



Biblical Counseling / Discipleship

Intertwined and Inseparable

The definition of biblical counseling in this series indicates that believers growing in the Christ-life have the privilege of helping others face and deal with various aspects of life and relationships by relying on the Holy Spirit and the complete sufficiency of God's Word.

Valid biblical counseling occurs when the counselor (a biblically obedient believer dependent on the Holy Spirit) provides help based on scriptural truth through purposeful communication that glorifies God by emphasizing salvation through Jesus Christ (evangelism) and faithful growth in the Christ-life (sanctification).

See *Counseling . . . What Is It?* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Biblical%20Counseling%20-%20Part%202.pdf>

The primary focus of biblical counseling is not counseling methods or procedures but, rather, Jesus Christ. Those receiving counsel need help to live Christ-honoring lives for God's glory. Biblical counseling explains salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and emphasizes sanctification (on-going growth in the Christ-life), a process that concludes with the believer's glorification (being in the physical presence of Jesus forever).

Authentic believers throughout history have counseled others regarding salvation in Christ. They have also counseled fellow believers to grow in Christ-likeness by relying on prayer, God's Word (the Bible), and the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout two millennia, biblical counseling has been an integral part of Christ-honoring discipleship.

In *Counseling One Another* (Oct. 2, 2012), Paul Tautges explains and lists Christian interactions that exemplify the link between biblical counseling and discipleship.

Biblical counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside one another for three main purposes:

First, to help each other consistently apply Scriptural theology to life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ;

Second, [to warn] each other, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and

Third, [to lead] each other to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that all may become spiritually reproductive followers of Jesus Christ.

This definition describes the aim of biblical discipleship. Basically, counseling is helping one another within the Body of Christ to grow to maturity in Him.

DISCIPLESHIP/COUNSELING IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Pastor Tautges reminds us that the New Testament uses different words to emphasize this more concentrated aspect of the disciple-making process, including: *parakaleo*, *noutheteo*, *sterizo*, *paramutheomai*, *marturomai*, *oikodomeo*, and *sophronizo*. The meanings and uses of these Greek words describe a well-rounded ministry geared toward helping people change to greater Christ-likeness.

Parakaleo

In the same blog quoted above, Tautges describes *parakaleo* saying:

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the Greek word *parakaleo* means 'to call to one's side,' hence, 'to call to one's aid.' It is used for every kind of calling which is meant to produce a particular effect, hence its various meanings, such as 'comfort, exhort, desire, call for.' The Apostle Peter uses this word to urge Christians to abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11), and the author of Hebrews insists that believers are to encourage one another to be faithful to their local assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

1 Peter 2:11, *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*

Hebrews 10:25, *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

God's plan for personal character transformation has always included other persons in the community of faith because normal spiritual growth does not take place in isolation but, rather, alongside others.

Noutheteo

Tautges explains *noutheteo* with the following observations:

A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament says that the Greek word *noutheteo* means to admonish or warn. It means to put before the mind so as to 'correct through instruction and warning.' It differs slightly from teaching in that it is normally a response to some kind of error or it is a warning against spiritual danger, present or potential. When Paul counseled the Ephesian elders about the danger of the emerging false teachers who would seek to make disciples by their false doctrines, he reminded them of the three years in which he did not cease to admonish them (Acts 20:31). Romans 15:14 teaches that believers can admonish one another biblically. This should always be toward the goal of spiritual maturity (Colossians 1:28), and therefore believers should appreciate the shepherds who give them instruction toward that end (1 Thessalonians 5:12).

Acts 20:31, *Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*

Romans 15:14, *And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.*

Colossians 1:28, *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 5:12, *But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.*

The noun form, noutesia, means 'training by word—either of encouragement, when this is sufficient, or of remonstrance, reproof, or blame, where required.' Therefore, we will also discover that God's plan for making disciples requires believers to care enough to confront one another when brothers or sisters they love are in error and to firmly warn or instruct them concerning their spiritual danger.

Sterizo

Another New Testament word related to discipleship is *sterizo*. According to *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, the word *sterizo* means "to make stable, place firmly . . . to strengthen, make firm, . . . to render constant, confirm one's mind." The ministry of strengthening one another is so significant that, when Satan asked permission to sift the apostles, Jesus charged Peter to strengthen the brothers when he returned from the test (Luke 22:32).

Luke 22:32, *"but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."*

Peter obeyed his charge to strengthen the brothers by reminding them of the resources believers have for growing in grace as a result of responding to the Gospel. He urged them to be diligent in making their calling certain and pointed out that believers are established (strengthened) in the truth (2 Peter 1:10, 12).

2 Peter 1:10, *Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.*

2 Peter 1:12, *Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.*

Ultimately, God strengthens or establishes believers (Roman 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, 3:3; 1 Peter 5:10).

