds)?

Read Colossians 1:28-29 and answer the following questions.

When was the last time I "proclaimed Him"?

How should I view non-believers that cross my path?

How should I view believers that cross my path?

What specific ways am I currently laboring and striving to make disciples?

How would my life look differently if I were living out this passage?

Read Galatians 6:1-2 and answer the following questions.

In this passage, the believer who restores the sinning brother/sister is described as "spiritual" (Spirit-filled). Does that describe me?

If not, what needs to change to so that it describes me?

Read Ephesians 1:3-4.

List out as many spiritual blessings as you can think of.