

**Marriage, Divorce, and God's Gift of Sex in the Light of
Scriptures and in an African Sociocultural Setting**

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Course Topics

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Part One: USING GOD'S WORD IN THE COUNSELING SESSION

Definition: *"Pastoral counseling is that pastoral care of individuals as they face their problems, troubles, griefs, burdens, fears and illnesses, which involves not simply giving advice, but assisting them to find help and healing from the world of God."¹*

Introduction: Scripture and Psychology

When you buy a new bicycle for your child or for yourself, you usually can buy it in one of two ways. You can buy it assembled at the store. That costs you extra money. Or you can buy it cheaper in the box, unassembled, demanding your skill and expertise with tools to get the bicycle in working order. Either way, whether the bicycle is purchased assembled or unassembled, you will get an owner's manual with the bicycle. The owner's manual will not only tell you how to assemble the bicycle, should you have been brave enough to buy it unassembled. The owner's manual will be a trouble-shooting guide. It will tell you what's wrong if you see certain problems arising with your bike. For example, if the brakes are making rubbing sounds when the wheels turn, the owner's manual will tell you how to adjust the levers and cantilevers and cables and brake pads so that you can stop the rubbing and get the brakes adjusted correctly. The owner's manual will contain a parts list, so that you can replace defective parts or parts that break. The owner's manual will tell you what tools you will need to assemble the bicycle and what tools you will need to fix it.

The owner's manual will not necessarily tell you how to use the tools. It generally takes it for granted that you have the knowledge learned from somewhere else to put the flat head

¹ Armin W. Schaezle and Frederick Miatzke. *The Counseling Shepherd*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: 1988. p. xii.

screwdriver into the slot of the screw and to turn it clockwise to tighten it and counter clockwise to loosen it. If you are using some kind of a power screwdriver the owner's manual expects you to learn how to use it by yourself. The owner's manual will take it for granted that you know how to use a pliers or crescent wrench or open-ended wrench, size 5/8ths inch. The owner's manual may not even give you pictures of the tools. It expects you to know what a ¼ in. Allen wrench looks like. The owner's manual expects you to know what is the difference between "tighten loosely" and "tighten firmly."

In respect to our ministry as a Counseling Shepherd, we think of the Holy Scriptures as God's owner's manual given to mankind. Our Creator/Manufacturer is God. His Word is the owner's manual. The Bible identifies our greatest spiritual need. It shows us our sin sickness and the death and hell that it brings. The Bible as God's owner's manual gives us the spiritual and emotional healing of the Gospel. We speak correctly about the Holy Spirit as the one who uses the tool of the Gospel in Word and Sacraments to provide spiritual healing. The owner's manual of the Word of God tells us about other tools. These tools are not the solution tool of the Gospel or the power of God's Word. These are tools of culture or tools of language or tools of grammar or tools of communication skills. We refer to:

Romans 10:17

17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

We think of psychology as the tool box. Some of the tools in the tool box of psychology that we will mention here may hardly seem to be tools of psychology at all to you. For example, we would consider words as tools in the toolbox. We don't often think of words as tools of psychology. We would think of language as the ways that those words are strung together to communicate meaning as tools in the toolbox. The Romans passage quoted above describes how the message of the Word of Christ (the owner's manual) is conveyed to human beings by means

of the message. The message is a part of the owner's manual, but the language in which that message is spoken or written is a part of the toolbox of human learning – in a broad sense, psychology. Psychology becomes a part of the picture of proclaiming the message of Christ in the many ways that the Word of God, which is perfect and authoritative, is applied to individuals and to their life experiences and their human, emotional, and spiritual needs by human beings (the Counseling Shepherd and the member working together). In all of this discussion, it is important to note that we in no way wish to diminish the inspiration, authority, power, and inerrancy of God's Word.

