

A seminar teaching a basic Biblical model of  
people and basic skills for Biblical Counseling

presented  
by  
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*SEEING PEOPLE THROUGH A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE*

## Understanding People

The purposes of a  
man's heart are deep  
waters, but a man of  
understanding draws  
them out.

Proverbs 20:5

# Understanding People

## Section One

### I. The Foundations of Biblical/Christian Counseling.

#### A. Three Basic resources of the Biblical Counselor.

(These are the elements which make what a believer does unique and distinct from any other approach. These are the basic assumptions which underlie all that we do.)

##### 1. We believe in the sufficiency of Scripture.

Scripture presents principles that address the counseling situations with which a person will deal, unless the foundations of those problems are caused by an organic dysfunction. The Scriptures present truths that address both the surface issues of behavior and the deeper issues of the heart.



This does not mean there is a specific verse for every problem. However, the Bible presents a framework, or categories of thought, in which truth is found to address problems.

### Common Error

The declaration of 2 Timothy 3:16 is true. Common error is that

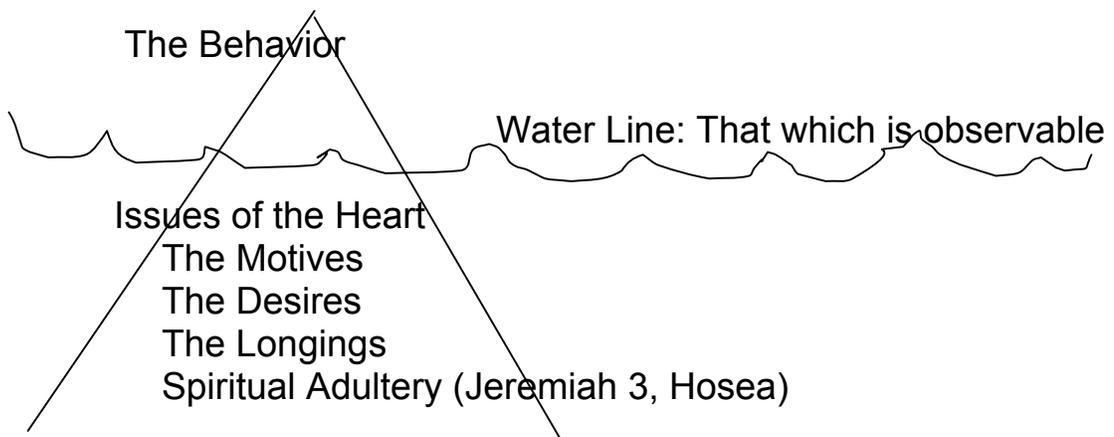
Bible Addresses ----- Spiritual Problems.

Psychology Addresses ----- Other relational and emotional struggles.

## 2. We believe in the centrality of the relationship with Christ.

Problems properly understood involve resources for full resolution found in relationship with Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Iceberg Reality of Personal Problems.



When the problems people face are seen at a deeper level, then addressing those problems requires a relationship with Christ and the presence of the Spirit. The truth of God's Word and the presence of the Spirit are required to change the heart. Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 20:5, Matthew 15:19, Matthew 23:25-27

### 3. We believe in the central role of the community.

The community of Christ has relational resources available that are found nowhere else. These resources can bring about substantial change.

a. The community of the believer involves the presence of God. He is present in the life of the Christian counselor. Matthew 18:20 (Two or three are gathered.)

b. The community of believers involves a relationship with fellow believers. (One another, John 13:34, love one another *allal on*.) The local community provides prayer, accountability, acceptance, direction, support, example, etc.

## **B. Three basic assumptions of a Biblical Counselor.**

### 1. The primary tool of the Biblical Counselor is words in relationship.

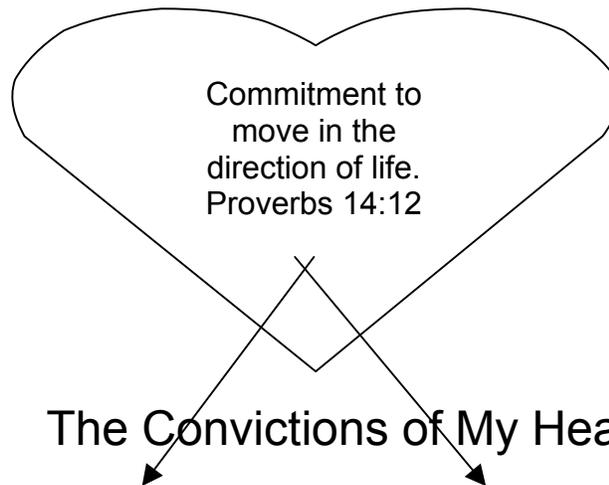
The Bible has much to say about the power of words in the life of a person. Words can change a person's life. Proverbs 12:18, 15:2,4, 18:21

The primary tool of the counselor is a well-timed and well-aimed word in the midst of a loving and caring relationship. Ephesians 4: 15

- a. These words must have truth. (They must be in agreement with the principles and truths of God's Word.)
- b. They must be motivated by love and not by manipulation or fear.
- c. They must be timed to impact the heart of the individual. This involves exposing the heart of the individual

2. The primary problem in people's lives is the choices behind their behavior.

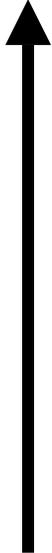
- a. Every deliberate behavior has a chosen direction.
- b. That choice is always in the direction that a person believes will bring life or completeness.



