

(D3:MINISTRY) Soul Care in the Church

INTRODUCTION

A. Surprising Statistics

1. According to a 2023 study by Thriving Center of Psychology, 55% of Millennials and Gen Z have gone to therapy or are currently going to therapy

B. Behavior-Driven Approaches (Rom. 12:2; Matt. 15:18).

1. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:13).
2. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10).

C. Soul Care and "Biblical Counseling"

1. Not all that claims to be Biblical Counseling is in fact Biblical.
2. Phenomena in Biblical Counseling Movement
 - a. Formalization of Counseling
 - b. Counseling as Identity or Stigma
 - c. Professionalization of the Counselor

D. Review of Build and Wellspring Foundations for Soul Care.

1. Biblical Transformation of Man
2. Guarding your Heart
3. Shepherding Our Hearts Day by Day / Spiral
4. Women encouraging Women
5. The One Another's

I. Whose Job is Soul Care

A. What is soul care?

1. Defined: "Biblical counseling [soul care] is the personal discipleship ministry of God's people to others under the oversight of God's church, dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit. Biblical Counseling [soul care] seeks to reorient disordered desires, affections, thoughts, behaviors, and worship toward a God-designed anthropology in an effort to restore people to a right fellowship with God and others. This is accomplished by speaking the truth in love and applying Scripture to the need of the moment by comforting the suffering and calling sinners to repentance, thus working to make them mature as they abide in Jesus Christ."^[1]
2. It is **discipleship**: "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to keep all that I commanded you**; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:19-20).
 - a. "Discipleship is the intentional pursuit of becoming conformed to Christ."^[2]
3. It is a function of the church, and under the oversight of the church.
4. It is dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit
5. It is aiming at make them mature as they abide in Christ.

B. What Soul Care is not:

1. Not an autonomous ministry apart from the local church.
2. Not an activity reserved for the experts. Too many Christians have believed the lie — that only "professionals" can properly counsel others.
3. Not an optional ministry
4. Not a separate entity apart from discipleship. Soul care and biblical counseling are discipleship.
5. Not insensitive or uncaring — "...with a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1).

C. The Mandate for Soul Care

1. Paul's example:
 - a. Colossians 1:28-29: "Him we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ." We do need to practice wisdom for soul care, and that means both wise, godly living and assumes some level of biblical knowledge so as to speak truth.

- b. 2 Cor. 5:18-19: "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their transgressions against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
- c. Acts. 20:31: "Therefore be watchful, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." Notice he says each one. This was individual admonishment. It was also compassionate admonishment. This was not distant and clinical.
- d. 1 Cor. 4:14: "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." This admonishment was familial, not to shame, but to help bring about change.

2. For pastors:

- a. Hebrews 13:17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.
- b. Ephesians 4:11-12: "And He Himself gave some... as pastors and teachers, for the **equipping** of the saints for the work of service.
- c. 2 Tim 4:2: "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and teaching.
- d. 1 Thess. 5:12: "But we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and admonish you."

3. For every believer:

- a. Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to keep all that I commanded you**"
- b. Ephesians 4:11-14: "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ..."
- c. Ephesians 4:15 "...**but speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is Christ."
- d. Ephesians 4:16 "...from whom the **whole body**, being joined and held together by what **every joint supplies**, according to the **properly measured working of each individual part**, **causes the growth of the body** for the **building up of itself** in love." – Each member must be engaged in the process.
- e. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).

- f. "Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:15). – Instruction to the church.
- g. 1 Thess. 5:14: "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."
- h. Romans 15:14: "But I myself am also convinced about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge and being able also to admonish one another."
- i. Galatians 6:1-2: "Brothers, even if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each of you looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

D. The task of soul care belongs to the church—both pastors **AND** individual members.

II. The Purpose of Soul Care

A. God's Glory

1. "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made" (Is. 43:7).
2. "As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God—whoever speaks, as one speaking the oracles of God; whoever serves, as one serving by the strength which God supplies; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...**" (1 Pe 4:10-11)

B. Restored Image-Bearing

1. Man was created to bear God's image (Gen. 1:26-28).
2. Sin mars man's ability to display God's image (Rom. 3:10-12).
3. Jesus the Perfect Image-Bearer — "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb. 1:3).
4. Gospel restores our ability to bear God's image through regeneration — "...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col. 3:10).

C. Goal of Soul Care

1. What the goal is not:

- a. Dig into the subconscious.
 - b. Get proper behavior.
 - c. Create “self-esteem.”
 - d. Build well-functioning families.
2. What the goal is:
- a. Christ-likeness — “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29a).
 - b. Pleasing the Lord — “Therefore we have as our ambition whether at home or absent to be pleasing to the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:9).

III. The Provisions for Soul Care

A. Soul Care is Sufficiently Equipped by God’s Word

1. Inspired: 2 Tim. 3:16 — “All Scripture is inspired by God...” Inspiration is the process by which the Holy Spirit divinely guided the writing of Scripture so that, while men wrote words of their own choosing, the final written product accurately conveys exactly what God intended.
2. Inerrant: Num. 23:19 — “God is not a man, that He should lie...” Inerrancy is the conviction that, because the Bible is God’s very word, it is completely free from error in everything it teaches.
3. Infallible: Isa. 55:11 — “...It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire...” Infallibility is the doctrine that the Bible will not fail in its ultimate purpose of revealing God and the way of salvation to humans.
4. Sufficient: 2 Pet. 1:3 — “seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness...” Sufficiency means that God has provided, in His Word, all that man needs to know concerning spiritual matters (Psalm 19; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).
5. Authoritative: Matt. 4:4 — “And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ The Church does not grant authority to the Bible. The authority of Scripture is derived by the virtue of it being authored and inspired by God. It has authority over everyone whether he is a Christian or not. Though not everyone submits to God’s Word now, they will later when the truths of God’s word are made evident on the Day of Judgment. Because the Bible comes from God, everything it says is true and authoritative.
6. Additional Scriptures to consider regarding Scripture’s sufficiency for equipping the believer to care for souls:
 - a. Guides and delights (Ps. 119:1-176).
 - b. Cleanses (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26).