Romans 1:16

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

The Counseling Shepherd will continue to use the Law with a member until that member repents. Then, the counselor speaks Gospel and absolves rather than accuses with the Law. The attitude, the demeanor, the body language, the vocal tone, the facial expressions, the level of sharing empathy, all of these things will change when we are expressing Gospel and not Law. Psychology has made studies of all of these things and the psychological books describe effective ways of conveying empathy and love and forgiveness with vocal tones, facial expression, body language, and even the strings of words that we call sentences.

Language, words, sentences, grammar, paragraphs, questions, etc., are tools, human tools, that we use to convey the message of the Gospel, the Word of Christ. The way we convey Law or the way that we convey Gospel will vary from one language to another, from one culture to another, from one generation to another, and from one gender to another. Psychology has made studies of these things also. The message and the meaning of the message does not change. "Grace" in English is expressed by the sounds that form the word, "Gnade," in German. Both words mean the same thing.

Are we beginning to see how psychology is a toolbox and the Scriptures are the owner's manual? The owner's manual is the authority. The tools in the toolbox of psychology can help us apply the authority to the task at hand, which is counseling troubled individuals.

Tensions

We have spoken about the relationship between Scripture and psychology on such a basic level in order to prepare us for a discussion of some of the tensions that exist between psychology and Christianity. It is important to understand the tensions that exist in order to come to an understanding of how Scripture is to be used with psychology and psychology with Scripture in God-pleasing ways.

In general, the Counseling Shepherd views the mental health of the human being as having spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions. The emphasis in Christian Law/Gospel pastoral counseling is certainly upon the spiritual dimension. The Counseling Shepherd does not raise psychology or human reason to a level above Scripture. Some pastoral counseling methods do that. Others believe in a system of integrating Scripture with psychology. That would put both Scripture and psychology on the same level. Scripture would then not be the authority God says it is. So the Counseling Shepherd does not look at Scripture and psychology as being equals. The Counseling Shepherd views psychology like he might view modern physical medicine. It is important to go to the doctor for some physical illnesses. It is important to go to the pastor for spiritual needs. It may be important to go to a psychologist or a counselor trained in secular methods for other things. Each has its place. The pastor his place. The medical doctor has his place. The psychology counselor has his place. The Counseling Shepherd also does not say that all psychology is worthless.

An illustration might show what I mean. A believer in Jesus Christ notices a lump on her breast. She is worried about breast cancer. She takes the matter to the Lord in prayer. Yet, she

does not neglect her physical health by rejecting or ignoring professional medical help. She goes to her medical doctor for a check-up and for the procedures of diagnosis and the treatment of modern medicine for what turns out to be cancer. At the advice of her medical professional she attends a group of women who meet to discuss and counsel each other regarding the disease which they all share. Or, she talks to a therapist. The woman also talks to her pastor who ministers to her with the Word of God. Her faith and her prayer life are strengthened. She nurtures her spiritual life with Word and Sacrament. So also the person who is suffering from some mental disorder neither neglects the spiritual, the emotional, or the physical aspects of the disease, but seeks proper treatment from the appropriate professional. She talks to her pastor. She consults with her physician and with a mental health professional.

The over-riding tension between Christianity and psychology is always present in all the Christian counseling materials that you read. If the author neglects to speak about the tension, you must have it in your own mind and judgment. Good Christian counseling writers will address this tension. They will note the good in one form of secular counseling or one theory of treatment and then they will add a caveat.

When a Counseling Shepherd refers a person to a mental health professional, a medical doctor, a lawyer, a real estate agent, or a financial advisor, he does not wash his hands in termination. His involvement continues in counseling. He is and remains his member's called under-shepherd of Christ. He continues to minister to the spiritual needs of his people.

The Bible-based Therapeutic Counselor to whom the Counseling Shepherd refers his members respects the role of the Counseling Shepherd as God's under-shepherd, called to minister to the spiritual needs of the people over whom God has led him to minister. The Counseling Shepherd respects the professional expertise of the Bible-based Therapeutic Counselor to whom he has referred his member.