**The Way of Foolishness:**  
(Responding to life my way)  
Psalm 10:1-4, 14:1

**The Way of Faith:**  
(Responding to life God's way)  
Proverbs 3:5

The direction of the course



c. These convictions are built in response to the events of our lives. Thus, it is essential not to simply know the events of the life but much more importantly, the beliefs or convictions that were formed in response. We must not view the individual as a victim of past circumstances that can not be changed, but as an agent that is functioning on the basis of beliefs formed in the midst of those circumstances.

d. The problem is that the purposes of the heart are often hidden, our hearts are deceptive. Jeremiah 17:9

### 3. The primary understanding of the struggle of people involves human dignity and human depravity.

a. Man is created in the image of God and is designed by God to be in intimate relationship with Him.

b. Man fell and is separated from God.

c. Man in his sinfulness seeks to fill the void in his relationship with God with things apart from God. (Idolatry)

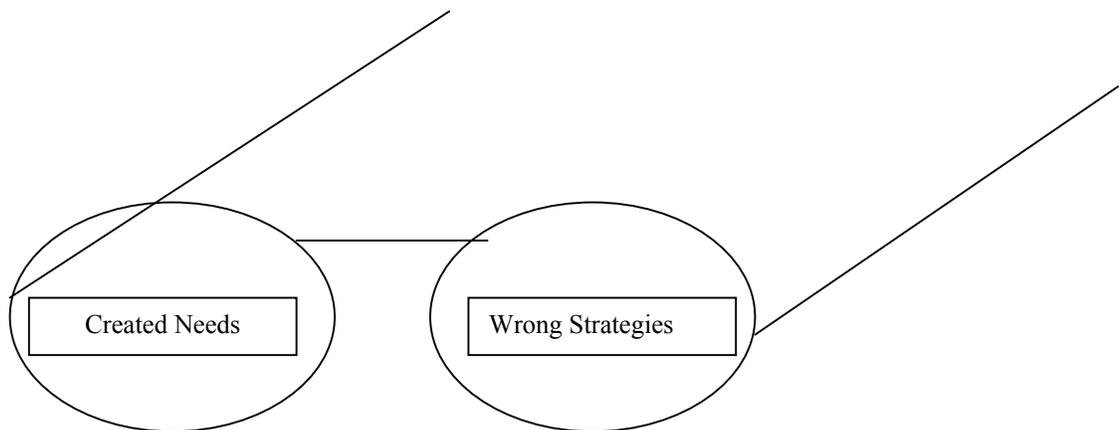
d. This becomes the basic model of understanding people.

# Understanding People

## Section Two

### II. Developing a Basic Biblical Model of People.

#### A. The need to see people clearly.



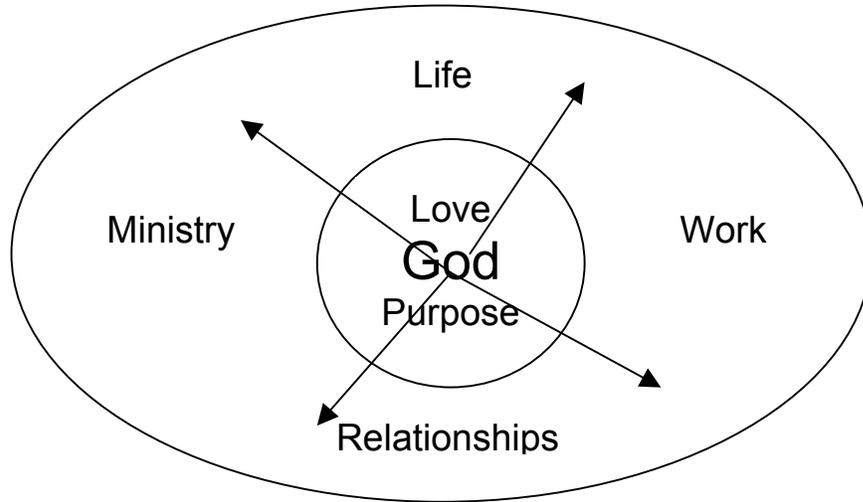
#### B. An understanding of Created Needs.

1. The primary need of all people is a relationship with God.

a. That which God provides.

1. In this relationship God provides our core relational needs, which are essential to function according to God's design.

2. In this relationship, God provides the core purpose for a persons life.



This is Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, a perfect relationship with one another and God in a perfect environment that responded to their activity and work. Genesis 1:26-31, 2:18-25

b. That which man needs.

1. Man has a need to be in relationship.
2. Man has a need to have a purpose to his actions.

2. The Primary Problem of all of mankind is a loss of that relationship.

- a. The Fall separated man from God, who is core in his life.
- b. That separation is experienced as an emptiness seeking to be filled. John 7:37-38

## 1. The concept of emptiness.

Greek word is *kolia*. The word is sometimes translated stomach or intestines.

