

*Person
to Person
Ministry*

Soul Care
in the
Body of Christ

Martin and Deidre Bobgan

Table of Contents

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT11

PART ONE: WHAT NOT TO DO

The Biblical Counseling Movement

1. Review	17
Onerous Ones.....	19
No criticism within the Biblical Counseling Movement	20
Unbiblical Nature of BCM.....	21
2. Problem-Centered Counseling.....	21
Problem-Centered Counseling and Sinful Communication.....	22
Problem-Centered versus Christ-Centered Ministry.....	23
The Appeal of Problem-Centered Counseling	24
Problem-Centered Counseling Not Universal.....	25
The Rise of Problem-Centered Counseling	26
Focus on Negative Feelings	34
Self-Justification	35
Marriage Counseling.....	36
3. Working on the Outside: Behaviorism.....	37
4. Working on the Inside: Inner Workings of the Heart.....	39
Caring for Souls Inside and Out.....	41
5. Counselor, Counselee, Counseling.....	42
Dr. Jay Adams' Use of the Words <i>Counsel</i> and <i>Counseling</i>	44
New Testament Gifts and Callings.....	46

6. The Biblical Ideal	51
7. Talebearing	52
What the Bible Says	53
Is this Kind of Talk Necessary?	55
8. Discussing Marital Problems	56
Violating the One-Flesh Marriage	57
9. Blaming the Past	60
10. Playing the Victim	62
11. Dishonoring Father and Mother	64
12. Women in Problem-Centered Counseling	65
13. Men in Problem-Centered Counseling	66
14. A Man Counseling a Woman or Married Couple	68
15. A Woman Counseling a Man or Married Couple	70
16. One Up / One Down	70
17. One Week / One Month / One Year after Another	71
18. Integration	72
19. Separated-from-the-Church Biblical Counseling Centers	73
20. Charging Fees or Expecting Donations	74
Simoniacs?	77
21. What Not To Do Conclusion	79

PART TWO: WHAT TO AVOID

Problem-Centered “Biblical” Counseling

22. Introduction	81
-------------------------------	----

23. Case Studies	82
24. Counselor, Counselee, Counseling	85
25. NANC: Nouthetic Counseling	86
26. Nouthetic Fundamentals	88
27. Personal Data Inventory	90
28. Problem-Centered Nouthetic Counseling	92
29. External Behavior	97
30. Discussing Marital Problems	100
31. Dishonoring Mother	103
32. Non-Nouthetic Problems	105
Dr. James Dobson	105
Presbyterians versus Charismatics.....	107
Role of Women	108
33. Bert and Sue in Christ-Centered Ministry	109
34. NANC	114
35. CCEF: Idols- of the Heart Counseling	117
Problem-Centered Counseling with Idols for Every Problem.....	125
What the Bible Says about Idols of the Heart	126
36. “Case Study and Analysis”	129
Violations of Scripture.....	130
One-Up/One-Down	136
Methodology.....	138
37. An Idolatrous System	142
The Flesh or the Spirit?	147
38. Idols-of-the-Heart Conclusion	150
39. Wally in Christ-Centered Ministry	151
40. CCEF	156

41. What to Avoid Conclusion	159
Pharisaics?.....	160
More Problems.....	161

PART THREE: WHAT CAN BE DONE

Christ-Centered Ministry

42. Three Essentials of Christ-Centered Ministry ..	167
43. Being Christ-Centered rather than Problem-Centered	169
Believers Are Equipped to Minister.....	172
Suggestions for Getting Started in Mutual Care	175
Drawing Believers to be Christ-Centered	180
Avoiding the Pitfalls of Becoming Problem Centered	183
Diverting from Talking about Problems.....	185
Diverting from Problem-Centered Talebearing.....	185
Diverting from Problem-Centered Speaking Ill of Others.....	188
Diverting from Problem-Centered Blaming the Past	189
Diverting from Problem-Centered Playing the Victim.....	192
Diverting from Problem-Centered Dishonoring Parents.....	195
Caring for One Another's Soul	197
Encouraging the Believer's Love for Christ.....	200
44. Recognizing the Biblical Truth about the Role of Problems	204
Using Problems of Living as Opportunities for Spiritual Growth.....	206
Treating Problems of Living as Trials with a Purpose.....	207

