

DOXOLOGICAL COUNSELING

Instructing Worshipers to the Praise and Glory of God

CLASS 5 - SANCTIFICATION'S SINCERITY (PART 1): WHEN IS CHANGE WORSHIP?

Introduction

Worshipful, God-honoring change occurs when at least four conditions are present:

CONDITION #1: When God's glory is the ultimate goal of change (Matt. 5:16; 1Cor. 1:30-31; 10:31).

"The sinfulness of sin not only appears from, but consists in this, that it is contrary to God... Here then is the desperately wicked nature of sin, that it is...high treason against the Majesty of God." — Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*

"As God is holy, all holy, only holy, altogether holy, and always holy, so sin is sinful, all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful, and always sinful... Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, the contempt of his love...the upbraiding of his providence, the scoff of his promise, the reproach of his wisdom." — Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*

Equipping Hour

In Counseling...

1. "What grieves you most about this sin?"
2. "What do you want most in this situation?"
3. "What do you want God to do in this trial?"
4. "Why are you wanting to change?"
5. What do the counselee's thoughts, actions, words, etc. reveal about what he is worshiping?
See Psalm 18:1-3; Matthew 6:24-25; 12:33-37
6. Help the worshiper consider that God would be glorified by this change and why.
See Numbers 14:17-19; Joshua 7:19
7. What attributes of God would be put on display if your counsel is heeded?

CONDITION #2: When faith is the primary means of change (Pro. 3:5-8; Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11).

"True worship only takes place when the spirit is engaged with truth by faith... Faith is the priority of the Christian life because it allows us to enjoy the grace of God by embracing His truth and engaging in true worship. Faith is the first responsibility of the Christian life and the continuing imperative of Christian living."
— Jerry Wragg and Paul Shirley, *Free to Be Holy*

"When we actively pursue faith, the truth regulates our lives. By faith we hold onto the certainty that God, who transcends our feelings, experiences, and circumstances, is the One who determines reality. *His truth is true, even when it doesn't feel right. His will is ultimate, even when our experiences seem determinative. His hand is mighty, even when our circumstances seem omnipotent. His character is holy, even when our emotions betray us. His promises are final, even when despair seems permanent.*" — Jerry Wragg and Paul Shirley, *Free to Be Holy*

"Feeling and freeness of spirit are often reserved until duty is discharged. Reward follows work." — Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*

In Counseling...

1. What truth is the counselee failing to believe, call to mind, and/or obey?
See **Lamentations 3:21-25**
2. What does a particular sin reveal that the counselee must be believing instead of what is true?
See **Proverbs 20:11; 27:19; Luke 7:35**
3. What needs to change in the counselee's thinking?
See **Philippians 4:8**
4. How has the counselee pursued change already? Why is this not working? What's missing?
See **Jeremiah 2:13; James 4:2-3**
5. Does the counselee understand the necessity of enduring in faith (i.e., I must choose to believe God on a moment-by-moment basis for as long as it takes)?
See **Proverbs 4:23; 23:19; Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 10:35-39**

CONDITION #3: When sin is the chief enemy of change (Rom. 6:12-13; 1Pet. 2:11; 1Jn. 3:4).

"Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin, or it will be killing you." — John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

"He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work." — John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

"[Sin] would rob God of his glory, Christ of his purchase, the soul of its happiness." — Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*

"That we may make a free and ingenuous confession of sin, let us consider: (1) Holy confession gives glory to God... A humble confession exalts God... While we confess sin, God's patience is magnified in sparing, and his free grace in saving such sinners." - Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*

In Counseling...

1. Has the counselee misdiagnosed the problem? Have they attributed their dishonoring thoughts, deeds, etc. to something other than sin (a mental illness, a psychological label, medication or the lack thereof, their body's biological makeup/chemistry, other people, circumstances, etc.)?
See Genesis 3:11-13; Ezekiel 18:1-3; John 9:1-3
2. Has the counselee rightly identified the sin in their life?
3. Is the counselee calling the sin what God calls it? Are they using biblical language?
4. Is the counselee practicing "spiritual cardiology"? Are they able to assess and diagnose their own heart in order to draw out their deepest desires, motives, pursuits, affections, longings, intentions, thoughts, etc.?
See Proverbs 20:5
5. Is the counselee willing to choose affliction over iniquity? Do they hate sin more than suffering?
See Job 36:21; 1 Peter 2:21-23

CONDITION #4: When the heart is the principal object of change (Pro 4:23; Rom 6:17; Heb 3:7-12).

"The heart is the *primum vivens*, the first thing that lives, and it must be the *primum vertens*, the first thing that turns... In religion the heart is all." — Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*

In Counseling...

1. The counselor must practice "spiritual cardiology." He must do Proverbs 20:5 and draw out what is happening in the counselee's heart by carefully discerning the fruit (words, actions, circumstances, etc.) with God's wisdom (i.e., His word).
See Proverbs 20:5; Hebrews 4:12
2. Does the counselee believe that true, heart-level change is even possible? The counselor may need to instill hope in the counselee that this type of change is not only possible but desired for them by God!
See Proverbs 23:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Peter 1:14-16
3. What in the heart needs to change? Thoughts? Desires? Affections? Commitments/allegiances? Strength of the will? Convictions?
See Mark 7:21-23
4. Does the counselee need admonishment, encouragement, or help to change?
See 1 Thessalonians 5:14