There are other tensions. The Counseling Shepherd is concerned to see in much of the Christian Counseling world an integration of Scripture with psychology in such a way that psychology is pre-eminent in authority and Scripture is simply added in an attempt to make what is said or done in counseling sound like it is in agreement with Christianity.

Another concern of the Counseling Shepherd is to see psychology used to support Scripture in such a way that the impression is given that if psychology would not be there to under gird Scripture, then Scripture would not be used. This is more subtle, but again, it is psychology as the foundation and Scripture as the weak sister.

Even the word, “integration,” is of concern. Integration carries with it the concepts of equals being joined together in some way. In this case it would be psychology and Scripture viewed as equals. The WELS Counseling Shepherd is concerned about elevating human science to the same level as Scripture. God’s Word must remain the authority. Science and human reason are only handmaids to the Scripture.

Four Methods of Using Scripture in a Counseling Session

There are other methods and other variations of these methods. But the four methods of using Scripture in a counseling session which we wish to discuss in this chapter are:

1. Lecture to
2. Preaching at
3. Band Aid application
4. Collaborative
 - 4.1 Discussion
 - 4.2 Questioning

1. Lecture to

The “lecture to” method is very didactic and very directive. The pastor reads from the

Bible, explains the passage, and then tells the member how it applies to him or her. There is little member involvement, except for listening. There is little active learning in the "lecture to" method. A variation to the straight "lecture to" method would be to ask the member to read the Bible passage.

There are times when the "lecture to" method is necessary. When the member's level of intelligence is very low, it might be effective. When the member is feeling intense and immediate grief, it may be a way to express comfort. "I am telling you that God has not left you. Your Jesus arose from the grave and that is why we are not hopeless about ourselves or your dead relative. Heaven is the home of all who believe in Jesus. Listen to the words that Jesus spoke to Martha to comfort her when her brother, Lazarus, died,

John 11:23-27

23 Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

24 Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'

25 Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

27 'Yes, Lord,' she told him, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'"

The "lecture to" method may be effective at other times of crisis. When someone is threatening suicide, you might lecture them with the Law when they say they would be better off dead. "You don't know what you're saying! God is not pleased with suicide. He calls it murder!

Exodus 20:13

You shall not murder.

When you kill yourself there is no opportunity to repent of your sin of murdering yourself. That means that you will go to hell. Hell is forever! Your pain and suffering here on earth is only for a short time. Through faith in Jesus who made you right with God, you will be with him forever in Heaven. Jesus said,

John 14:19

Because I live, you also will live.

Your Jesus who loves you died on the cross to make you right with God. He will carry all of your earthly burdens, even the problems that seem so great right now. Please, trust in your Jesus and not in suicide as the solution.”

Lecture, of course, allows us to speak the largest volume of information as compared to all of the other methods.

2. *Preaching at*

Preaching at someone is similar to the lecture method. When you preach at someone you are saying, “I’ll tell you what this Scripture means. I’ll tell you how it applies to you. And you had better believe it!” This is preaching in the negative sense of the term. This is “preaching at.” Preaching at someone is often thought of as talking down to someone. The message communicated by preaching at someone is almost always Law. The Gospel may be spoken, but the hearer hears only Law.

An extreme example of this might be: “I’ve told you for the last 20 minutes that God loves you. Can’t you see that he wants you to believe it? What’s the matter with you? Trust in Jesus and your sins will be forgiven.”

Preaching at someone is not an effective way to proclaim the Gospel. It can be an effective way to proclaim the Law, because of the strong “I am the authority and the expert” messages that come with preaching at someone. A problem with preaching at someone can be that the hearer views the one preaching at him or her as the authority and not the Word of God which the preacher was trying to communicate. There are all kinds of problems and ramifications in that scenario.

3. *Band Aid Application*

A Band Aid Application use of the Scripture in a counseling session is like covering a

sore with the Word. It is as if the pastor is thinking, "I hear the problem. Hey! I know a good Bible passage that takes care of that problem. Member, here it is!" The passage is read or recited rapidly. The member continues to think, "Good, now the Scripture should take care of that problem." There is little or no discussion of the passage or of its application. Scripture is simply thrown at the problem.

