

Counseling God's Way Leadership Seminar - Part 2

by Bob Hoekstra

God's way in counseling is through His Word, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the relational church life, emphasizing the importance of one another ministry and teaching and admonishing one another.

Duration: 1:17:35

Topics: "Biblical Counseling", "Christian Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of counseling God's way, focusing on foundational truths found in Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8. It highlights the core issues of sin, the remedy of God's grace, being united with Christ, the struggle of walking in the flesh, and the deliverance through Jesus Christ. The liberating power of the Word of God is emphasized, contrasting it with worldly counseling theories.

Transcript

Well, in this second session, let's pick up right where we were, looking at God's way in counseling. The Lord is our counselor. No surprise that His basic means in counsel is His Word.

The Word of God is the counsel of the Lord. And I commend to you the study of the Scripture, not only for life and ministry, but also watching out for this grand theme of the ability of the Word of God. What God's Word is able to do.

If people just receive it into their lives, or if we will just take it like living seed, and scatter it on the soil of human hearts who come our way for help. The Word is so able. It's His basic way to counsel us.

But the moment we acknowledge in light of the Word that God's Word is His basic means of counseling, it brings into view issues like the Holy Spirit. John chapter 16, verses 13 and 14. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all the truth.

For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. These are the words of the Lord Jesus, teaching in the upper room to His disciples, discipling them.

And much of the teaching in the upper room pertained to the Holy Spirit. Here the Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. What a great title for the Holy Spirit.

There are various titles of the Holy Spirit, Comforter being one of them, but here He's called the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit inspiring the prophets and the apostles of old to write the message of God, the very words the Lord was laying on their hearts and minds. Here we're told that this Spirit-inspired message of the Bible is to be taught to us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

How great to have a Holy Spirit Bible. All Scripture is inspired of God. The Bible not being the words of man, but the words of God to and through man, inspired by the Spirit, superintended by the Spirit, so that what they wrote down was what God had on His heart to say.

And how wonderful to see that this Word of God that is inspired by the Spirit of God can be taught to us by the Holy Spirit. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, the one who inspired the truth in the Word, the one who wants to guide us into all the truth, when He has come, He will guide you into all truth, all the truth of the Word of God. The Christian life cannot really be properly developing and lived out apart from the enabling work of the Holy Spirit, and we'll look at that later in some of our study on foundational truths.

But also the Word of God cannot even really be understood. We need a guide. These words of God, this is the kingdom of heaven, this is the mind of the living God.

Who has known the mind of the Lord? We haven't. Man can't just take the Word and try to grasp it with the strength of human intellect. Oh, God definitely wants our intellect to be exercised and shaped by His Word, but He must enlighten our intellect.

We need a guide when we go into the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit is our guide. Look what He wants to do in verse 14. He, the Holy Spirit, will glorify Me, Jesus, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

These are the things we need. The work of the Holy Spirit, guiding us into the truth of the Word of God, certainly verse by verse, chapter by chapter in reading and considering, but then guiding us into correlations and connections and elaborations where one part of the Word elaborates another part of the Word, and we grow in an understanding and a perspective that is of God and is of His Word. And, of course, the centerpiece is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, will glorify Me.

One of the great quenchings of the Holy Spirit in the church world today is the glorifying of man. When you read the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia, you come to Laodicea, and what a self-absorbed, self-sufficient, self-exalting church that was. You know what that does? That pushes the Lord Jesus Christ out of the picture.

In fact, in that very passage, Jesus is outside knocking on the door. Why is He knocking on the door? He wants to be in among and in the midst of His people in that church, or at least those people who profess to be His and call it His church. He's knocking.

How sad to have the Lord displaced, and it's very clear in Laodicea what is displacing the Lord's place in His church. It's this occupation with self. Boy, we're in a self-crazed age.

Self-improvement, self-help, self-assertion, self-actualization, self-love, self-esteem, self-promotion. It is not only not the way of the Lord, it is the opposite of the way of the Lord. He will glorify me.

The quenching of the Spirit, the displacing of Christ in His church, it's this passion of this age for self-ism kind of issues. We're called to glorify Him. The Holy Spirit was sent to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the great signs of a Spirit-filled church is the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified among the people. They're boasting in Him. They're reveling in Him.

They're marveling in Him. They're talking about Him, preaching about Him, praying in His name, hungering for His work in their midst. Well, this applies to counseling God's way as well.

Our counsel is the Word of God, but it's not the Word of God just left to our best understanding or our best attempt to explain it and other people's best attempt to live up to it. It's in the Word, centered in Christ. He's the focus, His honor and glory, and He's our hope and our help.

This is the central, core ministry of the Holy Spirit. Yes, God's Word is our message in counseling God's way. But to properly understand that message and impart it and share it with clarity and conviction with others, it necessitates the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, guiding us into all the truth.

