

Discipling and Counseling Others

Sunday School 06/16/24 (Week 10)

Overview of the Change Process

Introduction

What is the end goal of discipling and counseling others? Why do we do it? Why do we need it? Surely you can look over your own life and think of times when someone disciplined you and it was of great benefit to you. They may have been a key instrument God used to draw you to himself, or perhaps they gave you guidance on a decision that changed the projection of your life for the better. Or, you may know someone you are presently counseling who is in true need of change, and you pray that God may use you in the same way he once used someone else to help you. It's evident you see value in counseling, you are sitting here in a class on its tenth week about discipling and counseling others. But, what is the ultimate goal? As has been stated in a previous class the ultimate goal of discipling and being disciplined is obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Or put another way.

– That those disciplined will “**grow in the grace and knowledge of our**

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)

-But **HOW? How do people change?**

If our goal is growth in Christ, then we must bring them to him again and again, time after time. We all (disciplers and those being disciplined, counselors and counselees) need to bask in his presence, to glean from his rays of light. You cannot have a true encounter with Jesus and stay the same. We need to draw from the bottomless well of God's Word that leads to him. We would be wise to echo what the Psalmist says in Psalm 119:24, “**Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.**” All true and good counsel comes from and is rooted in God's Word and leads us straight to Christ.

-We see our need, both the discipler and those being disciplined need **CHANGE**

-We see our end goal, our destination. **CHRIST**

-But how do we get there? I would like you to consider this process of change as a hike up a tall mountain. Neither the discipler nor the one being disciplined can scale it on their own, the road is far too rocky, and too many ledges are unstable, you can easily lose your footing. Even the seasoned counselors cannot carry those they disciple up this mountainous terrain, the climb is far too long and much too difficult. But with God working for us and in us, this mountain can be climbed. Change is achievable only with God. We are simply broken people seeking to climb this mountain of change and hoping to encourage others to keep scaling this mountain along the way.

-As we look at this monumental task of change, please consider with me **5 Foundational Principles** that undergird this process. Five Landmarks along this mountain climb rooted and grounded in Scripture. These 5 principles are not a list of essentials to have prepared before the climb begins, but ledges where a flag can be planted as a landmark throughout the journey or perhaps climbing tools to help us scale this rough terrain. They will serve as guard rails on the pathway of the climb for the discipler as they face the struggle and frustration of seeking to cultivate change in those they disciple. They will also prove to be lifelines for those being disciplined as they progress on this journey of change.

-Each principle will be grounded by a key text. I hope to briefly explain these texts and look at what they mean for the discipler and those being disciplined. Then Lord willing we will focus on a conceptual model of change that will hopefully guide our thinking as we disciple others.

1. Godly Change is God's Work!

Romans 8:29-30 – For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

-God is clearly the agent at work here. Those that will change God foreknew and set his love on them before they were born, he predestined them for this change, he calls them out of darkness into his marvelous light, justifies them, and will bring them all the way home to glory. God is acting on their behalf and ensures the end result. He not only predestined their salvation but also their being conformed to the image of his Son Jesus. God saves and sanctifies and will glorify. It's all up to him.

-Still, yet well-intended disciplers can find it tempting to try and create clever schemes and plans to achieve a desired outcome. It is enticing to look at statistics and well-known counselors to get tips and tricks of the trade to produce better results, but a biblical counselor knows true change depends on the Lord, not the counselor. The discipler cannot make a dead man alive. We must remember the Spiritual deadness in each unconverted soul. They are dead dry bones and only God can breathe life into

them. When we remember this we are reminded of how insurmountable this task of discipling is. No amount of training can do this, only God can.

-Not only is this principle beneficial for the discipler to keep in mind as they seek to counsel others but also a great Landmark reminder for those being disciplined. A place to plant a flag that can be of great encouragement to both of them as they continue their climb. They will fall short time and time again and will see that only God can do this in them. There will be seasons and rough patches where looking back on all that God has done, all that God is doing, and is going to do will be all they have to hold onto. Thank God for these great promises to all of his children.

2. Godly Change is Motivated by God's Grace and Promises

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 – For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

-The love of Christ controls us, or as some other versions say compels us. Compels us to what? Look at verse 15, **“that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him”**. That we may live for Christ! This is a picture of those who once lived for themselves and have now been changed and given the desire to live for him. Why? Because they are growing in the knowledge of their Lord Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished for them and what he has promised them. This fruit of growth is a beautiful sign that God is working in one's life.

-The discipler should continually bring the disciple back to this truth again and again. Not holding an unattainable law over their head to earn God's love but calling for necessary behavioral change based on the grace of God. The discipler should never shy away from the clear Biblical passages that call the reader to change their ways and live holy, but they should always undergird them with the Gospel of grace.

