



# Faith Pulpit

## Discipleship in the Details

Counseling has become an important part of church ministry today. As with many elements of ministry, counseling has taken various forms. Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary is committed to a thoroughly Biblical approach to counseling. In this issue of the Faith Pulpit, Dr. Jeff Newman, professor of counseling at Faith, lays out a Biblical approach to counseling. This article positions Faith in the counseling spectrum and serves as a paradigm for your personal counseling ministry.

The mission of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary is to train called servants of God to minister the Word of God effectively in vocational Christian service. Our motto, “With the Word to the World,” demonstrates our commitment to produce students who know the Word of God and know people—students who communicate the life-giving Word to people in a world of spiritual death and dying.

At the center of this communication is the preaching of the Word. Faith equips men to lead through their careful study, explanation, and application of the Scriptures, first to strengthen their own lives and then to point others to live for the glory of God. We train our students to become Bible expositors.

In addition to equipping students to preach the Word, Faith prepares them for a variety of other ministries that enable them to take the Word to the world, such as evangelizing the world with the Word, teaching the Word to the world, singing the Word to the world, and counseling the Word to the world. This article focuses on the counseling preparation at Faith.

### **A Biblical Approach to Counseling**

What our world calls counseling, God calls discipleship. Every theory and subsequent methodology of counseling seeks to know people, interpret people through a grid of knowledge, and lead people to see

and live life according to that interpretive grid. In the end, those who are helped by counseling often become disciples of the person or ideology that helped them in real, or even in perceived, ways.

In a truly Biblical approach to counseling, believers engaged in the ministry of discipleship bring together their knowledge of the Scriptures with their knowledge of the people they are seeking to help. In one sense, this type of counseling happens informally in every conversation of life and in every observation of the life of another. In a more formal sense, Biblical counseling happens when children of God become careful students of the Word of God in order to grow in their love for God, live out the Word of God in their own lives, and seek to help others do the same. As this takes place, God's people reach out in love to others and purpose to know them through the lens of God's Word. From this knowledge, they give counsel that brings together the knowledge of the Word of God and the knowledge of the person, pointing unbelievers to faith in Christ and believers to walk with God in stronger faith and obedience.

Biblical counseling is discipleship in the details—bringing together the richness of the Word of God with the intricacies of people's lives in such a way that God is glorified through producing disciples who live out the truth of the Word of God in the details of life. Based on this definition of counseling as detailed discipleship, three commitments guide our philosophy and methodology of counseling at Faith. These three commitments flow out of Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### **A Commitment to the Authority of the Word**

At FBBC&TS we have committed ourselves to the authority of the Word of God for the ministry of counseling. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Our dedication to verbal plenary inspiration and the inerrancy and infallibility of the Word of God provides both the foundation and framework for how we view the Bible's authority for counseling. We strive to train students who think Biblically and, hence, theistically about their world, themselves, and the individuals to whom they minister.

The Word of God is more than a useful adjunct for the ministry of counseling. A precise study, sound understanding, and dynamic application of the Word to individuals facing the struggles of life in a sin-cursed world forms the very heart of a counseling ministry that glorifies God and encourages His children along the path to greater conformity to the image of Christ.

We believe that the best education for a fruitful counseling ministry has at its center a comprehensive and rigorous study of the Bible and theology. A counselor who fails to think Biblically and theologically will fail to minister the Word of God effectively. Wittingly or unwittingly, a counselor's

theology guides the questions asked, the information selected, the problems identified, and the solutions offered. A counselor who thinks the thoughts of God based on a vigilant study of His Word will direct people to think Biblically about God, about themselves, about their situations, and about their responses to the challenges they face. From this rich knowledge of the Bible, a counseling of detailed discipleship will encourage people to live with faith in Christ and change for the glory of God.

As a result of this commitment, we believe our counseling philosophy and methodology courses alone are insufficient to equip our students to conduct detailed discipleship. However, coupled with the depth and richness of our courses in Bible and theology, our counseling classes at Faith equip our students for the challenging work of connecting the truth of the Word of God to the details of the lives of people. This careful ministry of the Word then produces true, lasting, and progressive change in those individuals who walk with faith in Christ.

### **A Commitment to the Sufficiency of the Word**

God's Word claims sufficiency for accomplishing the very things that counseling should seek to accomplish—"and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The Bible teaches truth. It brings to light the need for faith in Christ that leads to change and growth—it defines people's real problem. The Scriptures, through the work of the Holy Spirit, restore people to a right relationship with God on the basis of their faith in the gospel. The Scriptures instruct believers on how to live with faith in Christ, demonstrating the reality that they are dead to sin and alive to God. The indwelling Spirit makes it possible for believers to live out the righteousness of Christ in an unrighteous world. The Word of God so cultivates and nurtures God's children that it renews them in the righteous image of Christ.