As we're listening, prayerfully listening to those who want our help and counsel, we can trust the Holy Spirit to be bringing to our remembrance the things the Lord has taught us, John 14. And by His guidance and His enabling work, ministering the Word to people, anticipating that it's going to be a Christ-centered, Christ-anchored, Christ-glorifying Word. The centerpiece of our counseling message to people is who the Lord Jesus Christ is, what He's done, what He is fully able to yet do.

That brings comfort to hope, to folks' hearts. It brings hope to their hearts. It brings life to the dead, the dying, the discouraged, all by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But when you talk about the Holy Spirit and His work, that leads logically, biblically, to the next fundamental way of the Lord in His counsel, and that is prayer. The Spirit of the Lord works in prayerful, seeking hearts. Colossians 1, verse 9. Colossians 1, 9 is a prayer.

We're called in the Word to pray at all times, to pray without ceasing. A heart turned toward the Lord day by day, step by step. It's the way of the Lord.

Prayer is to the Christian life like breathing is to the physical life. It's not just something to do at an announced time and place, though that's great. It's appropriate every step of the day.

The attitude of the heart tuned toward the Lord, ready at any time to break into verbalization of prayer need or praise, or just silent arrows shot to heaven, the throne of God, for the issues we face here on earth. A phone call comes. The boss calls us in.

Someone's meeting with us for lunch with a broken heart. We're spontaneously stopped and asked for help. We don't have to tell them, you know, I need about a half hour of prayer here before I answer you.

You can just talk to the Lord right there. Approach the throne of grace boldly. Not with cockiness.

Boldness means you're aware of guaranteed access. You know you're going to be heard. You can speak to the living God Himself guided by the Spirit through the name of Jesus.

That's where the Lord works, in prayerful seeking hearts. That's why in Luke 11, when it talks about God giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, not only initially, but any way, any measure, fullness, guidance, in response to prayer. Well, these two scriptures on this line, that the Spirit of God works in the Word of God in prayerful seeking hearts, these are both prayers.

These are biblical prayers. You can't pray better than the Word of God. If we're perplexed on what to pray, just get in the Word.

And when your heart is stirred on a verse, a phrase, an issue, just turn it into prayer. And the easiest place to do that is where? In prayers that are already recorded in the Word. These are recorded by the Spirit for that moment, but for all kinds of moments we find ourselves in.

Look at Colossians 1.9. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Oh, what a great prayer for every day of our lives. To be filled with the knowledge of His will, accompanied with, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

How about applying that to the counseling ministry? How about when we're seeking counsel? What a great prayer for us to pray. How about when others come to us for help? Haven't you heard this from many, a child of God? Oh, I'd appreciate your prayers, here's what I'm facing, and I've just got to know the will of God on this. Haven't we said that a lot in our lives? Sure we have.

Have we not heard it? Yes. Many a person coming to us seeking counsel, they might not even think of it as seeking counsel. They're just hurting, needy, or hungry, and they want help.

And for some reason, God has them turn to us. Maybe they know us, love us, know we love them, trust us, at least know we love God and His word. And boom, we're the counselor.

That is, the human instrumental counselor in the hands of the wonderful counselor. How about praying this with that person? You know, why don't we pray together a second? We're going to be sharing here for a while. Let's pray this great prayer in Colossians 1-9, that we may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

You know, 1 John 5 tells us, if we ask anything according to His will, we know we've been heard, and we have that which we have requested. Well, these prayers are the will of God. Finding prayers in the scripture that express our heart and our situation, and praying them to God as though they were just uttered first of all from our heart, great way to proceed with the Lord in seeking counsel or giving counsel.

God is going to hear and answer prayer like that. Counsel, it stands on the reality of the Lord being the wonderful counselor. It stands on the reality of His word being His counsel, and the Holy Spirit guiding us in that counsel.

Where does the prayer fit in? Really, Lord, work Your way and Your will in this situation. It's like turning all of that truth to prayer. Ephesians 1.17, another great prayer in the scriptures.

In fact, in Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 3 are two of the greatest prayers recorded in the New Testament. Ephesians 1.17, verse 16 talks about making mention of You in my prayers, and here's what Paul prayed for these saints. 1.17 Ephesians, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

May I say, in the knowing of Him. Knowing of Him, that's a good paraphrase. And it helps remind us that the knowledge of the Lord is not just an accumulation of facts about Him.

That's involved, but that's in a relationship with Him. What a prayer this is. This is one of the majestic prayers of the whole Bible.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you, and it's plural, it's a prayer for the saints at Ephesus, and saints anywhere praying for other saints. May give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowing of Him. You know what? That verse actually deals with the greatest need anyone and everyone has on the face of the earth.

