

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of October 6th - 12th

Getting Started

1. The late David Powlison once said that: “All ‘counseling’ means is having wise, candid, fruitful conversations about things that really matter...that is biblical counseling and that is the charge of being a Christian. We all need it, and we all need to do it. The alternative is to have foolish, evasive, barren conversations.”¹ There’s a refreshing simplicity to this description of counseling, no? Keying off this definition, how’s the quality of your counseling these days? In what specific ways would you like to grow in the care of souls as you seek to improve in your personal ministry of the Word to others?

Digging Deeper

2. This week marks the soft launch of the Harbor Center for Biblical Counseling. The current moment represents an unprecedented opportunity for our fellowship to bring the resources of the gospel to bear in one another’s lives as well as (in time) to our broader community. What are your hopes or expectations for our counseling center? What are your concerns? In what ways can each member of our church family be involved in this vital ministry? What’s *your* role?

1

<http://counselingoneanother.com/2013/01/11/an-interview-with-david-powlison-part-2/> . Accessed 10/3/19 @ 6pm.

Open Your Bible to Proverbs 10:19...

3. When counseling another person, there is arguably no more critical initial step than to ***seek to understand them***. One of the most fruitful ways to do this is obviously by learning to ask wise and thoughtful questions. While the Bible is replete with warnings for those who cannot or will not commit to taming their tongues (Proverbs 10:19; 18:2, 6-8, 13; 29:20), it also holds out some of its choicest promises for those who are willing to become quick to hear and slow to speak (Proverbs 13:3; 17:28; 18:4, 15, 17, 21; 21:23; Psalm 141:3; Ecclesiastes 5:2; 9:17; Matthew 12:36; James 1:19; 3:1-11). Ponder these Scriptures together as a group. Armed with these insights, what sorts of questions are helpful in drawing out another person and getting to the heart of the matter?
4. Another vital (and often overlooked) aspect of good counseling is to ***labor to appreciate them***. When a person comes to you for help, it's tempting to reduce them to the size of their problem to the point where their suffering or sin becomes their primary identity (i.e. merely viewing them as an addict, an adulterer, an abuser, etc). Take a look at Philippians 4:8. Read slowly through this apostolic command, applying its wisdom to this frequent counseling *faux pas*. How does the truth of this verse help to restore a sense of proportion to the lives of those whom we have the privilege to counsel?
5. A third pathway in cultivating a caring relationship with a person you're counseling is to ***come to empathize with them***. Scripture is filled with *descriptions* of compassion (Genesis 43:30; 2 Kings 13:23; Psalm 103:13; Hebrews 10:34; James 5:11) as well as *prescriptions* for compassion (Luke 10:37; Colossians 3:12; Jude 22-23). Discuss these passages together. Which ones strike you as especially relevant to the counseling task? How does Jesus supremely model this disposition toward other people for us (Matthew 9:36)?

6. Yet another aspect of biblical counseling that sets it apart from other types of counseling is God's insistence that we ***confess that we're a lot like*** those whom we are seeking to help. In the final analysis, there's less than a hairsbreadth difference between us and the person we're counseling. One of the most obvious reasons we can be of use to another person in the midst of their suffering and sin is that we know precisely what it's like for us to struggle with the same types of problems. In other words, it takes one to know one. How does Hebrews 4:14-16 seek to hearten us with similar truths about our Savior? In what ways does this comfort or encourage you? How does 1 Corinthians 10:13 teach that our problems (as counselors or counselees) aren't different in kind but perhaps only in degree? What practical impact might this make on us as we attempt to be used of the Lord to counsel others?

7. Without a doubt, soul care affords us the extraordinary opportunity and privilege to ***pray for those whom we counsel***. As a matter of fact, if we do nothing more than pray for them, we've already imparted an untold amount of blessing into their lives. Much like the men who lowered their paralyzed friend on a stretcher into a crowded house before Jesus, in prayer, we as counselors have the occasion to offer a similar service (Matthew 5:18-20) - to say nothing of our own great need to pray for wisdom for ourselves from the Lord to approach our friend in the Spirit of Christ. When we pray in the context of counseling, what sorts of things should we be praying about? See how many different answers you can come up with as a group.

8. As an encouragement, use the rest of the time in your group to explore the Bible's teaching concerning both ***the sufficiency of Scripture for counseling*** (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4) as well as ***the competency of Christians to be rich and wise in the care and cure of souls*** (Romans 15:14; Colossians 2:3, 8-10). How do passages such as these inform your convictions about the comprehensive rescue for our lives found in the gospel?