



MARRIAGE COUNSELLING TRAINING DAY

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ST PAUL'S ROBERT ADAM STREET

biblicalcounselling.org.uk



Biblical Marriage Counselling

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Session 1

Biblical Counselling and a Theology of Relationships

Jesus' Summary of the Law

Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-31

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind [and with all your strength – **Mark**].’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Jesus does not answer the question as asked

Jesus' Summary of the Law

The second great commandment is a necessary extension of the first

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. **Matthew 23:23-24**

Implications

1. Relationships/marriages are shaped by the nature and quality of our relationship with God – and vice versa

If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. **1 John 4:20**

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? . . . He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. **Micah 6:6-8**

Implications

2. Our relationship with God can be observed in our relationships/marriages
3. Our relationship with God can be addressed through our relationships
4. Our understanding of love must come from God
5. Jesus is our only hope of living in truly loving and fruitful relationships

Critical “One Flesh” Dynamics

Interdependence and mutuality

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**

Critical “One Flesh” Dynamics

Honour

...those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honour.

1 Corinthians 12:22-23

Honour one another above yourselves. **Romans 12:10**

Critical “One Flesh” Dynamics

Empathy

...its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

1 Corinthians 12: 25-26

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **Romans 12:15**



Session 2

Marriage Counselling Method

Step 1: Joining with Couples

Differences between individual and marriage counselling

- Safety of individual counselling: the counsellee exercises control over what you know, when it is known, and how it is interpreted
- To make marriage counselling safe you must establish and enforce the basics of biblical communication immediately

Step 2: Identifying themes and patterns

- Listen for the issues beneath events
- The temptation of couples is to describe events and ask you to play the judge
- Emphasise understanding, at this point, over problem-solving

Case Study “Jim and Cari”

- Jim will appear to be short or harsh with Cari or someone else. Cari tells Jim but he doesn't see it
- Jim will make an effort to do something nice for Cari and Cari will find a flaw in it. “The wooden spoon on the counter”
- Jim and Cari try to talk about these things and the conversations can go on for hours. Jim feels the only way to end the conversation is to agree. Jim doesn't know what to do

- You missed the spoon. . .
- You're upset. What's going on?!
- We need to resolve this

Cari

Safety

Fear of betrayal

Jim

Acceptance

Fear of Rejection

- But what about the dinner?
- I wasn't short. Nothing is wrong!
- When will this end?

How do you begin to locate and address the heart issues beneath the events?

- Listening for the normal desires and fears that are common to relationships: Acceptance, safety, fidelity, intimacy, belonging, to be known, understood, joy, peace, comfort, etc. Fear of: rejection, attacked, misunderstood, abandoned, harassed, controlled, blamed, etc.
- Ask the questions: “What are they really fighting for? What are they hoping to gain? What are they afraid of losing?”
What you are often witnessing are battles that are waged in the name of love

Process versus Content

- **Content** - “**What**” What is being said. Topics/Issues - finances, sex, parenting, job/career, household duties
- **Process** - “**How**” What messages are being communicated in the *way* that they are interacting? Emotions, body language, manner of communication, interactions with counsellor

Pursuit
Probing for signs of trouble
Anger/Escalation

Cari

Safety
Fear of betrayal

Distancing
Fixing/Placating
Anger/Escalation

Jim

Acceptance
Fear of Rejection



Step 3: Constructing Interactions

Matthew 19:16-22 – Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler

- **The simple proclamation of the Word leaves the young man feeling justified.** “All these I have kept . . .” v.20 He isn’t really challenged until Jesus asks him to change his relationship with others
- By calling people to “worshipful” behaviour in relationship the counsellor can create opportunities for new insight, encounters with God, and heart-level transformation

Step 3: Constructing Interactions

1. Construct interactions and experiences that *embody the destructive cycle*
2. Construct interactions and experiences that *embody Christ-like love*
3. Highlight ways that this requires them to place their faith in Christ

Importance of Emotions

Value the way emotions reveal and create connection

- Emotions are the currency of personal investment
- Anger
- Fear
- Untangling anger and fear

Importance of Emotions

VIDEO CLIP #1

Encountering Christ: Diagnostic and Transformational

Diagnostic

- Jesus functions as the exemplar against which all of our weaknesses, failures, and sins become clear

Transformational

- Those who encounter Christ in faith see not only what they should be, but what they will surely become through his great love for us

Encountering Christ: Diagnostic and Transformational

VIDEO CLIP #2



Session 3

Related Issues

The Importance of the Past

Deuteronomy 8:1–5

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

The Importance of the Past

Our history reveals our hearts

Our history helps us see God's faithfulness

Faith versus Emotions

Faith is more than a feeling

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. **Hebrews 11:1**

God is active in your activity

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Combating Hopelessness

Your actions always make a difference

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:7-9



Session 4

Q&A

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