1. Problems in our churches

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*

What’s happening in our churches?

A man in trouble...

Discuss: What do you think of the way Dave’s church has managed this situation? How true to life do you think this response might be?

Something’s not adding up....

The problem’s not ignorance

The vending machine
The Gospel Gap

‘Often there is a vast gap in our grasp of the gospel. It subverts our identity as Christians and our understanding of the present work of God.’

(Lane and Tripp, How People Change)

Where the gospel gap takes us...

Emphasis on behavioural change..

... external righteousness

... but unchanged hearts

Creating

...a culture of performance

...taking us away from gospel and toward religion

Fruit stapling
Sanctification

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3.18

The work of God’s free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness  Shorter Westminster Catechism

A man in more trouble...

Pastoral Care

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. Mark 6:34

Counselling

1. Ordinary

2. Happening
3. Self-propagating

4. A ministry of the word

Biblical Counselling

* Biblical Counseling is the process where the Bible, God's Word, is related individually to a person or persons who are struggling under the weight of personal sin and/or the difficulties with suffering, so that he or she might genuinely change in the inner person to be pleasing to God.

John Piper

‘God-centered, Bible-saturated, emotionally in-touch use of language to help people become God-besotted, Christ-exalting, joyfully self-forgetting lovers of people.’

Biblical Counselling UK

Further Reading

* How Does Sanctification Work by David Powlison (Crossway, 2017)
* The Biblical Counselling Movement after Adams by Heath Lambert (Crossway 2012)
Thus there is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet and having a sense of its sweetness.

Jonathan Edwards

Recap

1. The gospel gap
2. Fruit stapling won’t do
3. The scale of pastoral care
4. The need for biblical counselling

Life in the detail

The traffic jam

For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.’

Mark 7:21-23
The Heart

Back to Dave....

Discuss: what guesses might you have for the motivational basis for Dave’s sexual indiscretion at work?

Conversational ministry

- Principle #1: Know the person

- Jesus the master conversationalist
Three initial steps

1. Stop blaming my circumstances

2. Recognise that a knowledge of self is necessary for a knowledge of God

3. Stop believing that some things can’t change

Life example: Adam

Discuss: What instructions from the Bible would seem appropriate in this situation?
Situations matter

Understanding people

Further Reading

The glories of God’s love: a gospel primer for Christians by Milton Vincent (Focus 2008)
Dynamics of Spiritual Life by Richard Lovelace (IVP 1979)

Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling by Tim Keller (http://www.ccef.org/puritan-resources-biblical-counseling)
3. Worked examples and principles

Troubling circumstances will always come. Life is hard. When difficult circumstances and our hearts meet, a conversation breaks out between the two – back and forth, back and forth – and the conversation can be wise and hopeful, or it can be foolishness that parades as wisdom.

*Ed Welch, Side by Side*

Theory

1. Problems in our churches
2. The problem in our heart

Practice

A shift in culture

Conversational Ministry

- So much of it
- So little attention
- So surprisingly difficult...

Some worked examples
Conversational ministry

- Principle #1: Know the person

- Principle #2: Apply the riches of scripture to the realities of life

- Principle #3: Timing and counseling

Further Reading

*Side by Side by Ed Welch (Crossway 2015)*
*Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands by Paul Tripp (P&R Publishing 2002)*
The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

‘When I say that we envision being a church of biblical counselling, that’s just to say that one-anothering is normative in our church life.’ (Mike Wilkerson, Redemption Group Network)

Ephesians – the big picture

An ‘Ephesians 4’ church

**Discuss:** From Ephesians 4:1-16 find at least three ways in which God works to move his people to maturity
The path to maturity

- Doing Church badly
- Maturing the body of Christ

1. A ‘one-anothering’ ministry
2. A neglected ministry

3. A word ministry

4. A misunderstood ministry

5. A varied ministry

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* (Ephesians 4:29)
6. An existing ministry

- **Discussion:** If we wanted to improve the quality of the conversational ministry going on in our churches, what could we do?

**Developing a culture of ‘one-anothering’**

1. Set a personal example

2. Increase our application

3. Improve our coffee!

4. Create contexts for honest conversation (mentor groups)
5. Fill all four quadrants

6. Revisit ‘prayer ministry’

7. Encourage some training

**Some concluding topics**

1. Biblical counseling and evangelism

2. Biblical counseling and small group ministry

3. Biblical counseling and church culture

**Further Reading**

*Relationships: a mess worth making* by Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp (New Growth Press)

*Speaking the truth in love* by David Powlison (New Growth Press)