This commitment to the sufficiency of the Scriptures for counseling demands that our counseling methodology courses at Faith give the Word of God functional control over how we view life. We seek to help our students view all of life through the lens of Scripture. God's Word comprehensively describes, lovingly encourages, and firmly exhorts people who sin and suffer while living their lives in the presence of the one true, living, and sovereign God. We reject any models of counseling that deny the sufficiency of the Scriptures for defining and answering life's problems. God Himself is at the very center of life. Leaving Him out leaves people cut off from the life-giving and life-changing message of the gospel, and in the end, leaves them in the grip of all types of despair and insanity.

We also reject any models of counseling that diminish the sufficiency of the Scriptures by relegating the Word of God to a passive role such as a filter or mere rule book. God alone tells us how to correctly view all of human life. Attempting to give sense to any aspect of life apart from the Word of God leads to a view of the whole of life that may seem to make sense, but in reality and in the end, is

nonsense.

## **A Commitment to the Goal of the Word**

God wants His children to develop into mature servants whose lives are characterized by good works. God gave His authoritative, sufficient Word so “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

God transforms sinners into saints, enemies into children, slaves of sin into sons of God, and victims and violators into victors. His goal is far more beautiful than simply assisting His children to cope with life in this sin-cursed world. His goal is to make them look more and more like a member of His family as they walk with faith in His Son. His goal is the total transformation of His children into the image of Christ. He changes the hearts of His children. He transforms their desires into His desires, and He transforms their thoughts, actions, and feelings into those that would honor and glorify Him. God’s plan of redemption through the blood of His Son not only saves those who exercise faith in Him from the penalty of sin, but it also saves the believer from the power of sin and produces maturity when the believer lives a life of trust and obedience.

The goal that God is pursuing in the lives of His children is progressive sanctification. He prizes personal holiness, and He works to cultivate growth in holiness in each one of His dear children. This growth happens on the path of life as believers live moment by moment with faith and confidence in Christ. Every detail of life is lived in the presence of God, and His children grow in spiritual maturity as they live with faith in Him, viewing the details of their lives through the lens of His Word. Spiritual maturity happens in a crock pot, not a microwave. There are no elevators in the Christian life, only stairs. Yet, it is God who walks with His children on the path and enables them by His Spirit to take steps of growth with faith in His Son.

## **Useable Servants**

In light of this reality, at Faith we strive to produce counselors who grow in spiritual maturity and who have the ability to invite and encourage others to join in the journey, as together they submit themselves to the authority of God and His Word. God’s kind of counseling, a truly Biblical counseling, is a ministry of detailed discipleship that takes place in the context of relationships centered in the local church. God does not produce “experts” but rather servants who live under the authority of the Word of God and, in turn, call and lead others to do the same.

We want for our students what we desire for ourselves—the humility to judge the thoughts and intentions of our own hearts in the light of God’s Word, to confess and forsake sin, and to live righteously. We want to live with faith in Christ and turn from fleshly desires, thoughts, and behaviors and in their place put on the desires, thoughts, and behaviors that come with being renewed in the

image of Christ. As we and our students do this, God will then use us as He sees fit to point others to faith in Christ for salvation and for living out the righteousness of Christ every day.

At Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary we commit ourselves by the grace of God to produce servants of Christ who conduct detailed discipleship reflecting these commitments in their own lives and counseling ministries. We seek to produce graduates who are engaged in the ministry of detailed discipleship in such a way that they effectively minister the Word to the world—pointing people to the life-giving, life-transforming message of the Word of God. We deeply appreciate your prayers and your support as we train our students to take the “Word to the World.”

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen (Jude 24, 25).

## **Dr. Jeff Newman**

Visiting Professor at [Faith Baptist Theological Seminary](#) | [newmanj@faith.edu](mailto:newmanj@faith.edu) | [Other Articles](#)

*Dr. Jeff Newman leads Baptist Mid-Missions' Safe Haven for Missionary Soul Care. In this role, Jeff and his wife, Sherry, purpose to care deeply for the souls of Baptist Mid-Missions missionaries, promoting spiritual strength and fruitfulness and enabling them to achieve optimal effectiveness over a lifetime of ministry.*

*Before joining BMM, Jeff served for over three decades at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary. Over twenty of those years, he taught Biblical counseling and served area churches by providing Biblical counseling. In addition to his ministry with BMM, Jeff also teaches adjunct for FBTS. Jeff earned his undergraduate and master's degrees at Faith and a D.Min. in Biblical Counseling from Westminster Theological Seminary-Philadelphia. Jeff and Sherry have two married adult children and four grandchildren.*