You might say, well, that's a pretty presumptive statement. No, I don't think so. I think it's biblically sound.

What's the ultimate issue in all of life and creation? Knowing God. People who exist on this earth and never get to know God, the whole purpose of God's creating them has been missed. Our greatest need in life is to know the Lord.

That involves, of course, initially being introduced to Him, which the Gospel does, lets us meet, lets the sinner meet the Savior, and hear the Savior calling the sinner to salvation. What an introduction that is. Most likely all of us here have enjoyed that introduction, and hopefully have had some years along the way where we've actually been getting acquainted with the Savior that we met.

This verse is about growing in knowing the Lord. It's kind of nice to know that everyone who comes our way, we already know their greatest need. And if they're a Christian and they study the Bible, they know our greatest need.

And we can actually both help each other with the counsel of the Lord that helps us get to know Him better and better. We'll talk about those kind of truths in a little while here, foundational truths for counseling God's way. That's just a foundational issue.

You know that's going to pertain to everyone you ever meet, any place, whoever asks for any kind of counsel. And often we might not know a specific action step, which folks are often looking for. But we can point them to the Lord who will lead them into that action step, will comfort and strengthen them when there is no step to take, but only intercession to pour out, and they can get to know Him a little better, which leaves them more prepared and equipped for the next issue of life.

Yes, God's way in counseling is through His Word. Second, by the work of the Holy Spirit. Third, taking place in prayerful, God-seeking hearts.

And then this fourth arena of God's way in counseling is the relational church life of God's people. Yes, a person may have gone to an official appointment with someone carrying an official title of counselor, and maybe even have done it in an office or a clinic or some such place. And God is looking on hearts and honors His truth wherever it comes up, by whomever.

But fundamentally and basically, counseling God's way is to be taking place in the relational church life of the saints. I say relational, you know, our one another fellowship and life together. As the church gathered, and then as the church scattered.

Where are the people of the world? Where are they supposed to go to get the help that everyone needs along the way, and sometimes desperately so. Where are they to go? How about to the living God, and get help in that process by people who know the living God. The trend in this day and age is troubled souls are sent out to the world's experts, and even sent there by the church.

It came to me one day, sometimes in the church, we act like, well, sinner, we can help you get off the road to hell and on the road to heaven. But if you've got any circumstantial trials that are beyond an emotional hangnail, I'm sorry, you'll just have to go back out there in the world and find help. You know, reading the word of God, it came to me one day, hey, this seems backwards.

The world should be beating down the doors of the churches, saying, okay, we want to know what's going on in there. We've been watching who comes in. The broken, the busted, the emotionally lame, the mentally maimed, the condemned, the weak, the poor, and spirit.

But the more they seem to come in there, they come out transformed. It's like they're being made whole. What are you doing in there? We're introducing them to the Lord of glory, boasting in him, crying out for his work through his word by his spirit, and they're finding life abundant.

We should hear them say, could I get an appointment? I mean, if you don't mind counseling a human expert, could I get an appointment? It's clear in the scriptures. This kind of ministry one to another with the word of life is basic to the ways of the Lord. In many, many a place, it's like it is lost.

Look at Colossians 3.16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom. And again, this is the plural you, written to a group of saints at Colossae, appropriate for every collection, group of saints anywhere in time and space in the history of the church. Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you.

Oh, this is good counsel individually. This is good counsel for a church. Make rich place for the word of God.

Why is it when we gather together, most of us in our churches, a lot of attention is given to the word of God. Is that just some tradition or some church growth program? Oh no, dear saints. This is the call of God.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you, among you richly. We don't want to be misers as a church with the word of God. We want to give it rich place to dwell.

It's one of the cautions of the new trends in the American church growth movement, the seeker-sensitive trends, and even the emerging church movement. It seems like less and less attention is being given to the word of God, and less and less deep is the digging in the word of God. That's not God's way.

That's not wise. That's worldly wisdom. That's religious organizational development.

Here's what builds the body of Christ. Here's what transforms lives. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Oh, that's the kind of church we want to go to right there. That's the kind of church we want to be. The word of Christ dwelling richly, and it will include in it one another ministry.

See that? Teaching and admonishing one another. This word, admonishing, tied to the phrase one another, is one of the New Testament. There are two terms in the New Testament that can rightly be translated, and often are in different versions, counseling one another.

This one is admonishing, so it's kind of counseling with warning. There's your life, here's the word, don't you see the discrepancy? That's part of our ministry, one to another. It's a one another ministry.

It's not that we have to go off and find a professional expert admonisher or a counselor who will warn us. We're to be doing this with one another. That's why I say God's counseling is primarily to be taking place in the relational life of those of us who are in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we gather together and do such with one another. We scatter out into the world and are available to do that toward those who are not yet in Christ Jesus. Or special times together with a little group or one on one, counseling one another.