There are two realities that are both bad in connection with the band aid application method of using Scripture in a counseling session.

- a. The pastor has an unrealistic expectation of understanding on the part of the member. "I understand how and why I am using this Scripture, therefore my member also must understand. I don't need to offer a map. They know the way." As with all expectations and assumptions in connection with communication, this is a highway to poor understanding and failed communication of the essential and beautiful message of God's Word.
- b. The second harsh reality of the band aid application method is that the pastor has spoken the Word but has failed to use the Word. Without speaking practical application and without a "check off" question or two about understanding, little or no comfort may be given. The pastor also does not know where his client is mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. The pastor knows where he is but does not know that the member is following along at all. The connection between the pastor and the member is being broken at a most crucial stage, when the Word of God is being communicated!

4. *Collaborative*

The word means co-laboring, laboring together. Contrary to the case in the other three methods, both the pastor and the member are working hard in connection with this method of

using Scripture in a counseling session. There is good understanding going on. There is good communication being given from both sides of the room. Each hears the other. Each responds to the other. We would view collaboration as the most effective method of using Scripture in the majority of counseling situations. The most learning takes place.

We want to speak about two types of collaborative use of Scripture in counseling sessions:

4.1. Collaborative – Discussion

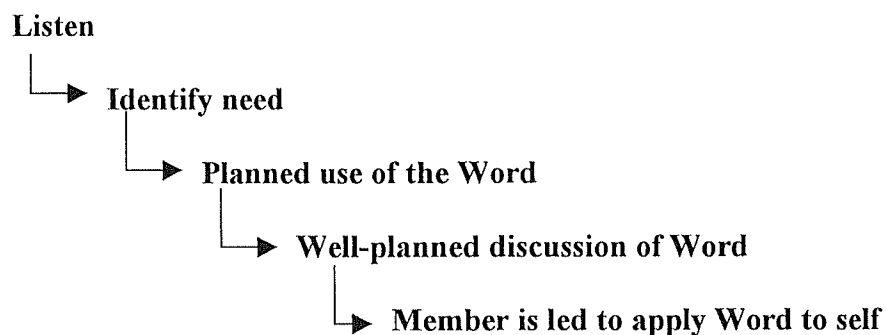
4.2. Collaborative – Questioning.

4.1. Collaborative – Discussion

The Collaborative Discussion Method of using Scripture in a counseling session is less directive than any of the previous three methods. But it contains fewer questions than the collaborative Questioning Method. It may take more skill on the part of the therapist to use Scripture in this way. It may take more time.

In the Collaborative – Discussion method the Word may be used first. It is then a planned use of the Word. The pastor knows before hand that he is going to use this Scripture passage in this situation or in situations like this and he knows the questions he will ask the member. The discussion is organized by the pastor because he planned it that way or the discussion is organized because the pastor has used the Bible passage so many times before in similar situations in counseling. Very often the review discussion of Scripture homework assignments is done in the session following the one in which the assignment was made through a Collaborative -- Discussion method. The questions that the pastor uses are quite brief and are generally quite high level questions: comparing, analyzing, evaluating, proving, recalling and comparing, and questions that create solutions.

The counseling sequence flows something like this in Collaborative – Directive:



As the pastor gains more and more experience with using the Word of God in this manner with clients, he will find himself doing more and more of this type of work with the Word. Closed and open questions with rich discussion by both member and pastor make this a good learning experience. The variables in this system are six-fold:

- a. The amount of knowledge of the Scripture which the member has.
- b. The love of the Scriptures which the member has
- c. The level of trust in the authority of Scripture which the member has
- d. The faith of the member in God
- e. The intelligence level of the member
- f. The education level of the member

You have noticed that all of the variables rest upon the member. The pastor will have to know his member very well to work this method effectively.

