

Passion for Christ
The Missing Ingredient in Our Fight against Sin
Grace Fellowship church, Pastor Brad Bigney

I. **The FOCUS of Your Counseling Has to be Leading Your Counselee into a Deeper Relationship with Christ ~ not just Dispensing Biblical PRINCIPLES**

“When principles or steps wander from Christ himself, they become self-serving guidelines. They make our marriages, families, friendships, and work go better, but the goal is our own betterment more than the glory of God... ‘Be good’ and ‘Do right’ are fine messages, but when they stand alone they have more in common with the Boy Scouts’ Handbook than Scripture. Remember that in the Bible, ‘This is who God is and what He has done’ always precedes ‘This is what you must do.’ Action follows our knowledge of God and trust in Him. It is as if God has said to us, ‘Now that you have seen who I am, you will want to love Me in return...’” ***Additions: a Banquet in the Grave***, Edward T. Welch, P. 155

Titus 2:11-14 changes everything. It takes a simple **COMMAND** to say ‘No’ - and surrounds it with **JESUS CHRIST**.

Remember - sin is what we do when we’re not **SATISFIED** in God (John Piper)... so our counselees don’t just need **ACCOUNTABILITY** and help in fighting their sin... they also need to be led into a vital... satisfying **RELATIONSHIP** with Christ.

II. **You Need to Help Your Counselees to TASTE the Goodness of God in Christ so that They’re RUINED for Anything Else**

Psalms 34:8 “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him.”

“It is a dreary holiness indeed that is merely resisting sin. The joy of holiness is found in having heard a sweeter song... This is the true meaning of grace. Grace does not demonize our desires nor destroy them nor lead us to deny them. Grace is the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming our desires so that knowing Jesus becomes sweeter than illicit sex, sweeter than money and what it can buy, sweeter than every fruitless joy. Grace is God satisfying our souls with his Son so that we’re ruined for anything else!” ***One Thing*** (*Developing a Passion for the Beauty of God*), Sam Storms, pg. 123 & 140

- You need to ask your counselees something other than just “Are you ready to stop **SINNING?**” Ask them, “Are you ready to be **RUINED?**” They need to come to the place where they’re ruined for anything else other than sweet communion with their Savior Jesus Christ.
- In fact... ask them to **PRAY** it as a prayer... find out how serious they are.

Get them to start praying: “God, ruin me for anything else. I want off this treadmill of sin. Take my breath away with the glory and beauty of Your Son, Jesus Christ! Fill my heart and life with the sweetness of Christ alone.”

- This fight against sin is a fight to stay **SATISFIED** in the goodness and mercy of Christ... so don't just talk about **SIN**... talk about satisfaction in the Savior!
- Ask your counselees **QUESTIONS** that will bring to the surface the level of true communion and fellowship they're experiencing with their Savior
- The **GOAL** of counseling is not just to help them quit sinning... it's to lead them to a place of being so satisfied in the Savior that they won't want to turn **BACK** to their sin again

How will you do that?

- Look for ways to stir up worship
- Assign readings from the Gospels in His interactions with sinners
- Assign readings from the Psalms
- Assign readings from Isaiah (ch. 42, 43, 50, 53, 55, 61)
- Assign listening to worship music

Only when your counselee starts to understand the difference between Psalm 16:11 and Hebrews 11:25 will really fight sin effectively.

Psalm 16:11 “... in Your presence is fullness of joy, in Your right hand are pleasures evermore.”

Hebrews 11:25 “... the passing pleasures of sin”

- The biggest problem we're up against is not a lack of **INFORMATION**... but the fact that our counselees are too often still madly in **LOVE** with the ‘passing pleasure of sin.’
- As **C.S. Lewis** described it... they're “making mud pies in the slum” because they can't imagine what it'd be like to have a holiday at the sea.

III. **Without a Passion for Christ Sin will just Lay Low & then MORPH into Another AREA of Their Life**

2 Corinthians 5:14 “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died.” ESV

“For the love of Christ compels us...” NKJV

“Holiness does not come merely by creating a list of moral taboos and then exerting our willpower to resist them. ‘Just Say No’ alone doesn’t work. Of course, we must say ‘No.’ Please don’t misunderstand me. But lasting, meaningful victory will come only if there is something more enticing to which we can say ‘Yes!’ ...We must fight sin with a massive promise of superior happiness. We must swallow up the flicker of sin’s pleasure in the forest fire of holy satisfaction. The only thing that will ultimately break the power of sin is passion for Jesus. The only thing that will guard me from being entrapped by sin is being entranced by Jesus. In other words, the key to holiness is falling love!” *Pleasures Evermore*, Sam Storms, p. 31-32

IV. **So HOW Do You Keep the Focus on Christ in Your Counseling?**

Stir up Three Areas in Your Counselee’s Thinking

A. **Call Your Counselee to Stop Living for the MOMENT & Start Living with a Sense of Hopeful EXPECTATION about Eternity with Their Savior**

Titus 2:13 “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- The second coming of Christ is mentioned **318** x in the Bible!
- Because God knows we’re suffering... and discouraged... and fighting sin! So He has a **PRESCRIPTION** for fighting sin that is **BIGGER** than just saying ‘No.’... God knows we need to get our eyes off of the **PRESENT** and fixed on the **FUTURE**.

