

Impact Intensives Gospel Shepherding Part 2: Basics of Counseling

"We want to avoid suffering, death, sin, ashes. But we live in a world crushed and broken and torn, a world God Himself visited to redeem. We receive his poured-out life, and being allowed the high privilege of suffering with Him, may then pour ourselves out for others." ~
Elisabeth Elliot

The Definition of Gospel Shepherding

What is Gospel Shepherding?

- Gospel shepherding is one vital component of biblical discipleship
- We can define biblical discipleship in many ways, but for now let's use a simple definition of "helping people move from unbelief to belief in Jesus in all areas of their lives," with "belief" defined as *trust and obey*.
- Gospel shepherding is the component of discipleship focused on addressing crises, hurts & healing, conflict resolution, problems situations, ongoing issues, or specific sins struggles.
- Gospel shepherding can take several forms.
 - Formal long-term counseling relationship
 - Informal long-term counseling relationship in daily life/friendship
 - Single micro-conversation in daily life, short or long
 - Stepping into unexpected disaster to serve as comforter or advisor in the life of a friend

The Basis for Gospel Shepherding

It's biblical: Scripture calls us to make disciples. It calls us to "teach and admonish" one another. It calls us to bear one another's burdens, to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn. It calls us to strive for the maturity of others. It calls us to love with the same kind of love God has for us.

- Colossians 3:13-17
- Romans 12:15
- Galatians 6:2

It's necessary: people are hurting and struggling all around us. That's real life. We can't ignore the heavy and hard stuff if we're going to faithfully make disciples and love people well. God cares about the hurting and broken-hearted. Gospel shepherding provides amazing opportunities for us to step into the reality of a broken world and walk with people while pointing them to Jesus.

- Psalm 34:18
- Matthew 11:28-30

- 1 Corinthians 13:7

It's discipleship: if discipleship is about helping people move from unbelief to belief in Jesus in all areas of their lives, then that most definitely includes the areas where they need healing, feel broken, encounter struggles, deal with conflict, and are entrenched in sin.

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Colossians 1:28-29
- 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

It's reflective: Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He is the perfect overseer of our souls, the God who comforts, heals and transforms. If we are to reflect who He is to one another and the world, then gospel shepherding must be a part of it.

- Psalm 23
- 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

The Goal of Gospel Shepherding

In your experience, when someone comes to you with a problem, or when you go to another person with a problem, what outcome are they seeking?

- Feel better
- Be happy
- Get their feelings validated
- Confirm that someone else is to blame

Goal of gospel shepherding: Heart-level transformation that flows out of worshipping Jesus

Let's break that down into two components:

- 1) A change in worship orientation
- 2) A change in behavior because of the change in worship orientation

Don't confuse the order...the transformation comes as a result of worship, not the other way around!

The Stages of Gospel Shepherding

- 1) See the problem through a biblical, gospel-centered perspective
- 2) Get to the heart of the problem
- 3) Point to Jesus as the only hope and solution
- 4) Call them to real, heart-level change – a worship reorientation (repentance, belief) that leads to a behavior reorientation (following Jesus)

5) Identify practical steps to move toward change and create space for God to work
(don't mistake this as heart-level transformation! Think of this as helping them create the right environment for genuine fruit-bearing)

This is not a linear, streamlined process. The stages are fluid and in some ways never complete. You can't force this process to happen. You can't force someone to see their heart clearly, or to desire to change, or to take the necessary steps to resolve the situation. The best you can do is sensitively and lovingly guide them through the process.

People often get stuck at one stage. That's ok. Don't seek to change people on your timeline. Seek to be an agent of God's reconciliation in their lives.

Remember what is your role v. God's role: you can help guide someone through these stages. But you can't achieve heart-level transformation for them. You can't make them desire change. If you start to take on the weight of God's responsibility on your shoulders, shepherding others will be a massive burden. You will likely at some point respond to the person in impatience and frustration, or switch to behavior modification because you think it's "not working".

The Gospel Shepherding Toolbox

- 1) Questions – Jesus was a master at asking questions to provoke conviction or bring understanding. Questions are perhaps the most powerful way to move people toward a right understanding of their heart, their need, and the truth.
 - Learning to ask good questions is probably the best gospel shepherding skill to master
 - When you get stuck in counseling, asking more questions is a good way to stall as you pray for the Spirit to speak and guide you
 - Utilize two types of questions: extensive (broad, gathers information) and intensive (pointed, leading toward an end)
- 2) Stories & Anecdotes – Jesus rarely told the truth to people in plain, boring terms. He almost always illustrated the truth to them through stories and parables because he knew this was a much more effective way of communicating truth (Nathan confronting David in 2 Samuel 12 is another great example of this).
- 3) Scripture – Jesus had a solid working knowledge of Scripture and how it applied to every situation. He brought Scripture into his encountering situations with people as it applied. You cannot biblically counsel people without actively using Scripture. Continue knowing and memorizing Scripture, and show people the truth you are speaking to them in the Word!
- 4) Discernment – Jesus was so in tune with the Father he was able to discern what people needed, what they were after, and what their hearts were like. He knew what they needed to hear, when they needed to be challenged, and when they

weren't yet ready to receive total truth. Through the Spirit we too can have discernment in gospel shepherding. This requires that we are actively listening to Him as we counsel.

- 5) Love – Jesus had genuine love and compassion for those he talked with, even when they were entrenched in sin and blind to it. Love shaped the way he encountered people. Love shapes the way we encounter people, too.
- 6) Time – Jesus knew that genuine change takes time. He didn't ask people for an immediate response. He didn't force them to make decisions on a set timeline. Look at the patience he had with his disciples.

The Role of the Counselor

So, what role, then, do you take?

1. **Pray** with the person, asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance
2. **Ask** questions, both extensive and intensive
3. **Listen** to the person and the Spirit with discernment
4. **Clarify** by asking more questions or confirming that you heard correctly
5. **Gain** involvement by relating to the person with empathy and identification
6. **Lead** the person toward truth through Scripture, illustrations, anecdotes, or more questions
7. **Speak** gospel truth in love. Use real Scripture!
8. **Identify** practical steps/homework to help foster a right worship environment
9. **Affirm** God's mercy, grace, and love for them in Jesus over and over again
10. **Pray** for the person, praying truth and love over them

Key to remember: preach one gospel, and one gospel only!

The Comfort & the Call

Remember that the gospel is good news.

The temptation in gospel shepherding is to focus on:

- What the person is doing wrong and making them believe it is wrong
- What they should be doing better
- A pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps method of changing

True hope is found in offer people both the comfort and the call of the gospel. It's found in calling them to trust and beli

The comfort is the good news that Jesus has already accomplished their salvation for them, that they are abundantly loved and forgiven, that Jesus takes us as we are and He does the changing, that Jesus is the only one that will satisfy their souls.

- Gospel shepherding isn't about telling people what they need to do better, nor condemning them for their problems. It's about calling them to trust and believe in the good news of the gospel, of what Jesus has already done for them. It's about pointing them to the truth that Jesus is the only one worthy of our affections, the only one who will satisfy our deepest longings. It's about showing them that following Jesus and living life His way is truly better than living life our way.

Gospel shepherding is NOT about telling people what they *should be* as an obligatory result of the gospel – this only brings shame and guilt. Gospel shepherding is about reminding people who they *are* or *could be* because of who Jesus is and what He has done – this brings freedom, repentance, and joy.