



Urban Initiative Biblical Counseling

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Biblical Counselor

Everyone is a Counselor

Do you believe the statement, everyone is a counselor?

If you are a friend, brother, sister, parent, grandparent, wife, husband, teacher or pastor you are a counselor. By definition a counselor is one who gives advice or counsel. Think of the many people with whom you have interacted this week. Did anyone describe a personal experience or event to you? Did you advise them to do something about it or help them to interpret it? In doing these things you are a counselor.

The question is: what kind of counsel do you give and to what extent is your advice driven by Biblical truth? Jesus commanded us to "...make disciples...teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you ..." (Matthew 28:19-20). How well are you able to come alongside fellow Christians to help them grow and change to be more conformed to the image of Christ?

Beauty for Ashes

Isaiah wrote this to encourage the Israelites in Isaiah 61:3, "To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them *beauty for ashes*, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

In the counseling room we regularly encounter Christians who were raised in good churches that faithfully preach the Bible. Yet their lives do not reflect what they say they believe. Although each heartbreaking story is different, one thing they have in common is that their struggle has been observed by others. Then, when these individuals begin to change and grow to become more like Christ, their friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers also observe their transformation.

This newsletter features stories of God's work in the lives of individuals to bring beauty out of ashes. The not-so-surprising outcome is that people within their sphere of influence are now seeking their advice. They are being asked to give Biblical counsel, as in 2 Timothy 2:2. "And the things that you have heard from me...commit these to faithful men (*and women, emphasis added*) who will be able to teach others also."

Emily's Testimony

I wish I could say that I came to Urban Initiative Biblical Counseling on my own. The truth is, I had their contact information on my desk for months but probably never would have called. I was particularly

stubborn and proud. Even at my most depressed and desperate point, I could not quite make the call. This is my story.

After 5 years of infertility, my husband and I decided to pursue adoption as a means of growing our family. During the home study process, probing questions are asked and much is revealed. When we received the call that our home study had been approved, it came with a “BUT” - “but we would like you to receive some counseling to help you cope with the grief and loss related to your infertility.” I was outraged but certainly did not let my social worker know that. Instead I unloaded to my husband and the people close to me. I kept saying, “How dare she tell me that I’m not coping well – she hasn’t walked where I’ve walked!”

My husband called the Himes for me and told me he would go with me to as many appointments as I would like. Despite my anger, I knew the importance of being teachable. I reviewed the Urban Initiative brochure and noted especially the “counselee’s responsibilities” – one of them being that the counselee will complete the assigned homework.

That first appointment was very difficult and filled with tears. I knew that I was far from God and cynical about the work he was doing in my life, but in this session I started to see again how sinful I was. My heart had become hardened and my evil thoughts about God had seemed justified somehow. I remember Karen working to impress upon me that the reason I felt so miserable was because my thinking about God was faulty. This felt like a breakthrough to me. Another thing I remember from this first session was Jerry asking me, “If you had a child right now, what would you have to offer?” The only thing I could think in that moment was bitterness – in other words, NOTHING. This grieved me greatly. I realized that I had made a mess of things. God wanted my attention. He showed me that I had come to the end of myself and I was absolutely miserable.



One of my assignments for that first week was to write down Hebrews 4:14-16 and read it 10 times a day. I was also to read the first 2 chapters of *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, by Paul Tripp. I took my responsibility of doing the homework (as listed in the brochure!) seriously and completed it by my next session. The Lord used that act of obedience, I believe, to begin changing me. I did not even know how to pray anymore – and didn’t pray at all that first week. But, after reading a passage 10 times a day, I began to consider what it might mean for ME. I began to wonder, “In what way can He sympathize with my weakness?” I started to consider the cross and the pain Jesus suffered for my sin. The Lord is so powerful – he began to melt my heart. I was sensitive to his truth again.

I was saved during childhood and have had some trials during my adult life, but none has tested my faith as this one has. I have begun to see that I perhaps never really trusted completely in Christ – even though I thought I did.

On the Sunday after that first counseling session, my pastor asked in the sermon, “What is your Abraham moment? What is the thing that the Lord is asking you, ‘Do you love me more than this?’” I knew the answer to that. The Lord was starting to reveal to me the idolatry in my heart. I had been striving for a baby, as if it all depended on me. I was angry with God, however, that He withheld the desire of my heart. I was starting to see that He wanted that spot in my heart – He wanted to be my heart’s desire. I had replaced Him.