-As the disciple continues to climb this mountain of change he can rest assured that his footing is anchored in God's love, not in his need to earn that love. He can continue to scale the mountain while often looking back at this Landmark of God's Grace and Promises for encouragement to fuel him towards even more Christlike change.

3. Godly Change Involves the Believer Actively Responding in Faith and Obedience to God's Work

Philippians 2:12-13 – Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

-We are not called to just “let go and let God”. The text says “**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**”. This may come as a surprise to a new believer. Earlier in Romans Paul said that salvation from before time began to after time fades away is all of God. It is his work, his doing. Why now is Paul calling the Philippian church to work out their own salvation? Look at verse 13, “**for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**” The Christian should not expect they will be perfect at the point of salvation with no more striving. We will not have our glorified bodies until we meet death or Jesus returns to take his bride home. The reason we strive, work, and try at our salvation is because God is working on our behalf, and it is his good pleasure that we be sanctified more and more each day. Christ is beautifying his bride as she strives to reflect him more and more.

-The discipler should keep this truth in mind as she disciplines others. As I said earlier the discipler should never shy away from calling for necessary behavioral changes but should always undergird them with the Gospel of Grace. We do not want to fall on either side of the ditch by on one hand putting too much weight on performance to earn God's grace while on the other never calling them to obedience to Christ because he is gracious. Both are misconstrued. There is a good and healthy balance to this, and the discipler should pray for God to guide them as they seek to strike this balance in their counsel. Gospel indicatives lead to Gospel imperatives.

-For those being disciplined they must climb this mountain. When God converts them they are not automatically transported to the top of the mountain, nor is there a helicopter coming to rescue them. They must climb! This foundational truth may serve more as a tool than a flag planted at a certain destination along the climb. The counselee can lean on the fact that it is God who is working in them but he is also fueling them and equipping them for the climb. This should fuel more and more change in behavior and obedience to live for Christ.

4. Godly Change is a Process of Maturation, of What Theologians Call Progressive Sanctification

2 Peter 1:3-11 -

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Progressive Sanctification! This flows directly from our last point, working and striving because God is working for us and in us. Look at verse 3, he **“has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,”**. God has given us everything we need to grow in Christ! He enables us and equips us for godliness. How? Look at verse 3 again, **“through the knowledge of him”**. By growing in **“the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”**, we are growing in godliness. Look at verse 5, **“For this very reason, make every effort”** to what? Grow in and from your faith all the way to love. Because of what Christ has done for us we grow in sanctification. Look what growing in these does for the believer vs 8, **“ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Look halfway into verse 10, **“for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** Sanctification does not save us but it testifies to us that we are in Christ. As Christ works in us may we strive more and more to live for him and grow in our sanctification.

- The discipler should allow this truth to guide them as they counsel others. Some changes in those being disciplined may take more time than the counselor thinks is necessary and this can often lead to frustration for the counselor. It is helpful to keep in mind our own progressive sanctification and how often we fall short. Remembering how far God has brought us and realizing that we are broken people seeking to help other broken people along the way. As disciplers, we should seek to “ **stir up another to love and good works**”. May God bless our efforts.

-Concerning those being disciplined, may they not be discouraged as they progress in their sanctification. This is not a quick climb; it is a lifetime of what may often feel like 1 step forward and 2 steps back. But God graciously works in our feeble efforts.

5. Godly Change Occurs in the Context of God’s Church, Within the Body of Believers

Hebrews 10:24-25 – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

-Change is not a solo endeavor, it happens in community. Iron sharpening iron. This is God's beautiful design, he brings people from every nation, tribe, and tongue in community together and the common ground they have in Christ far outweighs all their noticeable differences. Some may be further along their climb while others may be just beginning but this commonality will grow into eternity, while their nationality, language, ethnicity, upbringing, and any other cultural hindrances will vanish on the last Day. God is making a beautiful, unified bride for his great wedding feast. But until that day she is being sanctified in the context of the local Church. People will have different personalities and preferences, but this community is where this change grows. Every person in the body of Christ is dependent on Christ to sanctify them, and he graciously does it in the community of His Church.