It speaks of an emptiness that longs to be filled. In English I say "I love you with all my heart". In Greek you could say, "I love you with all of my intestines or bowels."

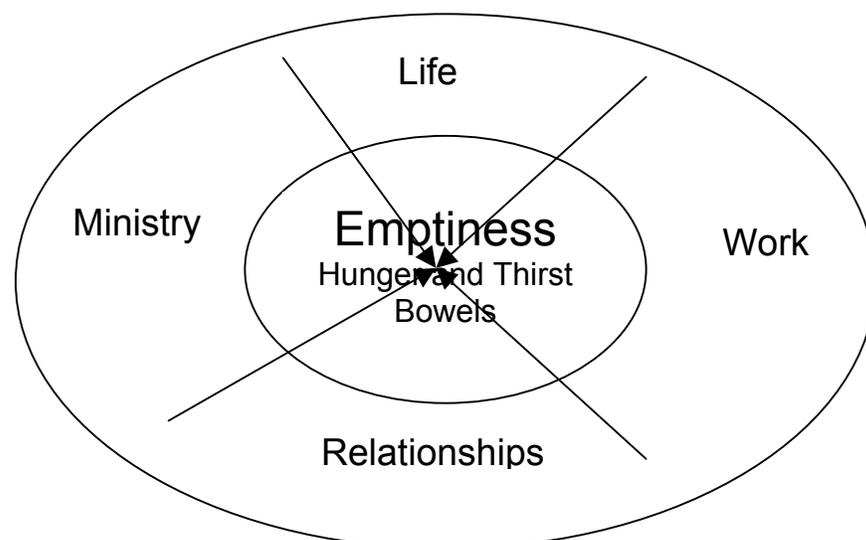
This emptiness will become the driving force in a person's life apart from God. Romans 16:17-18, Philippians 3:18-19

That which temporarily satisfies will become our god.

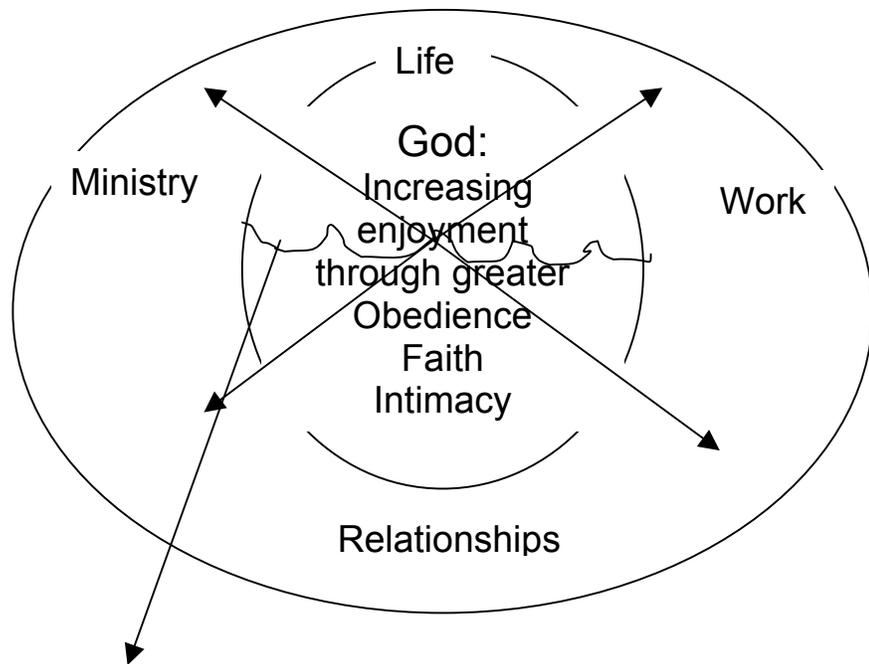
## 2. The concept of spiritual hunger and thirst.

Physical hunger and thirst: a discomfort of the body that seeks to find fulfillment.

Spiritual hunger and thirst: a discomfort of the heart (immaterial part) that seeks to be filled. This is often experienced as loneliness, abandonment, worthlessness, inadequacy, purposelessness, despair, etc. Psalms 42:1, 63:1, Isaiah 55:1, Jeremiah 2:13-13, John 4



When properly understood, this hunger drives us to a relationship with Jesus who is the only source of true satisfaction. The closer a person's relationship with God, the greater the sense of completeness and wholeness, and the person becomes more able to function according to God's design for them. This also results in a greater sense of purpose in their lives.



The level of wholeness increases as the level of spiritual maturity increases.

### 3. The response of mankind is wrong strategies.

a. The wrong strategies are formed in response to events that cause us to experience the emptiness of our lives.