In discipleship. That's fundamental to the way the kingdom of heaven is to operate. And the kingdom of heaven on earth now is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Kingdom of heaven. That domain where God rules His king in hearts. Where is that today on this earth? It's the church.

It's the church. And we are to be counseling one another with admonishment when needed. You know, warnings.

Brother, sister, watch out for that. That thought, that behavior, that perspective is of the world, not of God. It's of human wisdom, not the Word of God.

That's part of our counsel. And it's to be one to another. That's a pretty comprehensive term, one another.

It involves every Christian as one to be applied to every other Christian that one Christian knows or relates to. And then those other Christians back to them and to every Christian they know. Can you see the picture of that? It covers the whole body of Christ one way or another.

And this is what we're to be doing. Counseling one another with warning. We'll see a different term in a moment that's counseling one another with comfort.

But how about competency? Romans 15. Wait a minute. I'm to be counseling people? Every Christian is to be learning how to be a part of that? Yes.

But how can we be competent for that? We don't want to be careless and foolish and irresponsible. What about this issue of competency? Are we going to be able to do that? Well, according to the Word of God we can anticipate it and even how it's going to develop. Romans 15, 14.

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. There's that phrase again. Dr. J. Adams in 1970-71 wrote a book calling the church back to biblical counsel, and the title of it was *Competent to Counsel*.

He got the title from this very verse in the Williams translation, which translates, able also to admonish one another, competent to counsel one another. But look at that verse. How do we get a spiritual competency, capability, a biblical qualifying to actually function as effective counselors one to another? Well, it's right here in this verse.

I'm confident concerning you, my brethren, this is to the whole church here in Rome and any other church or believer who would read it, that you are also full of goodness. Now we know from Romans itself and the rest of the Scripture that in us dwells no good thing. This is not human goodness.

This is not innate goodness. None is good but God alone. This is the goodness of God filling people's lives.

You're full of goodness, filled with all knowledge. What kind of knowledge? Fourteen and a half chapters kind of knowledge. That's the context when that was stated.

Book of Romans type knowledge. As we get equipped in that kind of truth and the goodness of God is at work transforming our lives, brethren, we are able also to admonish one another. Or as Brother Williams put it, we are competent to counsel one another on the basis of that.

God's word in us, God's work on us and through us. That's our hope. It's not that we become these great experts.

In the kingdom of heaven really there's only one expert and it's the Lord God Almighty. The rest of us are learners. All of our lives we're learners of the Lord.

Yes, it is in the relational life of the body of Christ that God has ordained that His counsel is to take place. Romans 12. Romans 12 brings to view the matter of spiritual gifts to this matter of counseling.

Romans 12, verse 6. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith. Then drop down to verse 8. He who exhorts in exhortation or be engaged in exhortation with your spiritual gift.

One of the spiritual gifts given here is the gift of exhortation. It could be translated encouragement or comfort. It's related to the word, if you put it in the noun form, we made an English word out of it, paraclete.

The Holy Spirit, the comforter. One of the spiritual gifts in the body of Christ is exhortation or encouragement or comforting others. This is another one of those words that can be translated counsel or counseling.

The one in Colossians 3 and Romans 15 was counsel with confrontation, kind of like the law of God. Thou shalt not. This is right, this is wrong.

This is more counsel with comfort. This is like ministering the grace of God. And really in those two New Testament terms, you have quite a New Testament theology of counseling.

Counsel with confrontation, counsel with comfort. Ministering the law of God, ministering the grace of God. But how do you know when to minister which? Well, in general, we need to be learning of both.

So on the teaching and enlightening and edifying side, it's good to be sharing both and learning both. But how about in timely application, in the events of our lives or an issue that someone is facing? Well, 1 Timothy 1 says the law is for the rebellious. So if we're ministering to someone, be it a cantankerous billionaire or a rebellious teenager, the law is for the rebellious.

Why? Because the law confronts the hardness and the self-centeredness of mankind's natural heart. And certainly that pertains to many in the world who are not humbling themselves before God and crying out for forgiveness and help, but it also describes Christians at times who are willful and carnal and indulgent, and they're pressing their will and way and not God's. The law is for the rebellious.

The law condemns that, says that's foolish, that's wrong, and, you know, you have the consequences of reaping and sowing. You sow to the flesh. Dear one, that's going to reap corruption.

And sometimes the rebel is so rebellious you can hardly get more than that out of your mouth. And they're either gone or shouting you down. Well, those are still truths of the living God, and you've sown them on the heart.

You can water them with intercessory prayer even if they flee from your presence. And especially if it's not a self-righteous word you've given, but a broken-hearted, heart of God word you've given. Speak the truth in love.