Worshipping God through Trials.....	217
Ministering and Remembering God’s Word through Trials	219
45. Becoming Christ-Centered on a Daily Basis	224
Encouraging a Daily Walk	224
Beginning with Daily “Lite”	228
46. Be Encouraged to Minister the Life of Christ in You.....	229
WE PRAY!.....	233
Appendix A	235
Appendix B	241
End Notes.....	245

What This Book Is All About

This book is about a Christ-centered approach to nurture the spiritual life of believers and to equip believers to fight the good fight of faith and thereby confront problems of living through exercising faith in Christ and the Word. **This book also reveals the innate sinfulness of problem-centered counseling, shows how problem-centered counseling leads Christians into feeding the flesh and quenching the Spirit, and gives reasons why Christians must abandon the problem-centered approach.**

When we say “problems,” we are referring to problems normally taken to a psychotherapist or a biblical counselor. These are the personal, marital, and family problems that are discussed in seeking a resolution. **By “problems of living” we mean trials, tribulations, afflictions, and sufferings. While the expression “problems of living” is not in the Bible, we are purposely using this designation to explain what NOT to do.**

Person-to-person ministry must be Christ-centered rather than problem-centered. To meet this goal, we explain how both the one who ministers and the one who is receiving ministry will be doing three things: **(1) abandoning problem-centeredness; (2) embracing the biblical truth about the role of problems; (3) becoming Christ-centered on a daily basis.** The believer who remembers these three elements while ministering to fellow believers will find that, as fellow believers learn to give primary attention to Christ instead of talking about their problems, consider problems of living as opportunities for spiritual growth, and develop a

daily devotional life wherein they learn to walk according to the Spirit, the Lord will give them wisdom for the problems of living.

A basic premise of this book regarding such problems of living is that trials are attacks on the Christian's faith. They test the believer's faith and provide an opportunity to grow spiritually and to glorify God, who has given Christians all they need to confront such trials (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Peter 1:3-4). Therefore how Christians view and respond to problems is extremely important. Those who draw alongside to minister should do so with the understanding that the person's faith is being challenged. There should be much sympathy because all believers have times when their faith is attacked. Therefore, they will not simply say, "You need more faith." They will recognize that the person is in the midst of spiritual warfare and needs encouragement in his walk with the Lord and spiritual support in holding up the shield of faith and wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:10-18).

The Bible has much to say about trials, temptations, afflictions, and sufferings, or what we generally call "problems of living." Christians are not immune to problems. In fact, Christians should expect trials and various forms of suffering, including the kinds of problems of living that both psychological and biblical counseling address. Whether the problems are due to a believer's strong stand for the faith or an aspect of God's fatherly discipline or simply because we all live in a sinful world, every problem is a challenge to a believer's faith. Some are obvious attacks, but others are trials that bring a temptation to turn away from God or attempt to solve things apart from His involvement, His Word, and His will. Thus trials may tempt believers to lose patience and not trust God to work through the pain and suffering. Trials

also tempt believers to sin against God for the sake of getting rid of unpleasant circumstances.

The Bible presents a view of problems of living very different from the usual human perspective. God uses such problems for His purposes, which include drawing people to Himself, conforming believers to the image of Christ, and building His Kingdom, all to His glory. God thus uses problems for His glory and our good. In contrast, ever since the counseling rage began, Christians have been using the Bible and God, often in combination with the wisdom of man, to solve and get past their problems. The means and the goal are diametrically opposed. God uses problems for our spiritual and eternal good, but in much Christian counseling people often attempt to use God and His Word primarily for elimination of and temporal relief from problems.

Utilitarian Christianity is not limited to seeker-sensitive churches, but pervades Christian counseling and much of what is called biblical counseling. Think about the contrast between God using trials for His purposes and people using God for theirs. One glorifies God and spiritually matures believers; the other dishonors God by using Him for personal gain (personal happiness, relief from problems, etc.). Does this mean that God's dear children are not to turn to Him and His Word in the midst of trials and seek His help? No! He is our Father. He has instructed us to call on Him, and He has promised to instruct and deliver us. However, there is a subtle but stark difference that can occur when the believer's goal is different from God's goal.