4.2. Collaborative – Questioning

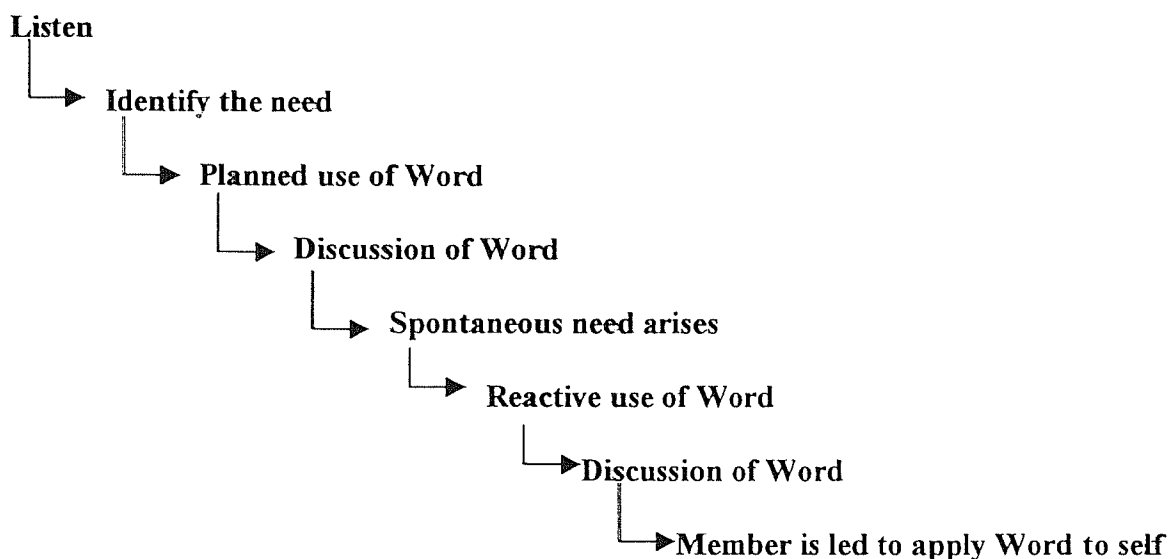
Member circumstances (see above list) may dictate that the Collaborative -- Questioning method will be the most often used. You may not know enough about the six-fold variables listed above to use the discussion method with your client. You may have tried the discussion method and it is not working. You may find yourself doing all of the talking, analyzing, comparing, and evaluating. Your member needs to be led. But you can't lead with discussion because he or she is not participating in your discussion. You must do the leading with your

questions, otherwise you will continue to do all of the talking and not your member. The use of open questions is the best method to produce more member talk than pastor talk. After your member becomes familiar with your use of Scripture in a counseling session, you may find him or her much more ready to follow the discussion method than at first. Early in the counseling sessions, you may find that you will almost always have to use the questioning method with your members.

One of the characteristic differences between the questioning method and the discussion method is that the questioning method is often much more spontaneous. You have not had a lot of time to plan what Scripture you will use. You have not had a lot of time to plan your discussion. Within a planned discussion of Scripture with all the interaction of two Christians talking in love about the Word of God, suddenly you may have to address an issue with a different section of the Word than you had in your planned approach. This is not disaster time! This is opportunity time! Good questions will help you lead a good discussion of these rather spontaneous happenings. Good questions will help your member apply the Word to himself or herself in very direct and effective ways.

A questioning method, as used in Bible-based counseling, should be one that uses questions to lead the member to explore lessons, meaning, comfort, hope, repentance issues, forgiveness, and other things in the Word. It should be a method that uses questions to lead the member to apply the Word in its richness to himself or herself. A questioning method is not a bombardment or a grilling. The Counseling Shepherd who uses questions will not only and exclusively speak questions. A part of the skill of questioning is in the sequence from which the best questions flow; the set-up of discussion, lecture, reading, or closed questions that lead the pastor to ask the open questions that lead to application of the Bible truths to members. This application is thus done directly by the members to themselves.