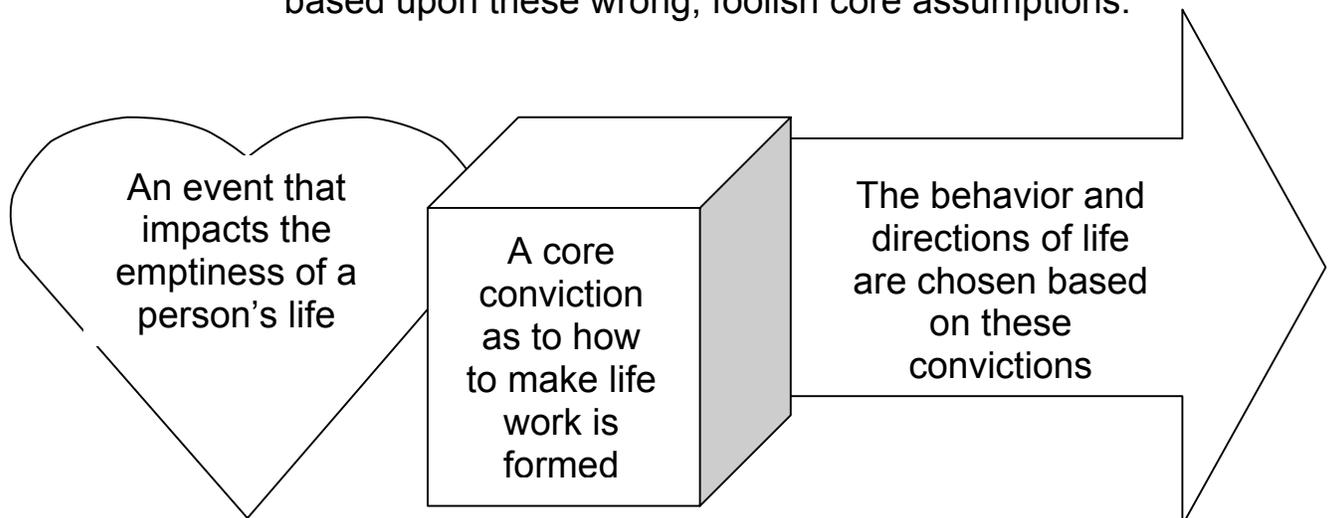
1. They made me feel temporarily full.
2. They made me feel pain.
3. The most powerful are the painful events.

b. These events are interpreted through the results of our fallen nature.

1. The deception of the heart. Jeremiah 17:9-10
2. The foolishness of godlessness.  
Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3
3. Self-reliance Isaiah 50:10-11

c. These beliefs are often formed in childhood.  
Proverbs 22:15

d. The choices of life, the decisions that are made are based upon these wrong, foolish core assumptions.



The place of greatest change is in the area of the mind. It is important to change the thoughts and convictions of a person as well as the behavior to bring about substantial change.

4. The interaction of event, perception, and choice determine a person's response to a given situation.

a. An event or situation takes place in the life of a person. This event can either be a positive event or a negative event, pleasing or painful.

b. An interpretation of the event is made in accordance to a person's core beliefs and convictions.

A person who responds in faith will view the event as coming from the hand of God intended for their benefit and growth. The event will be interpreted as an opportunity to praise God or to depend upon Him more. The person of faith will chose a desired outcome. The person believes the outcome rests in God's control. The ultimate desire is to accomplish the will of God.

A person who responds in fear and lack of faith will view the event as a threat to their personal well being. The person without faith will chose a demand outcome. The person believes they control this outcome. The content of the demand usually involves a change of circumstance, the elimination of the pain, or the pursuit of pleasure.

c. A behavioral choice is made attempting to deal with the event.

1. People choose activities and behaviors that lead to an improvement of the situation.

2. People choose activities and behaviors that lead to a deterioration of the situation.

d. A reaction to the event is often evidenced in the emotions.

1. If the desire is met, the person of faith will respond in praise and thanks to God. If the desire is unmet, the person of faith will respond with godly emotions.

Blocked desires lead to disappointment.

Uncertain desires lead to concern and greater dependence on God.

Unobtainable desires lead to sadness and greater dependence.

All involve thanks to God!

2. If the demand is met, the person lacking faith will respond with pride. If the demand is unmet they will respond with ungodly emotions.

Blocked demands lead to anger and bitterness.

Uncertain demands lead to pressure, worry, fear, and anxiety.

Unobtainable demands lead to depression, despair, and false guilt. There is an absence of thanksgiving to God.

This process is seen in James 4:1-5.

1 WHAT is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (Quoted from NIV.)

Because the believer never walks the path of faith perfectly, there will always be a combination of godly and ungodly reactions to circumstances. The presence of the ungodly reactions to a degree that inhibits obedience or ministry is the trigger that indicates the need to examine the deep issues of the heart.

$$A + B + C = D$$

An event enters the life of a person. There are both painful and pleasing events. There are both positive and negative events.

The event is evaluated according to the core beliefs.

Faith: The event is seen as from God. Desires a certain outcome. Will seek to trust.

No Faith: The event is perceived as a threat. Demands a certain outcome. Will seek to control.

There is a choice made to deal with the event.