- c. Sanctifies (John 17:17).
- d. Teaches and gives hope (Rom. 15:4).
- e. Judges thoughts and attitudes (Heb. 4:12).

B. Soul Care is Spirit-Driven

1. Because of the Holy Spirit's ministry
 - a. The Holy Spirit is the agent of change in the believer.
 - i. Since the Holy Spirit is the agent of change, we should expect Him to use the means He has chosen to produce that change (i.e. changing the heart with grace).
 - ii. Since the Holy Spirit is the agent of change, we should expect Him to use the men and women He has designated to produce or facilitate that change (the church).
 - iii. Since the Holy Spirit is the agent of change, there is hope in any situation and with any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord.
 - b. Change is promised—Rom. 8:28-29.
 - c. Change is undeniable—1 Cor. 6:9-10; Titus 3:3-8; 1 Thess. 1:9-10.

C. Soul Care is Christ-Focused

1. In its focus on Christ:
 - a. "present every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28).
 - b. "nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).
 - c. "we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord..." (2 Cor. 4:5).
 - d. "and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col. 3:10).
2. It is through Jesus Christ.
 - a. "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God" (1 Pe. 3:18).
3. Its standard is Christ
 - a. [He] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Col. 1:15).
 - b. Jesus Christ is the "normal" man.
4. It is accompanied by Christ (Mt. 28:20).

IV. Key Considerations for Providing Soul Care

A. Be Involved

1. Build a Christ-focused relationship with another believer where you put yourself compassionately in a position to help them love God and love others and aim at maturity in Christ.
2. Not aloof and distant like some therapies where counselor simply mirrors counselee.
3. Point them to their primary relationship is with Jesus Christ. They are to be more concerned with what God thinks than what you think.
4. We should:
 - a. Be compassionate (Heb. 4:15, Mat. 9:36, Luke 13:34)
 - b. Give hope (Rom. 15:3-4,13; 2 Peter 1.3, 1 Cor. 10:13).
 - c. Be respectful.
 - i. "I could be doing that and worse without the grace of God" (1 Tim. 1:15)
 - ii. Take them seriously. Assume they are telling the truth unless you are led to believe otherwise. "Love...believes all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).
 - d. Be patient with all (1 Thess. 5:14).
 - e. Be honest (Eph. 4:15)
 - i. Content = truth
 - ii. Manner = love
 - f. Prayerful.
 - g. Express confidence in their ability to obey Scripture (Phil. 1:6, Rom. 6:6,12-14).

B. Inspire Hope

1. Their problems are not unusual
 - a. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - b. Christ was tempted in all things as we are (Heb. 4:15).
2. God's Word has answers to their problems (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 15:4).
3. Point them to the Gospel!
4. Point them to the good shepherd! (John 10:25-29).

C. Listen Well

1. Listen and ask questions to gather information to help interpret their problem biblically (Pr. 18:13). Why?
 - a. To help determine whether they are weak, fainthearted or unruly? (1 Thess. 5:14).
 - b. To help discern any difference between the “presenting problem” and deeper rooted sin.

D. Embrace Biblical Definitions.

1. What is the nature of the problem?
2. Provide accurate, helpful and appropriate biblical counsel that:
 - a. Uses biblical labels and terms to help one another see how God defines their behavior as sin.
 - i. Drunkenness for alcoholism
 - ii. Gluttony and lack of self-control for bulimia or overeating.
 - iii. Anger, selfishness, pride and impatience for “frustration”
 - iv. Love of self not personality type.
 - b. Sin is not just imperfection, but rebellion against God
3. Root/Heart
 - a. Identify common sources of sinful behavior and attitudes
 - b. Identify unbiblical beliefs.
 - c. Identify functional gods. Who or what are they worshipping?
 - i. Three common areas: 1 John 2:16
 - (a) Lust of the flesh – pleasure, comfort, satisfaction
 - (b) Lust of the eyes – possessions, greed, wanting more
 - (c) Pride of Life – control, power, fear of man, success, respect, acceptance, significant, recognition
 - d. Identify ruling desires and idolatries (James 4:1-3)
 - i. “What is more important to you than pleasing God?”
 - ii. “In that moment, what were you willing to sin to get? Or what you were you willing to sin to protect?”

- iii. "When you sinned against that person, what desire did that person become an obstacle or threat to?"

E. Care for the soul with God's Word

1. Open God's Word and teach so that the Spirit of God may use it to work in convicting of sin, instilling hope, etc.
2. Ensure your instruction is thoroughly Biblical
 - a. 2 Pet. 1:3 – The Scriptures are sufficient
 - b. Don't bring psychology or secular theory into your care
 - i. Love languages.
 - ii. Personality types
3. Aiming at heart change, and Christlikeness. Putting off sin, being renewed in thinking, putting on (Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:9-10).

Resources:

Counsel with Confidence: A Quick Reference Guide for Biblical Counselors and Disciplers – Joel James
 The Church as a Culture of Care – T. Dale Johnson, Jr.
 A Theology of Biblical Counseling – Heath Lambert
 Theology of Christian Counseling – Jay Adams
 The Christian Counselor's Manual – Jay Adams
 Counseling How to Counsel Biblically – John MacArthur
 Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands – Paul David Tripp

^[1] T. Dale Johnson, Jr., *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 2021, p. 9.

^[2] Johnson, p. 17.