"A startling thing has happened among Western Christians. Many of us habitually think and act as if there is no eternity - or as if what we do in this present life has no bearing on eternity... Being oblivious to eternity leaves us experts in the trivial, and novices in the significant... most Christians, let alone the general public, do not even have an accurate picture of what the Bible says will happen to us after we die. We major in the momentary and minor in the momentous." Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions and Eternity* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989), pp. 138-139

- Most of our counselees landed where they did by **MAJORING** on the momentary and

IGNORING the momentous... and we've got to help them change that. Titus 2:11-14 helps us lead them there.

- Our problem is the polar opposite here in America today. We give so little **THOUGHT** to the future... and we're living on such a **LOW** level... trying to squeeze every drop of **SATISFACTION** out of this life right now. That's what causes us to stumble into sin so easily.
- The Bible teaches us to look up while we're fighting sin! You need to help your counselee develop a healthy **OBSESSION** for the **NEXT** life. To the degree that this is lacking they're gonna **STRUGGLE** in their fight against sin.

B. Help Your Counselee to Connect the CHANGE Process to the Work that Christ has already ACCOMPLISHED on the Cross

Titus 2:14 "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed..."

"Where the Lord calls for change, connect those specific changes to what God is doing. Whenever you need to change, put the Redeemer in the center of the picture... Don't ever degenerate into giving advice unconnected to the good news of Jesus crucified, alive, present, at work, and returning."

Ephesians gives us no Reader's Digest list of 'six principles for successful marital conversation' or 'four keys to getting your life organized.' Such advice is often reasonably OK, though rather pale and powerless." *Seeing With New Eyes*, David Powlison, page 43

"We approach the Bible with a 'where can I find a verse on _____' mentality. We forget that the only hope the principles offer rests on the Person, Jesus Christ... We cannot treat the Bible as a collection of therapeutic insights. To do so distorts its message and will not lead to lasting change. If a system could give us what we need, Jesus would never have come... He is the only answer, so we must never offer a message that is less than the good news. We don't offer people a system; we point them to a Redeemer."

Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, Paul David Tripp, P. 8 & 9

- Counsel with both hands! Point to sin with one hand... but always keeping pointing to the **SAVIOR** and His work on the **CROSS** with the other. We need more two-handed counselors.

C. Keep **REMINDING** them of Who They are in Christ

The people you're counseling are spiritual amnesiacs... whatever else they're struggling with that brought them in to you... they've forgotten who they are in Christ. Sin will do that to you!

So remind them...

Titus 2:14 "... and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

I Peter 2:9-11 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim that praises of Him who called out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you are sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

- A large part of your counseling should be spent reminding them of who **THEY** are... who **CHRIST** is... and what He's **DONE**.

2 Peter 1:12 "Therefore I will not be negligent to **remind** you always of these things, though you know them..."

2 Peter 1:13 "Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by **reminding** you."

2 Peter 1:15 "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things..."

Counselor Check-List

Stirring a Passion for Christ rather than just Dispensing Biblical Principles

1. Am I talking about Christ as much as I am sin?
2. Am I just using ‘Single Bullet’ verses... addressing the sin... and the way out... or am I sharing larger portions of Scripture that put a solid doctrinal foundation under the counselee’s feet of redemption and hope in the Savior?
3. Am I regularly lifting the counselee’s sights to the future... stirring up hope about the Savior... or am I focused largely on the immediate problem?
4. Do I effectively weave the redemptive work of Christ on the cross into our sessions... and calling my counselee to celebrate Christ’s power and freedom over sin... or am I just pressing them and calling them to ‘Quit your sinnin’!?’
5. Are my homework assignments giving my counselee enough opportunities to ‘taste and see that He is good’? (Psalm 34:8)
6. Am I quick to make a bee-line from their sin to the cross? Do I keep talking about redemption and a Redeemer even as the brokenness and ugliness of sin keep spilling out each week in our sessions?
7. Do I approach our sessions with the mind-set of growing a Christ-follower... or am I just fixing a problem?
8. Am I making the person and glory of Christ attractive by my words and attitude – leading a broken sinner to the Savior – or do our sessions feel more like a business transaction... sticking biblical principle ‘band-aids’ onto sin spots?

9. Have my counseling sessions with this person maintained a hopeful future expectation (based on the person and promises of Christ) or do our sessions mostly wallow in the drudgery of the immediate mess?
10. Is my own life right now reflecting the celebratory worship of a Christ-follower or do I just come across as the Bible 'Answer Man'?