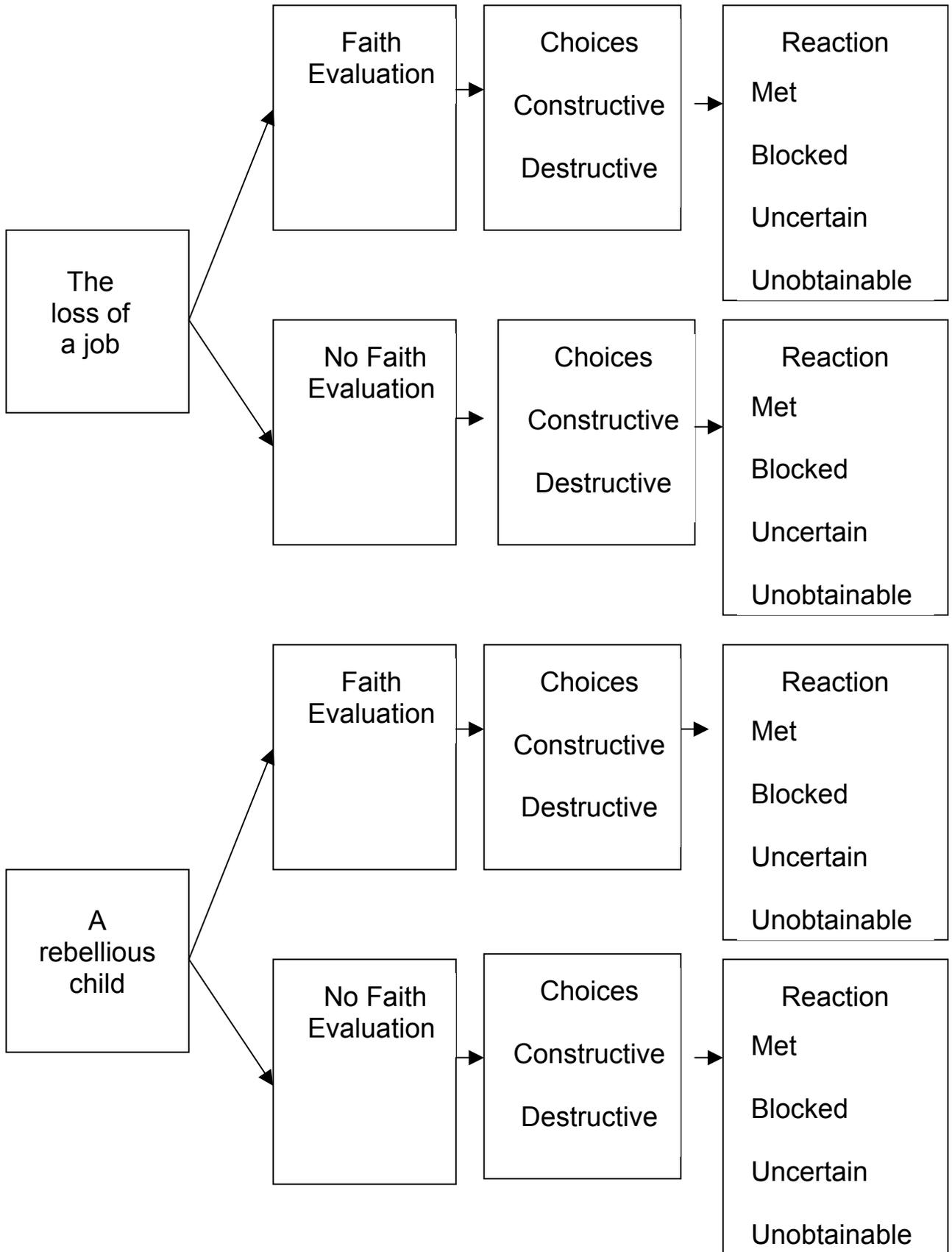
Constructive choices improve the possibility of meeting the goal or demand.