But then sometime you're with a Christian or even someone in the world who's not rebellious. They're humble. They're compliant.

A child of God wanting to please God. A child of God wanting the help of God. Even a sinner in the world coming broken saying, I've sinned, I'm wrong, can you help me? How do you minister those situations? James 4, 6, God gives grace to the humble.

He gives grace. He gives His hope, His encouragement, His comfort. We remind people the Lord is for you, not against you.

The Lord is a God of love. And some people, they have a spiritual gift for this. One day a person was talking to me at church when I was pastoring and not traveling and teaching like this.

And they stopped me after service and it was a lady and she was sharing how devastated her life was. And she said, my life is just so busted and broken. Can you refer me to some expert who can help me? And I was looking at her and over her shoulder in the back of the church auditorium, I said, oh yes, there's someone I can direct you to and she's standing right back there.

This lady almost snapped her neck off. Number one, to think that her request was being answered. Number two, when she looked and she said, she's an expert? Because she kind of knew of her, you know.

Isn't she just a gal who goes to church? And she kind of quizzed me about that. Why is she an expert? She says, well, she knows the Lord, she knows the Word. I believe she has the spiritual gift of counseling, Romans 12.

And she's been using it under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit and she's grown in wisdom and knowledge of the Lord. I said, there's your expert. She thought I was going to direct her maybe to some professional out in the world.

God has provided in His Word for His body some of those, the world would call them experts, we would just say one's gifted by God, called to this ministry in a very special way. There are those. Some of you are probably exactly in that category and that's why you're kind of drawn to a time of study like we're in this weekend.

But, every Christian is to be growing in their usability in these areas. You know, every Christian is to exercise faith. The just shall live by faith.

Without faith, it's impossible to please God. But according to Romans 12, some believers, 1 Corinthians 12 I mean, some people have the gift of faith. It's a supernatural enabling to just trust God in ways that

many of us are still struggling to learn how.

But all of this, see, is taking place in the relational life of the church. That's the norm. You know, you ask the world, what's the normal pattern to get counsel? Oh, well you find some human expert on humans and you call and make an appointment with them.

That's the norm for the world. That's not the norm for the church. I'm not saying that God can't use a believer who just happens to be in that field and is turned from worldly wisdom to the wisdom of God, but the norm, the normal way for the church is in the relational life of the believers.

Normal means you're measuring it by a norm, a standard that is valid. What is it that declares normal Christian behavior for us? It's the Word of God. Don't let average behavior in the church world confuse you from normal behavior in the sight of God.

Normal is that which is measuring up more and more to the norm. That's the Word of God. Average is just what's taking place generally.

God help us to be increasingly normal. The world won't think we're normal. But here's our norm, the Word of God.

And just these few verses, and there are many, many, many, many more, just these few verses are a reminder that counseling in God's plan is to take place in and among the relational life of His people gathered together and then scattered out as salt and light into the world. All of us are called to it. Some of us have more wisdom and experience in it.

Some, on top of that, even have a spiritual gift, which means that most of their ministry and most of their fruit is going to come right in the arena of biblical counseling with others. That doesn't mean it will necessarily be a profession or a vocation, but it will mean it's an emphasis and it will be effective by the Spirit of God. So, Jesus is the wonderful counselor.

That's what counseling is. And He counsels unto discipleship. That's the other issue in defining counseling.

And His way to counsel? In His Word, by the work of the Holy Spirit, in prayerful, God-seeking hearts, all in the context of the relational one another life of the church, the body of Christ. Now, with that in mind, let's consider this matter of foundational truths for counseling. Foundational truths.

Let's start off in John chapter 8. Foundational truths. Core truth in the Word of God. The Word of God has all kinds of wonderful truth and it's all edifying and helpful.

But it's not all foundational. It's come to my mind again. It's not in our outlines.

It wasn't on my mind, but it's come to my mind now. An interesting and somewhat humorous verse that appears twice in Proverbs to make a point. What are you talking about foundational truths? Well, let me share a truth with you that is not foundational.

I think you'll see. If you don't sense already what I'm talking about, I think you'll get it quite quickly, in fact. There's a verse that appears twice.

And I'll give it kind of a paraphrase. It is better to dwell on the corner of a rooftop than in a house with a nagging woman. I didn't hear any amens.

But we know that's the truth. We know that's the truth. Why? It's one of the Proverbs inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We know it's true. But is it foundational? Well, of course not. Of course not.

Foundational truth, those are the things that someone gets saved by, and once they come to Christ, here are a series of foundational truths. You want to ground them in. Can you imagine at a mass evangelism outreach, a harvest crusade or whatever, that all the counselors are trained? Now, if anybody comes forward to the gospel tonight, we're sending them to you, counselors, and here is the one and only verse we want you to just preach to them and clarify to them, and that's this.