Romans 16:25, *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past*

1 Thessalonians 3:13, *so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.*

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*

2 Thessalonians 3:3, *But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.*

1 Peter 5:10, *After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*

However, believers have both the responsibility to strengthen themselves (James 5:8, Revelation 3:2) and the privilege of strengthening one another (Romans 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 3:2).

James 5:8, *You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

Revelation 3:2, *Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.*

Romans 1:11, *For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;*

1 Thessalonians 3:2, *and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.*

The ministry of counseling helps believers become so established in the truth that they are able to stand firm in difficulties and help others in the process.

Paramutheomai

When describing his ministry discipling the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul said that he exhorted (*parakaleo*), encouraged (*paramutheomai*), and implored (*marturomai*) them as a father would his own children to live in a manner worthy of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, *just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,¹² so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines the word for encourage, *paramutheomai*, as "to speak to, address one, whether by way of admonition and incentive, or to calm and console; hence, equivalent to encourage, console." The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 that believers are to "encourage the fainthearted." In John 11:19 and 31, the Jews came to console Martha and Mary over the loss of their brother Lazarus. These passages indicate that the counselor comes alongside the one in need and speaks truth compassionately.

1 Thessalonians 5:14, *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

John 11:19, *and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.*

John 11:31, *Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.*

Marturomai

The word *marturomai* refers to summoning a witness to testify in court. *Strong's Concordance* defines it as to "call to witness, testify, solemnly charge." In his trial before King Agrippa, Paul said that he testified to the truth of the Scriptures (Acts 26:22-23). In Ephesians 4:17, Paul implores believers not to live like Gentiles. The counselor presents the truth of God's Word as a witness of God's grace and the changes God charges the counselee to make.

Acts 26:22-23, *So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place;²³ that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.*

Ephesians 4:17, *So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind.*

Oikodomeo

The word *oikodomeo* literally means to build a house. According to *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, when the word is used metaphorically . . .

Those who, by action, instruction, exhortation, comfort, promote the Christian wisdom of others and help them to live a correspondent life are regarded as taking part in the [building of the temple in which God dwells], and hence, are said [to oikodomeo] i.e.... to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, and blessedness.

Believers are to encourage one another and build up each other by reminding one another of the hope of the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11). The counsel they give should not spring merely from knowledge, but rather, it must be rooted in love (1 Corinthians 8:1).

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

1 Corinthians 8:1, Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

Sophronizo

Finally, HELPS Word-studies defines *sophronizo* as

... literally “living in divine moderation” ... moving in the “bigger picture” transforming someone to be “radically-balanced” according to the Lord’s will. This radical-moderation requires a complete perspective that ... [combines] the legitimate extremities of truth from both sides of a matter.

In other words, mature believers present the correct tension between such apparently contradictory truths as God’s mercy and His justice, His sovereignty and human responsibility, etc., and encourage disciples to walk in love toward one another. The word is used in Titus 2:4 of the ministry that older women are to have toward younger women.

Titus 2:3-5, Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

SUMMARY OF COUNSELING/DISCIPLESHIP TERMS

All New Testament terms addressed in this study show that believers can help one another through biblical, Christ-honoring counsel. The Greek words indicate that godly counsel takes many forms. Faithful believers can comfort, exhort, come alongside, encourage, restore, instruct, admonish, correct, warn, and advise one another by depending on the Holy Spirit, prayer, and God’s Word.

In light of the biblical terms related to counseling/discipleship, Paul Tautges makes the following observation.

The counsel dispensed is always in the form of words spoken from the commitment of biblical love. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” As biblical counselors, we must take great care in the words we use with fellow disciples, for speech has the power to kill them with despair or to give them the hope of life ... The power of counsel lies in the degree to which our words are filled with the Word.*

Biblical discipleship/counseling regularly occurs when believers purposefully communicate and interact as fellow disciples in life and ministry ... all for God’s glory. As expected, this Christ-oriented ministry is radically different from secular counseling.

See *Counseling ... Based on What?* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Biblical%20Counseling%20-%20Part%201.pdf> and *Overview of Humanistic Psychology and Major Schools of Thought in Psychology* at <https://www.verywell.com/what-is-humanistic-psychology-2795242>

Endnotes

* <http://counselingoneanother.com/2012/10/02/our-working-definition-of-counseling/> This reference is from *Counseling One Another*, a book by Paul Tautges that can be purchased at Shepherd Press (<http://www.shepherdpress.com/product/counseling-one-another/>). A review of the book is available at *Theology for You* at <http://www.theologyforyou.com/counseling-one-another/>

NOTE: You can receive a complimentary subscription to *Counseling One Another*, a blog by Pastor Paul Tautges, at <http://counselingoneanother.com/about/purpose>