Early believers saw trials as God's gracious fatherly means of maturing His children in the faith. Rather than focusing on ways to solve the problems as the means of finding peace and happiness, the early Christians saw problems as opportunities for growing in faith and glorifying God. James urged believers to **“count it all joy when ye fall**

into divers temptations” (James 1:2) and to recognize that every trial is a test of faith and a call to spiritual arms. Thus they had a different perspective and a different “solution,” so to speak.

If any group of believers suffered from problems of living, the early Christians did, to the point of great affliction, persecution, and martyrdom. Moreover, many of them had suffered horrendous childhoods, including slavery and all forms of abuse. The “talking cure” would never have sufficed any more than Job’s counselors’ “talking cure” of arrogance and condemnation. No, the early Christians needed more than that. They needed encouragement in their walk of faith. They needed to learn to use the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, prayer, and the rest of the godly armor supplied with their new life in Christ. They needed their branches to be pruned with affliction so that the fruit of the Spirit would flourish.

They needed to learn the ways of the Lord and to encourage each other in the truths they had learned. They needed to remember and remind one another about the usefulness of trials, afflictions, and tribulation and how these can produce patience in trials, experience with God, hope in His promises, and the very love for God being shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:3-5). They needed to hang on to the Lord with endurance and to come alongside the weaker one to help that person do so as well (Gal. 6:1-2). They needed to seek God for wisdom, believing that He would show the way (James 1:5-6). And through all of this they learned that James was right when he said:

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect

work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

The early believers came to experience the consolation of the Lord so that they could console one another along the arduous walk of faith in those days that were far more trying than today. Have we been deceived into the problem-centered talking cure when there is so much more to be gained through following the teachings of Scripture regarding trials, their source, their purpose, and their tremendous usefulness?

Years ago we were part of the biblical counseling movement (BCM). We spoke at conferences, promoted various BCM organizations, and wrote in support of biblical counseling. For reasons mentioned in this book and in our other writings, we left the BCM and became critics of it. One of the many reasons we left is because we realized that the very terminology (i.e., *counselor*, *counselee*, *counseling*) used in the movement was unbiblical. Primarily, we recognized that those in the BCM used a problem-centered approach similar to the psychological counseling movement that preceded it, while we used a Christ-centered ministry approach. We also realized that the training programs with their manuals, certificates, and degrees were intimidations to those individuals who should have been encouraged to minister without such obstacles to service.

It is our desire that, by reading this book, those who are maturing in the faith through the trials of life and walking daily in the faith will be encouraged to minister the care of souls to fellow believers. To accomplish this goal we have three parts to this book. In Part One we discuss “**What Not to Do**” by revealing the unbiblical shortcomings of the BCM as a contrast to true biblical ministry. Knowing “**What Not to Do**” can often be as important as knowing “**What Can Be Done.**” In Part Two we discuss “**What to Avoid.**” We

recommend that one not become enmeshed in any system of counseling. **We demonstrate how what is called “biblical counseling” is problem-centered and inevitably leads to evil speaking¹ and should be avoided by all believers.** As examples we critique the nouthetic counseling approach developed by Dr. Jay Adams and promoted by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC) and the inner-workings-of-the-heart approach espoused by Dr. David Powlison and promoted by the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). Part Three is titled **“What Can Be Done.”** In it we discuss what can be done to minister to those with problems of living. This is meant to be an encouragement to those who desire to minister and for those who are already doing so.

This book is **not** written to train Christians to become biblical counselors. The purpose of this book is to encourage those in the church who are called and gifted by God to minister Christ to other believers as needs and opportunities arise. There are numerous believers who are already prepared and equipped by God to minister to fellow believers who are facing trials and suffering from problems of living. God has prepared and equipped His children through His gifts of salvation, new life in Christ, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and His Word. He continues to prepare and equip them as they continue in His Word, walking according to their new life and maturing in the faith as they encounter various trials and life experiences.

We pray that more and more of those whom God has already prepared through His Word, the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and the fellowship of the saints will step out in faith to minister to one another in the Body of Christ as a result of reading this book.