It is better to live on the corner of a rooftop than in a house with a nagging woman. Well, our laughter makes the point. It would be ludicrous to think that's foundational.

Foundational truths. It's where you are to stand every day of your Christian life. It's the path you're to walk every step of the Christian life.

Foundational truths. The Lord laid on my heart many years ago kind of a conviction that I often spent too much time with folks in personal ministry on peripheral issues. I didn't get to the core of life in Christ quick enough and often enough.

Or to put it another way, I was talking about superstructure issues and not enough foundational issues upon which the entire life of a Christian must stand every day. And the burden the Lord gave me on that was be praying in situations with people. And it's often on my heart and mind when we're doing the Pastor's Perspective broadcast that Lord, any question addressed to you is valid from anyone on any subject, really.

And we want to attend to it by the grace and work of your Holy Spirit. But, Lord, if some of the questions are quite peripheral and don't seem to apply day by day or broadly to many, give us wisdom in connecting that valid question, not only with maybe some insight, but with the foundational issues that are kind of latent there, that are related but not stated by the inquirer. And the Lord has shown me through the years that if the truth of His Word will impact lives anytime the Word is used, how about if we use foundational truths? Look at John 8 for a little more explanation.

John 8, 31 and 32. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Real disciples live in the Word of God. This matter we've looked at, of counseling and discipleship. Oh, we must view counseling as just one more way to disciple people.

It is not acceptable biblically to the Lord to make counseling something we do this way over here and discipling something we do that way over there. There has to be a connection between the two. And here it is, I believe, biblically.

Discipling is the overarching issue that the entire church is to be engaged in and each one of us for all of our lifetime. You know the Great Commission? Go make disciples in all the nations. So for all of the

church age around all of the world, here's what the church is to be doing.

Make disciples. Make followers of Jesus Christ. Counseling is just one of the great one-on-one personal ways to disciple people in the life-giving truth of God.

And here we're told that real disciples live in and on the Word of God. If you abide in my Word, you are my disciples indeed. Real disciples, they live in the Word.

It's their daily food. It's their daily guidance. It's their daily nurture.

It's their fellowship and communion with the Lord. This is the Word of the Lord. If you abide in my Word, you are my disciples indeed.

Real disciples live in, on, and by the Word of God and look what happens to them. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. There is liberating power in the Word of God.

People who quiz us about ministry of counseling and say, all you use in counseling people is the Bible, I've had folks say with almost those direct intonations. And, you know, early on, I mean, 35 years ago when I was starting to learn these things, I was kind of intimidated. I was like, well, yeah.

Now I like to say, oh, that's all I want to use. God, forgive me if I drift off to something else. That often provokes quite a conversation.

Why do you do that? Well, how about because there is liberating power in the Word of God? Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy of needs, which culminates in self-actualization, you know, kind of the exaltation of self. There's no liberating power in those speculations. And really, they totally contradict the Scripture.

You know, you put out a hierarchy of needs, you know, and you have the basic ones, just food and clothing and all that, you know, and then put some other in there, emotional needs and needs of affirmation and all. It's all about self. And then the pinnacle of the pyramid is self-actualization.

In other words, me, making me all that I can ever be, you know. That's the wisdom of the world. There's no power in that.

That just keeps feeding that corrupt tendency in our flesh to make us the focal point, the hope and the help for all of life. But here we see where the power is. If you abide in my Word, you're my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, the truth of my Word.

Not just generic philosophical truth or what looks like truth. But you'll live in my Word, and you'll know the truth of my Word, and that truth shall make you free. What a privilege to minister the Word of God to people.

There's liberating power there. How many ways and times has the Lord liberated you and me from things that bound us? Bad thinking, bad talking, bad priorities, bad attitudes, bad relationships, and awaiting bad consequences. And all the gospel came to us.

And we called upon the name of the Lord and that great truth, and we were set free from a life of condemnation and alienation from God. And how many times along the way, as he proved, he still has more liberating power to unleash in our lives on the daily affairs of our pilgrimage. Well, how about if we're sharing consistently foundational truths of people? Sure, there's liberating power in that proverb that I

paraphrased.

And it might have a real impact on a man on the roof and a woman in the house really upset. You know? Sure. But that's not a verse to live on every day.

That impact is in an arena. There are so many truths in the Scripture that lay the whole foundation out. They drive you to the core from which everything on the periphery hinges.

How about sharing more foundational truths which will bring a more comprehensive impact of liberation in a person's life? Not only will it help them on what they're struggling with right now, but will lay a groundwork for where they'll be walking tomorrow and the next day. Well, what would that be like? Well, Romans. Let's look at Romans chapter 5. Foundational truths in Romans.