A chart of a Collaborative – Questioning sequence follows:



Open and Closed Questions

A closed question is generally a question which you can answer with a “yes” or a “no” or with one word or a brief phrase. “Give me the facts! Just the facts, Ma’am,” is the intent and purpose of the closed question. Sometimes closed questions get more of a negative reputation than they deserve. They are very important when used to gather factual information. It can be very helpful to use closed questions when counseling children. Simple closed questions are also helpful to use with those who are learning challenged.

Closed questions are important to set up an open question. An open question demands a longer answer. “Exactly what time of the day was it when he began to drink yesterday?” is a closed question. It may be answered with, “7:00 AM,” or “just as the sun rose.” This closed question sets up a more open question that follows it in which the member is permitted and invited to reveal much more. “Can you tell me what your thoughts were when you saw him drinking already at 7:00 AM?” Your member might tell you about how this was the first time it happened and how shocked she was. She might tell you how this is a pattern which he repeats

every weekend. She might tell you about the argument that ensued. She might tell you most of all of these things and much, much more in a long string of revelation.

Generally, when a pastor uses a closed question, he will get the information that he wants. This information may be important for the counselor to have. Generally speaking, when a pastor asks an open question he will get the information which the member feels is important to him or her.

Closed Questions – Fulfill Pastor Needs

Open Questions – Fulfill Member Needs

Both types of information must be obtained to do counseling well. It is easier to ask closed questions. It is more difficult to set up for and to ask open questions. Both types of questions have a role in Bible-based counseling. Since open questions provide more information about thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and sequences of events, they are generally thought to be the preferred type of question for this type of counseling.

Questions are also helpful to use after a paraphrase or a summary. A closed question after a paraphrase might be, “Do I have that right?” or, “Do I understand the situation correctly?” An open question after a paraphrase might be, “Do you have anything to add that you think it would be important for me to know?”

The pastor who uses mainly closed questions works very hard during a counseling session. The pastor who uses open questions is not talking as much. The member is doing most of the talking and most of the work.

Types of Questions²

Category One Questions: Repetition Questions (echoing and rephrasing).

Type One – Echoing

You ask your to repeat what the Scripture they have just read says:

² Adapted from David Kuske’s *Taxonomy of Questions*, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon

“Who did God give to Adam to be his companion and helper?”

“What did Joseph tell Potiphar’s wife when she tempted him?”

You ask the person to repeat what you have just said using the exact same words that you used.

Type Two – Rephrasing

You ask the person you are counseling to repeat back to you what he or she has just read in the Scripture or what you have just said using their own words.

“Put that in your own words.”

“Summarize what this part of the passage is saying.”

An offshoot of this type of question would be to ask the person to tell you a familiar Scripture story in their own words, without having read it first.

“Can you tell me about how God created Adam and Eve?” (This is an open question rather than a closed question – closed question example: “Who did God create for Adam?”)

Category Two Questions: Comparing or Applying

Type Three: Comparing and Applying

Two or more things are presented to the member. The person is asked to compare them.

“This is Abel’s attitude towards God. This is Cain’s attitude towards God. Can you compare them for me?”

“Compare the way the rich man prayed with the way the publican prayed?”

“Apply this Scripture to what you said you are doing in your life?” (confession of sin or suggestion regarding a fruit of repentance or expressed trust in God’s forgiveness.)

Type Four: Recalling and Comparing or Recalling and Applying

You ask your member to recall something from Scripture that relates to what you just read about in the Scripture. Then you ask them to compare the two things.

“Can you remember a passage that you memorized in Confirmation Class that says the same thing that we just read? Can you compare these two passages? Can you apply what these two passages say to your situation?”

Category Three Questions: Evaluating and Analyzing Questions

Type Five: Proving the Presented Evaluation

You present something from Scripture and you tell your member your evaluation of it. Then you ask them to prove that your evaluation is correct.