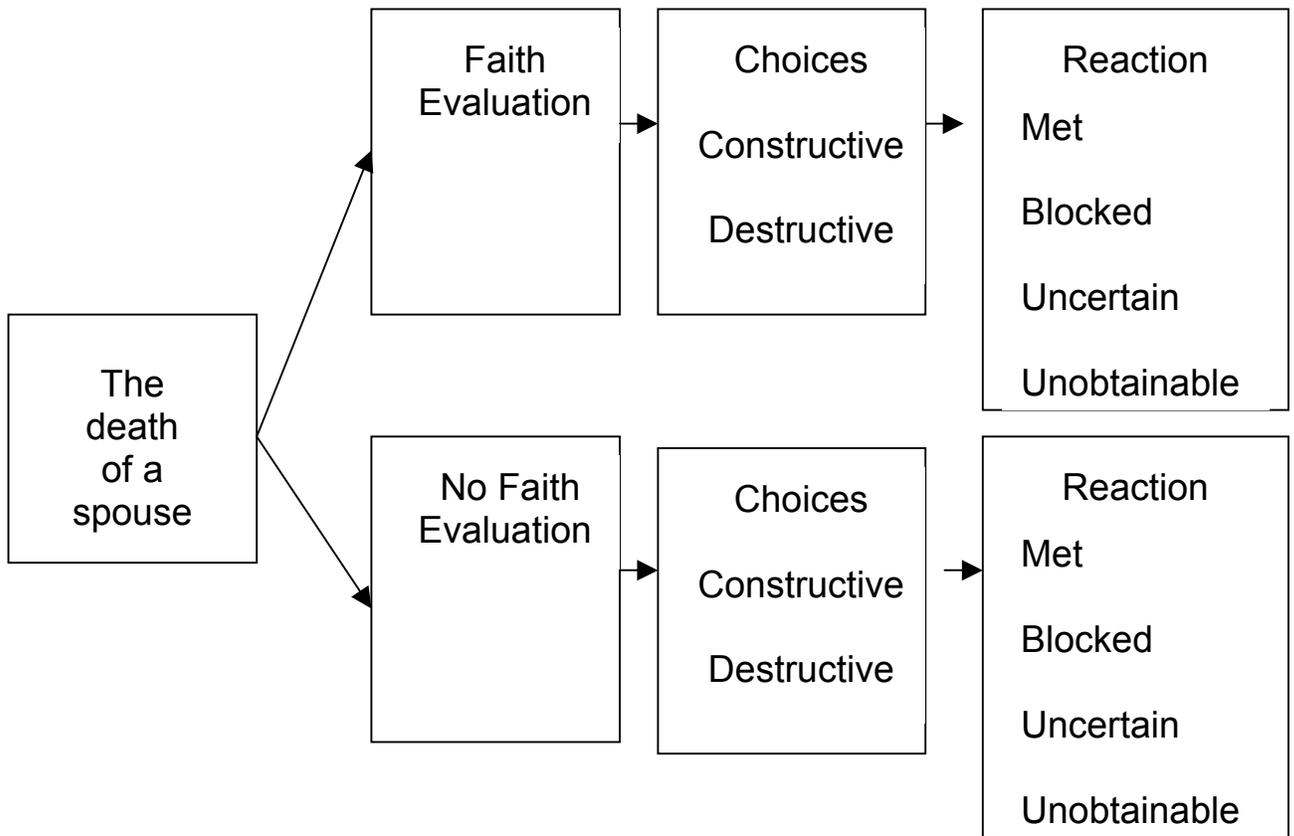
Destructive choices inhibit the possibility of meeting the goal or demand.

There's a reaction.

Faith: If met, results in praise. If unmet, results in godly emotions and reactions.

No Faith: If met, results in pride. If unmet, results in ungodly emotions and reactions.





This is the direction through which a person develops an emotional or relational problem.



This is the direction through which a person comes to the understanding necessary to make significant change.

# Understanding People

## Section Three

### III. The Activities of Biblical Counseling.

#### A. Understanding the presence of the Lord.

1. The Biblical counselor at all times is dependent upon the work of the Spirit in his life and the life of the one being counseled.
2. The Biblical counselor is aware that there may be a spiritual battle that is taking place. There may be issues of spiritual warfare that need to be addressed. Ephesians 6:10-18
3. This is done, not through the skill of the counselor, but through the authority of Jesus Christ and the renouncement by the person involved.

#### B. Assisting the person in telling their story.

##### **1. Present a caring atmosphere.**

- a. An expression of American culture.
  1. Open posture.
  2. Leaning towards.
  3. Eye contact.
  4. Relaxed style.

b. Show an open and caring attitude according to your culture.

## **2. Use good listening skills**

a. The danger of poor listening.

1. Proclaimed in Scripture. Proverbs 18:13,15,17

2. Demonstrated in our lives.

b. The content of those skills.

1. A commitment to focus upon the other person.

a. Characterized by a careful listening to the words of the other seeking to understand what they mean.

b. Characterized by a careful observation of non-verbal communication.

Body posture, Tone of voice, Rate of speaking, Facial expressions, Dress, Eye contact, Emotional content, Voice inflections, Nervous habits

2. Listening beyond the words.

a. Listening for the presence or absence of emotional intensity.

b. Listening for inherent contradiction within the story.

c. Observing the avoidance of certain topic or events.

3. The failure to listen intently.

a. Distractions within the room or the environment.

b. Beginning to answer the person in your own mind before they are done speaking. (We can listen twice as fast as a person can speak.)

c. Failing to hear the words spoken because the mind is wondering.

**d. Above all else, avoid premature assumptions. (Check out your assumptions through the skillful use of questions!!)**

2. Use good questioning skills.

a. The use of reflective questions:

1. They usually begin with something like “I hear you saying”, or “I believe you mean”, or “how close is this to what you want me to understand?”

2. They reflect back the counselors understanding of what was said.

b. The use of open-ended questions.

1. Closed questions usually require a “yes” or “no” answer. They are limited in their usefulness. They can help to test an assumption.

2. Open-ended questions require the person to say more as they are answering. The majority of the counselor’s questions will be open.

3. Closed: “Did you feel angry when they said that?”

4. Open-ended: “What emotions did you feel when that happened?”

c. Data collection questions: These are questions that simply ask for more information. (“How often do you do that behavior?”)

d. Exploration questions: These questions are used to explore a tentative conclusion. (“You mentioned being hurt by your son, I wonder if you were more upset at your husband?”)

e. Confrontational questions: These are used to try to break through a person’s unwillingness to see what is really taking place. Matthew 26:10, 53; Mark 9:19

### **3. Use self monitoring**

a. What is my emotional response to this person’s story?