You can't hardly get more foundational or core to the Bible than the book of Romans. And I might add, you can hardly get more foundational or core to the book of Romans than Romans chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8. Brothers and sisters, this is the core of our counseling message to people. Oh, it's restated in all kinds of ways throughout the Scripture, but it's just laid out so powerfully in these four chapters.

Let's just take one or two verses from each of the chapters, Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8, and just see how foundational these truths are. And see, by the way, a message of truth and life that we have that the theoreticians of the world can't even begin to approach. It's unparalleled, this phenomenal foundational truth of Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8. Romans chapter 5. We put verse 17 there.

Let me at least read verse 12. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because of all sin. One verse gets to the heart of the problems of humanity.

What's the core issue? Sin. Oh, what a mistake in the seeker-sensitive fellowships to back off of terminology like sin and condemnation in the teaching and preaching of the church. What a serious mistake that is.

We're avoiding the basic problem all humanity faces. Well, we don't like to use that word because it might offend somebody. Well, it's designed to offend while enlightening.

Oh, I'm a sinner deserving of eternal separation from God? A loving God wrote that in His Word. He wants mankind to understand that. It's not coming mean-spirited.

It's coming out of a broken heart of a God who's willing to be their Savior. But this is the issue, sin. That doesn't mean that everyone struggling with a problem is because they have sinned, though sometimes that's what's behind our struggles.

Sometimes we struggle because others have sinned around us or against us. But any way you come at it, you eventually get to the difficulties, heartaches, heartbreaks, problems of households, lives, and nations. It's sin.

But verse 17 tells us the remedy for that problem. Romans 5, 17, For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. This verse rehearses the problem of mankind.

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one. The one man's offense, that's Adam. By his sin, death reigned through the one.

Since Adam's sin, there has been a tyrant dictator ruling over humanity. In the Gospel of John, he's called the thief. Here, he's personified with the term death.

The enemy of our souls who comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. That's why the world's in the mess it's in. You listen to a newscast, if they're telling the news from anything less than a trivial surface kind of pablum approach, you realize this world is a troubled planet.

If you watch an honest news report, it throws your heart on the ground before God. Intercession for all humankind. And usually the individual ones that are writing the next story.

How is it that lives get so devastated and shredded and messed up? Death has been reigning over them. He's been robbing them, killing them, destroying them. And it happens not only to individuals, but families, nations, and alliances among nations.

By the one man's offense, death reigned through the one. But notice the next two words. Much more.

The second half of the verse is going to explain the remedy. And the remedy is God's grace. And the introduction of the remedy is the phrase, much more.

Oh, the mountain of misery, suffering, anguish, torture, brutality, dishonesty, deception that just floods the world. It's all because death has been reigning through the one. If it was like a tidal wave, it's like a tsunami of evil has just swept over humanity.

Let's say the tsunami is a hundred feet high. That's pretty devastating, isn't it? But now the remedy is described as much more. Much more.

Those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. It's clear in this verse that God's remedy of grace applied to man's need of sin, the remedy is much more than the problem. It's not like God has just, you know, a little bit of help that might apply in eternity and a little bit of help along the way.

Lives devastated by the reign of sin can be delivered, transformed, equipped, and made fruitful by the much more grace of God. The message we have is not a trivial religious message. It's an astounding, glorious, much more message from a mighty and loving God who can bring the devastated lives much more than what the enemy buried them in.

And this is because they're in Christ. Romans 5 talks about being in Adam or in Christ. In Adam, the problems.

In Christ, the remedies. It's foundational. When we help people see their connection to Adam, rebelling against God, sinning, falling short under the judgment of God by their own choices and behavior, oh, their heart is stirred, convicted to find a remedy.

And it's another person. Adam, a creature who fell and they were birthed with that life and generation after generation under the dominating influence of the God of this world, 1 Corinthians 4.4, that's Adam's family. But the remedy is another person and he's the Lord of glory.

He became a man but he always was God and he's God with us and for us and he provides grace and it's much more. That tsunami of sin was a hundred feet. How about a thousand foot wave of grace? That's our message.

And it's astounding how often it is appropriate just to read verses like that or share a summary recollection of them on the go with someone. Foundational. Romans 5, it's about in Adam or in Christ, everyone on earth is one of the other places.

One is trouble and judgment, the other is life and glory. Then Romans 6, it's about being united with Christ. United with Christ, verses 5 and 6. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin, this natural fallen human vessel, might be done away with or let me give a literal translation.

Rendered powerless. Done away with in the sense of moved off the throne. Rendered powerless.

No longer ruling our lives with fleshly lusts. That we should no longer be slaves of sin. Everyone starts out on this earth a slave of sin.