“When David took Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, and had sexual relations with her, David sinned against the Sixth Commandment. Can you prove to me that this is true?”

Type Six: Analyzing, Evaluating, (and Proving.)

You present something to your member. You ask him or her to evaluate or analyze it and then to prove their evaluation or analysis.

“Here is the proof that makes people accuse you of stealing from the church. What does God say about stealing? How does God judge the person who steals?”

How does God judge you?"

"Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the whole world. What does that mean for you? Can you tell me how it is true that when Jesus died for the sins of all the world, he also died for your sins?"

Category Four Questions: Questions That Create (Solutions, Homework)

Type Seven: Create Something That Applies to the Key Point of the Session

"Since you are having so much trouble telling your father that you are sorry for what you did, I would suggest that you write a letter to him – but don't send it. Instead bring the letter along with you the next time we meet. We'll discuss it and how it can help you ask for his forgiveness. Are you willing to do that?"

"Keep track of how many times you two don't (do the problem – argue, fight, etc.) Between now and the next time that we meet. We'll talk about those times when we meet again. Is that agreeable to both of you?"

"Can the two of you role play your last argument for me?"

"Can you role play for me what it felt like for each of you not to be arguing this past week?"

"Can you read this Scripture each day and compare what it says to how you are feeling on that day?"

"Each day that you have an argument, I want you to think about the passage, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' In order to remind yourselves about this passage, I want you to write it out in big, bold print and paste it somewhere you will see it; on the refrigerator, or some place like that. Then when you look at it after you have had an argument would you be willing to say the words of Luke 17:3-4

'If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. 4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent, 'forgive him'?

Are you willing to do that?" "Good." "Then I want you to think about a sin for which God has forgiven you because of Jesus. Then say these words: 'I am sorry, please forgive me. Help me to forgive.....' "Can you do that?" "Good, let's review it again." "Here I wrote it down for you."

"Please write this passage on a piece of paper in big letters:

Mark 2:5

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

Tape it to the refrigerator or to your computer monitor. Then when you have an argument, I want you to read it and to ask yourself, how has Jesus forgiven me? How can I show my thankfulness for his forgiveness right now?"

Knowing the labels of the types of these questions is not as important as knowing and practicing how to use them. They present a rich variety from which a pastor may draw a full

measure of ways to lead his members to explore the Scriptures and to apply God's truth to their lives.

Bible-based Counseling as a Well-Structured Sermon

We need to remember that Bible-based Counseling

- is not a glorified devotion,
- is not a Bible Study, but
- is a longer, more informal sermon.

This is a sermon that is not a "preaching at." This is a sermon which is rooted in the love of Christ. Even the motivation for speaking the Law to your client is not to show that you are the "authority" but to show that God cares. It is a structured sermon, though informal. It has a lot of twists and turns and side tracks, but it is still a sermon, based on Scripture with a goal and points to direct the ebb and flow of the dialog between pastor and member. The goal is repentance and forgiveness and hope in the Gospel of Christ crucified and arisen. It is a sermon like the repentance model which has Objective Justification, Law, Gospel Absolution, and Law and Gospel Fruits of Repentance encouragement in it. There are illustrations and applications in this Scriptural sermon. But the message of Christ crucified and arisen is central.

Other Uses of Scripture in a Counseling Session

Opening Devotion

It may not always be wise to begin the first session with an opening devotion. You do not know the spiritual state of your members as the first session begins. It may be wise to find that out prior to having the devotions you might have with them in subsequent sessions.

An opening devotion should be brief. Many people take ten or fifteen minutes at the beginning of the day to write an outline for the opening devotion that they will use with most of their members during that day. They base their opening devotion for the day on Scripture. They

may include a thought from Sunday's sermon, or some important event in the nation or the world, or where they are in the Church Year Calendar. They use and adapt this opening devotion to all the members they meet, if it is appropriate. The word is read. There may be some planned discussion that may even be collaborative. The application is made. Others use a prayer as a simple opening devotion, praying for God's guidance and help. Of course, the opening devotion or prayer should find its basis in the Word. Since you do not know what is in store for you in the rest of the session, opening devotions and opening prayers are best if they are general enough not to be about specific results that you hope will come from the session, but about which your members have no knowledge at the time.