1. The presence of emotions.
2. The absence of emotions.

b. Are there aspects of this person’s story that will make it hard for me to care about them?

c. What is the underlying demand that I sense from this person?

1. Fix the other person.
2. Remove the consequences of my behavior.
3. Violate Matthew 18:15.

d. Are there areas I know will be uncomfortable to deal with, and therefore avoid?

e. Do I sense that something is just not right in this story?

### C. Addressing the need of the person.

#### **1. The need for prayer**

a. There is prayer before the session for the counselee and for the counselor.

b. There may be prayer during the session. Most sessions will end in prayer.

c. There is prayer after the session.

**2. The need for information:** There are times, not often, when the problem is just a need for information on how to change a particular situation.

#### **3. The need for behavioral change.**

a. Behavioral change involves, first, acknowledging the sinfulness or wrongness of the behavior.

b. Behavioral change involves repentance and a desire to move in a new direction.

1. True repentance involves acknowledgement.

**2. True repentance involves accepting personal responsibility for the behavior.**

3. True repentance involves restoration or restitution.

**4. True repentance involves accepting the consequences.**

(Compare the repentance of David and Saul. 1 Samuel 15 and 2 Samuel 12.)

c. Behavioral change involves setting new goals that reflect obedience to Christ.

- |                                  |   |  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Believing the gospel.         | 10. Reconciling broken relationships.       | 21. Honoring parents.                  |
| 2. Rejoicing in persecution.     | 11. Keeping promises.                       | 22. Fearing only God.                  |
| 3. Listening to the Word.        | 12. Maintaining moral purity.               | 23. Praying.                           |
| 4. Pursuing the goal.            | 13. Accepting God-given singleness.         | 24. Avoiding hypocrisy.                |
| 5. Loving neighbors.             | 14. Avoiding greed.                         | 25. Not judging motives.               |
| 6. Loving fellow believers.      | 15. Serving as stewards of our possessions. | 26. Not opposing fellow believers.     |
| 7. Serving with humility.        | 16. Not worrying.                           | 27. Confronting specific behaviors.    |
| 8. Paying civil taxes.           | 17. Abiding in Christ.                      | 28. Remembering the Lord's death.      |
| 9. Forgiving those who wrong us. | 18. Following Christ.                       | 29. Being ready for the Lord's return. |
|                                  | 19. Bearing the cross.                      | 30. Obeying the Great Commission.      |
|                                  | 20. Reaching out to children.               |  |

When the commands of Christ in the gospels are examined and those that relate to a specific event or the Old Covenant are removed, there are two hundred commands that can be divided into 30 categories. This is not an extensive list of all the New Testament commands, but it is a helpful tool for establishing new directions in a person's life. (Compiled by Rick Leineweber Jr. Printed in Biblical Counseling For Today by Jeffery Watson)

d. Behavioral change involves accountability.

1. Someone who knows the struggle and is willing to ask the tough questions.
2. Someone who will pray regularly.
3. Someone who understands the struggle and is able to respond to failures with grace.

e. Behavioral change involves consistency and repetition.

1. Studies indicate that it takes about 31 days to create a new habit.
2. New habits must be reinforced.

#### **4. The need for heart change.**

Most people come to a counselor for one of two reasons, either to change their circumstances or to change their feelings. Therefore, there is a great reluctance to examine their own heart issues. Often, a counselor will only be able to address the more surface struggles of an individual. This may result from a limited amount of time spent with the person, or a limited willingness by a person to look at the heart issues. Many times the focus will be upon behavioral change. Behavioral change can lead to a change of heart but more often will lead to greater exposure of the heart issues. Often heart change requires a great deal of time. This is where consistent involvement in a healthy New Testament type community can, over time, expose heart issues and bring about significant heart change.

a. The problem with Jonah:

1. He was finally obedient.

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2. He experienced great despair.

3. God dealt with the convictions of his heart.

(His obedience led, through God's work in his heart, to a confrontation of his motives and purposes. The Scriptures do not clearly indicate whether he responded properly. )

- b. It involves exploring the events in which convictions were formed.

1. Often experienced in childhood with the conviction formed in the midst of foolishness.  
Proverbs 22:15

2. The purpose is to understand the conviction not to blame the person who caused the situation.

3. Usually the greater the pain the greater the strength of the conviction.

4. These convictions often involve a concept of self. 1 Samuel 15:17, Judges 6:15

- c. It involves an honest evaluation of the damage that was done and the pain that was experienced.

1. A willingness to admit the pain and hurt.

2. Beginning the process of forgiveness towards the one who caused the hurt.

3. A willingness to admit to the wrong convictions and accept personal responsibility.

Often those who have been significantly abused or hurt blame themselves for the evil or hurt they experienced at the hands of others. The reason for accepting self-blame is that it gives the person a sense of control. People tend to believe that responsibility equals control.

d. It involves repentance of the self-protective and independent strategies to make life work.

1. The attempts to make life work apart from dependence upon God.
2. The foolish convictions that control a person's decisions.

e. It involves a faith-based dependence.