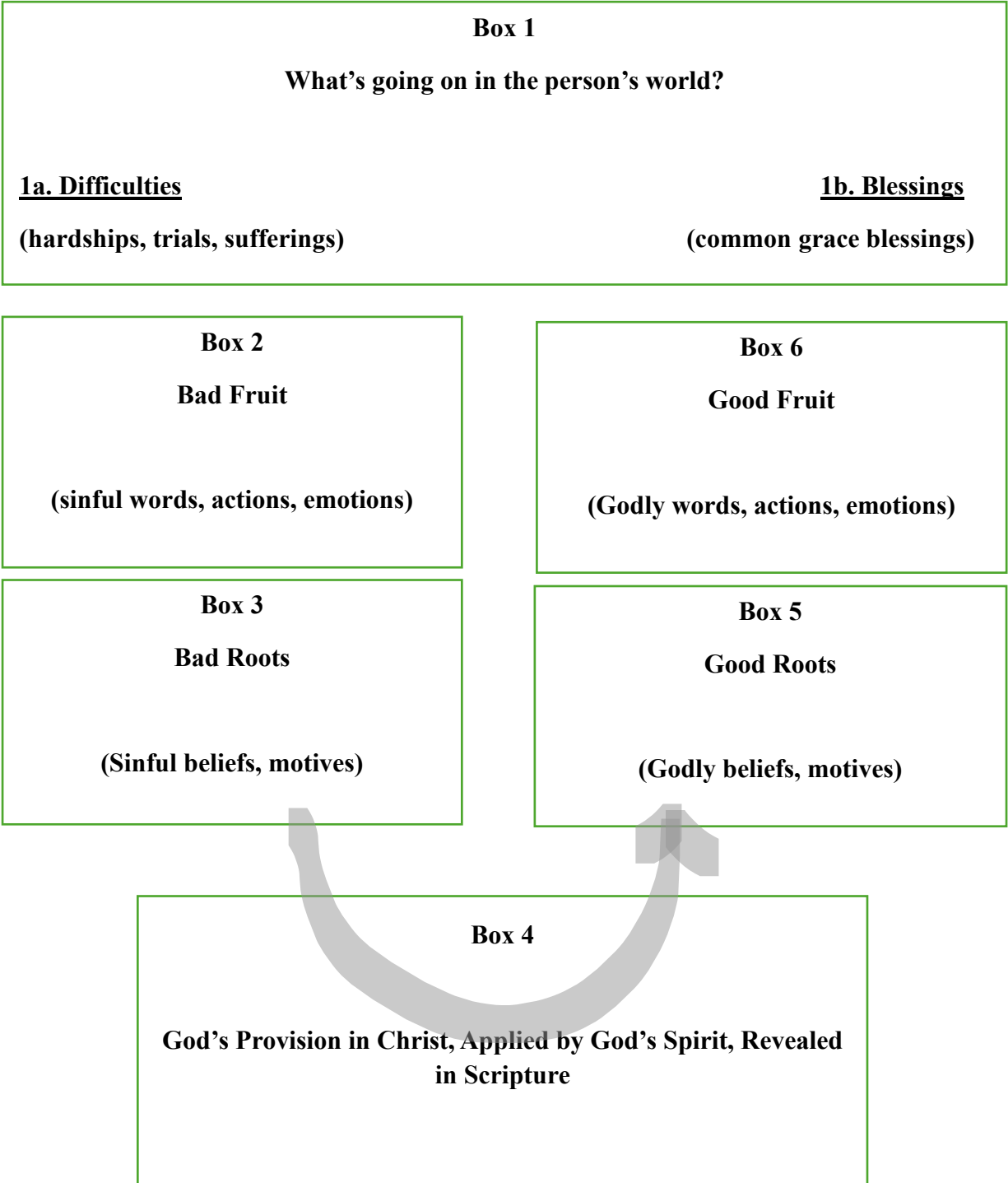
-The discipler should keep this truth at the forefront of their mind. God's design of community should interweave their counsel. They should call those they counsel to be a part of and value a local Church community. Even when counseling someone they do not attend Church with, they should encourage them that God's design of church community walks hand in hand with good Biblical counsel.

-Those being disciplined should strive to connect with a local church to help them grow in Christ. Nothing sanctifies the believer like sitting under the regular, steady, exposition of God's Word. This context of community is for their good, where they can gain true friendship that will stir them towards more Christlikeness. Change is hard and there are times when someone coming alongside you and holding you up as Aaron and Hur held up Moses arms will be indispensable.

-These principles should always be in our mind as we counsel others. They will encourage us during difficult seasons and will drive us to work hard to counsel those God places on our path.

- But what does change look like in those we disciple? Can it be broken down in an easy-to-understand way or pattern? I believe it can, let's consider a conceptual model that explains how those being disciplined change called **The Six-Box Model**.