God has a remedy that people should no longer be slaves of sin. And it has to do with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. You know, those who believe in Jesus, we're united with him in his death and in his resurrection.

When he died on that cross, we who believe in him, we died there with him. That old man, that old life, judged by God, crucified and buried. When Christ was raised from the dead, we who believe in him, were raised with him to newness of life.

And to learn to count on those truths and be reminded of those truths. And when we're behaving in a way that doesn't match those truths, you know what it's because? We're either not aware of these, we don't know these, we're not counting on these. Or, Romans 7, we're walking according to the flesh.

You know when a Christian walks according to the flesh, this is kind of a sobering thought. We're drawing on the same resources that Adam in rebellion did and that the human race out of Christ are drawing on. So how could that person behave like that? They're a Christian.

Yeah, they're not abiding in Christ. They're not drawing on the work of the spirit. They're not believing on this united reality with Jesus.

They're walking on their own natural human resource with themselves as the hope and themselves as the focus. And that's what Romans 7 is all about. Walking according to the flesh.

Verse 22. Well, let's add verse 18. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, my natural humanity, nothing good dwells.

Verse 22. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. That inner struggle, delighting in the law of God deep in our hearts, but in our members, our natural human, especially our brain and our glands and our hormones and everything else, is pulled downward into self-indulgence.

What's the way out of that? Verse 24. A humble cry for a deliverer. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? O wretched man that I am! When a Christian is walking according to the flesh, he gets defeated and exhausted because he can't deliver himself.

And it's bondage and burden day by day. O wretched man that I am! That's what God's waiting to hear. If you're struggling, that's what He's waiting to hear.

If someone comes to us for help and they love God and they love His Word and His Law and they want to live that way, but they're defeated, they're drugged down by their own fleshly tendencies. You know what God wants them to humbly do? Confess this. O wretched man that I am! You know what churches and Christian counselors around the country and the world are doing? People come with a Roman 7 struggle, give their testimony, and sometimes they even say, I'm just a wretched man.

And the counselor will say something like, Aha, that's your problem right there. You're talking bad about yourself. You have low self-esteem, I can tell by that remark, you know.

And they're right on the verge of being delivered from their indulgence by repentance and a humble confession and a cry, Who will deliver me from this body of death? And counselors teach them to say, O dysfunctional one that I am! Who will tell my daddy he did this to me? And on and on they go. O self-impooverished, self-esteem impooverished one that I am. No, you're not even close yet.

It's a humble cry for a deliverer. The focus is off of self-help and self-hope. It's, O wretched man that I am, left to myself by my flesh.

Lord, look at the wretched things I can think and do and say. Who will deliver me? Not what steps can I take, be they 3, 7, or 12. But who will deliver me? It's a cry for a deliverer.

And those who humbly bow before the Lord to be set free in that way will soon be singing this chorus. Verse 25, I thank God it's through Jesus Christ our Lord. He's a deliverer.

Jesus already has delivered us from the condemnation of sin. Someday He's coming back to even deliver us from the presence of sin. And along the way, He wants to deliver us from the power and temptation of sin.

He is a comprehensive deliverer. O God, deliver us from the self-help craze of humanity. Self is not our helper.

Self is actually our problem. Self-help. Oh, me help me? Could you give me a bigger hope, please? Yeah.

We can point you to the Lord Jesus Christ, the mighty deliverer. A person who humbles himself that way before God, they are ready to walk according to the Spirit. That's what Romans 8 is about.

Verse 2, For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. In Romans 7, drug down a believer, pulled down by the principle that sin and death dwells in their humanity. The members of their humanity.

Oh, but there's a higher law, a higher principle called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This law, this truth, this principle, that the Holy Spirit can take the life that is in Jesus Christ and make it our portion to live by. It sets us free from the law of sin and death.

These are foundational truths. Anyone we share these with on any day, it'll help them that day. But whatever they come across the days ahead, it'll help them there too.

There is liberating power in the truth of the Word of God. And brethren, you stack up Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8 to the speculative, humanistic, psychological counseling theories of man. Oh! It's like the world sees the rhinoceroses of impossibility and heartache stampeding over lives and they're standing there shooting ping pong balls at them.

You know, like, come on! And this is stepping back and having the mighty God, the great I Am. Look at those things like fleas to be flicked off the table. There's no comparison.

This is like a rich treasury vein of gold from heaven above. There's nothing man will face on earth below, the past that condemns or the future that brings fear that cannot be attended to by these great truths heard and counted upon. May the Lord give us this vision of ministering foundational truths to others.

Lord, thank You for these great truths. They stir our heart with faith. They make us realize that the remedy in Christ is much more than the devastations dealt in Adam and by the enemy of our souls.

Give us an increasing capacity to stand on these truths and share them with others, we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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