1. There must be a chosen belief that the old convictions or demands (concerning what is necessary to be complete) are untrue and an evidence of a lack of faith.
2. There must be a chosen belief that a person's relationship with God, and what He chooses to provide, is what is necessary to be complete.

f. It involves choosing behavior that reflects a new dependence upon God.

1. These behaviors violate the old convictions.
2. These behaviors require dependence upon God to provide for the core needs.
3. These behaviors will be different for each person because each person has a unique set of wrong convictions.
4. These behaviors often begin with small steps.

A man who is beat up  
from his dependence  
upon the world.

# God



The rope represents  
the promise of God's  
sufficiency in all  
situations.

The cliff  
represents his  
core conviction of  
what makes his  
life work.

What must he do to  
experience the  
sufficiency of God?

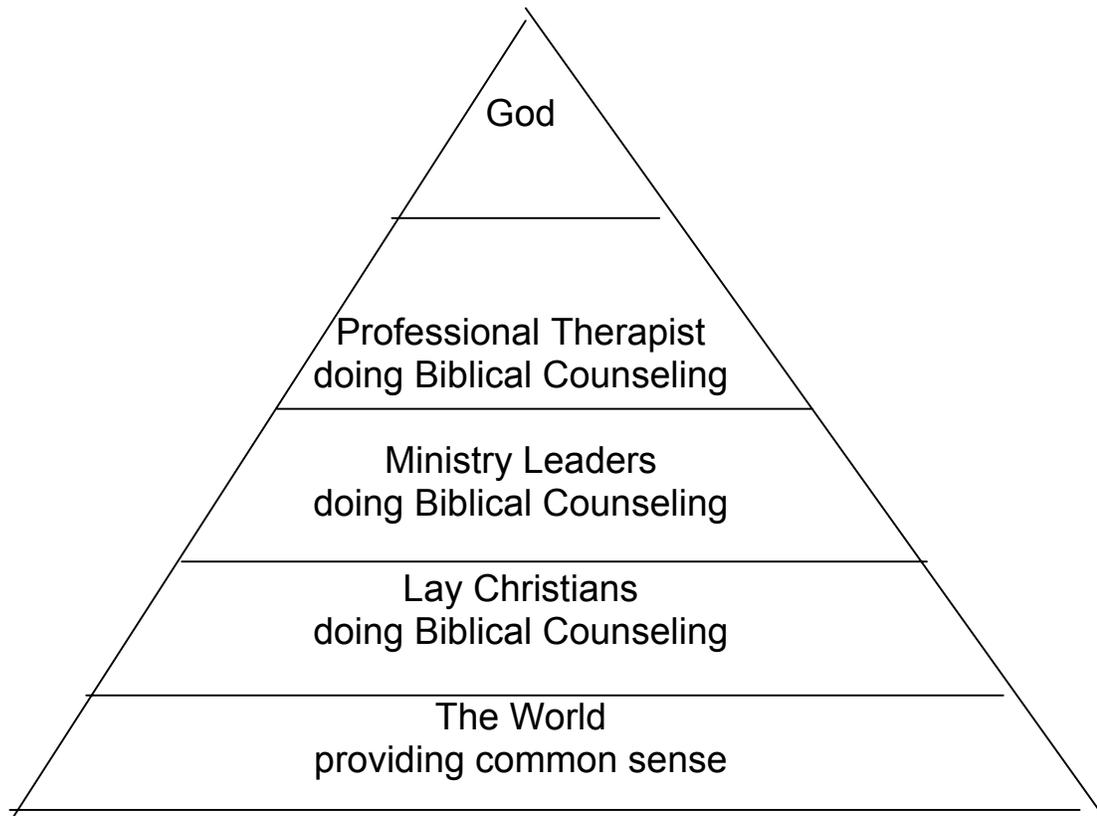
The rocks represent his  
greatest fear.

(Adapted from "The Marriage Builder" by Dr Larry Crabb. p.42)

# Understanding People

## Section Four

### IV. The Characteristics of Skilled Counselors



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## **A. The World: The Basic Skills that all helpful people possess.**

1. Genuineness: This is the ability to communicate a genuine concern for the struggles of another person.
2. Respect: The ability to demonstrate respect for the person involved in the struggle.
3. Empathy: The ability to identify and interact with people's emotional pain.
4. Immediacy: The ability to deal with the present situation.
5. Concreteness: The ability to provide practical and effective direction.
6. The ability to listen and communicate well.

## **B. The Biblical Lay Counselor: The Basic Skills of a maturing believer.**

1. All of the above.
2. An apparent level of spiritual maturity.
3. A basic understanding of the Word of God.
4. An other-centered love for people.

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**C. The Ministry Leader or Trained Lay Counselor: The Basic Skills of a trained believer.**

1. All of the above.
2. A life characterized by the standards of 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
3. Basic training in understanding human nature and assisting people.
4. An evidence of spiritual gifting in dealing with people.
5. Experience.

**D. The Professional Therapist: The Sharpened Skills of a professional.**

1. All of the above.
2. Extensive training in dealing with people and a thorough knowledge of theology and the truth of the Bible.

(This section is adapted from Biblical Counseling For Today by Jeffery Watson. Word Publishing, 2000.)