I began meeting alone with Karen, periodically meeting with the guys (Jerry and my husband) as well. She has challenged and taught me in a way no one else has. She has pointed me again and again to Scripture. We have discussed the heart and what God says about it. She is teaching me how to apply the Bible – how to use my devotional time to let Scripture change me. The Lord is powerful to melt hearts of stone, but the Christian life is a race. He calls us to run with endurance. I believe I got so far off-track because I stopped running. I got lazy and started giving in to fleshly thoughts about our good God – and soon I believed the lies I told myself. There’s always a commentary running in our heads – mine had become very sinful because I gave into the flesh.

The hard work of running the race was spending time in Scripture and comparing my thoughts with what the Lord has to say. I was guided in this work through homework assigned by Karen. It was not until I interacted with the Word of God – as opposed to being a passive listener – that the Lord began to change me. The power of God working through His Word softened my heart.

I still meet with Karen and am so grateful for the Himes’ ministry. I have much to learn, but God has so graciously shown me Himself and softened my hard heart. At every session, I am challenged to learn, apply Scripture, and grow. This could not happen without the hard work of digging into the Word of God – doing my homework!

Editorial Comment

We want to thank Emily and her husband for sharing their testimony. Walking alongside her as she grows in Christ-likeness has been pure delight for us. In just a few weeks, she was responsive to the work of the Holy Spirit in her life, which enabled her to learn to interpret life in a way that is Biblically informed. The same individuals who grieved and prayed for her in the difficult time, have observed the transformation in her countenance, thinking, attitudes and behavior. They are now being encouraged, blessed and helped by her.

Emily’s battle with God is not unique. The struggles in our lives demonstrate that we have a worship problem. Our choice to resist and oppose God’s truth is described in Romans 1:18-25. Paul says (verse 25) that we have “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator...” But Jesus came to rescue us. Praise Him! Praise Him!

From Counselee to Titus 2 Woman

When John and Mary came to us for counseling their relationship was very strained. Each was blaming the other for the problems in their marriage. Although growth was slow initially, they persevered with the homework they were given. One of John’s ongoing assignments was to read and implement the principles from *The Exemplary Husband* by Stuart Scott. Mary began reading *The Excellent Wife* by Martha Peace. For reasons unknown to us at the time, they stopped coming.

Recently we received a call from Mary saying, “I have some questions”. My (Karen) heart sank with disappointment, thinking, “I hope that the reason for her call is not because things are going badly for them”. To our delight, Mary’s request was this. “So many of my friends are coming to me for help, I need to know how to help them more effectively. I’ve read *The Excellent Wife* four times, what else would you suggest?” She had been transformed in her relationship with Christ, and that is why others are seeking her counsel for help with their problems. We met a few days later, so I could provide her with additional ideas and Biblically sound resources to help her friends. Mary is becoming a Titus 2 Woman who desires to help others change and grow to become more like Christ.

From Christianized Pagan to Biblical Counselor

Biblical Counseling is unlike the professional paradigm in many ways. One way is that we believe counseling is a ministry. The relationship with those we counsel is like “iron sharpening iron”. Or as someone said, “It is one beggar coming to another beggar to tell them where to find bread.” Because of this philosophy of ministry, people we have counseled in the past often become our close friends. Since we met Steven and Barb McInerney in 1989, this has proven true in a friendship that continues to grow.

At that time Steve and Barb were struggling in their marriage and we had just begun to put ours back together after nearly two years’ separation. Over the last 20 years, we have each grown in our relationship with Christ, and our spouse.

Steve has been certified by NANC (National Association of Nouthetic Counseling). Barb has recently completed the theology and counseling exams, and is preparing for certification. It is a delight to have good friends who share our passion for ministering to others from the Scriptures.



For years Steve has been burdened to write of their experiences in churches that did not teach and preach the truth. The confusion and devastation that resulted from the years spent in these churches produced this desire to write a book. *Confessions of a Christianized Pagan*, has been recently published and is available at www.confidenceinscripture.com

Since we are all counselors, the question is, what kind of counselor are you? When you give advice, does it agree with the truth found in God’s Word? Often our interpretation of someone’s story is colored by our emotions, or by psychological theory mixed with Scripture.

Two books we have found extremely helpful:

- *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart* by Martha Peace Focus Publishing, Bemidji, MN.
Ch 3, *Psychologized Man Most High*, appropriate for men also, is available in booklet form.
- *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands* by Paul Tripp, P & R Publishing

We want to thank you for your encouragement and your support of the Urban Initiative Biblical Counseling ministry. It is our desire to continue for as many years as the Lord gives us. We also desire to mentor others to counsel more effectively from Scripture. This is the purpose of counseling study group that meets every other Friday. Anyone is welcome! Call us for details.

Sharing in the Biblical Counseling Ministry

There is no charge for counseling or books and materials. Therefore, contributions are always welcome.

Donations are tax deductible and may be sent to: Urban Initiative Biblical Counseling
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If you would like to receive future newsletters by email, please email us at jwhime@aol.com