The Six-Box Model



-Box 1 – Many of the factors that take up this box can be either be1a or 1b depending on the person and their experience. **Give me some examples.**

1a -bad parents

-natural disaster or poverty

-toxic relationships

-death of a loved one

-trials

-health concerns or disease

1b – good parents

- prosperity, wealth

- healthy relationships

- a healthy newborn

- blessings

- good doctors report

-Box 2 – includes bad fruit behavior that may be present in those being disciplined. Such as sinful words, actions, and emotions that flow consciously or subconsciously from the counselee's heart in response to their box 1 situation. This can include sins of commission and omission, what they do and are not doing, saying or not saying, and feeling or not feeling that does not align with God's commands. **Give me some examples.**

-lashing out in anger

-sinful or vulgar language

-lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh

-overindulging, gluttony

-abuse

-apathy or hatred

-worry

Box 3 – includes any bad root beliefs and motives that come in response to box 1 and produce bad behavior in box 2. This box is taken up with how those being disciplined wrongly organize, interpret, and explain themselves, God, and their world. What do they focus on other than God? What do they desire, want, value, cherish, idolize, treasure, hope in, worship, live for, love, hallow, and rest in? For example, no one randomly chooses to worry (box 2), it arises from a heart of unbelief or perhaps small remnants left over that are not fully submitted to trusting in God and his provision (box 3). In this case in particular, it is the responsibility of the discipler to guide the one being disciplined to replace that unbelief with a growing mature faith. **Give me some examples.**

-unbelief

-idolatry

-selfishness

-stability

-comfort

-Here we notice a Critical Biblical Dynamic- these first three boxes and their pattern in this way inform us that while one's circumstances (box 1) are important, influential, and significant; they are not causative, determinative, or ultimate (box 3). Box 1 gives rise and opportunity to our behavior; it is not the cause of it. Any counsel that denies or downplays this is going against God and his word. If we assign behavioral causation to box 1 factors we dehumanize people and remove their inherent human responsibility as image bearers of God. We must keep these in their proper order.

-We also must slow down here and focus on the real problem (box 3) roots of Sin. Once these bad roots have come to light and been exposed in those you disciple may we give the Gospel with clarity. They need to repent and believe the Gospel. This is the only way one can begin to obey God and His Word. This is where true change takes place.

Box 4 – Summarizes God's provision in Christ that the Holy Spirit uses to enable his people to respond in God's way. Here the bad roots are uprooted, and good seeds are planted where new good roots will take hold. The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to do this, He wrote the Bible, illuminates our minds to understand the Bible, and empowers us to believe and obey the Bible. This main agent of change is the Holy Spirit, This big arrow from box 3 through box 4 to box 5 represents him and his work. In his kindness, he uses other influences or tools along the way like the church, God's people, you the disciplers, and even good biblical-based resources.

Box 5 – includes the goldy root beliefs and motives we have just envisioned the Holy Spirit forming in those we disciple. This box stands as the polar opposite of box 3. The change process involves the person repenting of any box 2 bad fruit and box 3 bad roots, embracing box 4 Biblical truths, and applying those truths to their hearts. Box 5 portrays the new Christian identity that the Holy Spirit worked in box 4. Those substitutes from box 3 have now been replaced with a new person who loves, hopes in, rest in, and worships God. **Give me some examples.**

- belief
- trust
- dependence
- Godly worship

Box 6 – Includes the good fruit that is bore out of these goldy roots that the Holy Spirit has planted. It is the opposite of box 2 which contains bad fruit. Those being disciplined put off sinful behavior and put on godly replacements. **Give me some examples.**

- godly living
- kindness
- generosity
- church attendance
- discipling others
- self control
- love

So, what are the steps the discipler should take to navigate through this six-box model? Let's briefly work through them.

-Box 1: We listen to those we disciple and learn about their situations, especially their difficulties.

-Box 2: As we listen, we learn about any disordered behavior that needs to be changed.

-Box 3: As we listen, we learn about the sinful heart beliefs and motives producing that behavior. (Do not seek behavioral change by trying to move from box 2 straight to box 6 quickly. By doing this you will bypass the heart which does not get to the roots.)

-Box 4: We then discern what biblical truths God wants to use to help those we counsel change. (We must be careful to not bypass box 4, it can be tempting but we must remember our first foundation principle, **Godly Change is God's Work.**)

-Box 5: Based on God's Word, we envision the godly heart beliefs and motives God wants to cultivate in those we are discipling, and we affirm those godly heart responses that are present.

-Box 6: We note what godly behaviors should flow or are flowing from the counselee's heart. If it is showing then we celebrate it and encourage them towards more good works.

Questions

1. How can we strike this balance of not burdening those we disciple with earning God's love by obedience while calling them to obedience in light of God's love for us?
2. How do we as disciplers not get discouraged if we do not see the desired growth in those we counsel?
3. How can we draw these bad roots from box 3 to the surface and inform those we disciple graciously?

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