Scriptural Homework

We have discussed this previously in Chapter Five in connection with the structure of a Hopeful Solutions approach. The concept of a "break" is helpful to arrange homework assignments. It is helpful to develop a "stable" of homework assignments from which you may draw and which you may adapt to situations. The assignments should be brief, can be repetitive, and should be discussed at the next session. Your homework assignments should get your members in contact with the Word. A few key questions about the Scripture you have chosen are all that are necessary. Questions that call for comparison, analysis, and evaluation are important. Examples of these types of questions are found on pages 18 and 19 in the section that talks about questions that create something that applies to a key point in a session.

Scripture in a Closing Summary

This is a time for review. You can structure your summary around an individual Scripture passage that contains the main thoughts of your session. Or you can wrap your summary around the Scripture you have used in the session, restating key parts of each passage. When appropriate, a closing prayer should be a part of your closing summary.

Scripture and prayer

- Prayer should always be based on God's Word.
- Prayer should never be used in place of God's Word.
- Prayer is not a Means of Grace – a means by which and through which the Holy Spirit chooses to do his sanctifying work in a person.
- Prayer flows from faith as a fruit of faith and repentance.
- Prayer is not arrogant in the sense of “I want!” “I want!” “Me!” “Me!”
- Prayer is arrogant in the sense of a bold trust in our faithful God to keep his promises.
- Prayer is humble. It yields to God's will.

Ex Corde or extemporaneous and spontaneous prayers

Most often you will not have time to write out a prayer for your counseling session. Your prayers will have to be *ex corde*, from the heart and spontaneous. It is helpful to remember a little outline for prayer that was read by the author years ago.

P = PRAISE

R = REMEMBER

A = ASK

Y = YIELD

“Oh Lord, we praise you for the wonderful love and goodness you have shown to us.

We thank you for giving us Jesus as our Savior.”

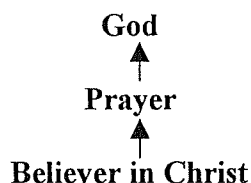
“We remember our sin of..... For which we repent. It troubles us deeply.

We remember with thanksgiving the forgiveness for our sin of Which we have in Jesus.”

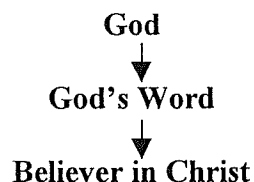
“We ask you for”

“We yield to your faithful love, knowing that you will answer our prayer in ways that are the best for us. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.”

We remind ourselves again that prayer is the way that Christians talk with God.



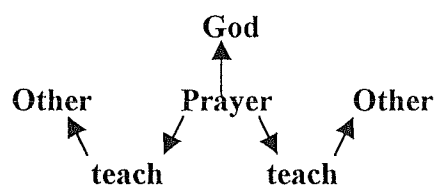
God only speaks to the believer authoritatively through his Word. Any answers to prayer that are seen in our earthly life are speculative – they are our human interpretation of God’s actions in response to our request for something from God. God only speaks to us through his Word in an authoritative way.



This makes prayer a good work and God’s Word a Means of Grace.

This also illustrates to us that the real, Scriptural function of prayer is not horizontal, for example, as a teaching tool. The real function of prayer is the believer in Jesus Christ communicating to God his or her desires and thoughts and wants and fears and hopes. These desires, wants, fears, and hopes may be for others. This is intercessory prayer.

Not teaching



But intercessory



These thoughts express the Scriptural function of prayer. They do not negate the psychological function of prayer as a means of unburdening, sharing, or expressing faith and trust and exercising hope.

Summary

There are many ways that Scripture may be effectively used in a counseling session. It is God's authority on morals, thoughts, attitudes, and relationships. When Scripture is used as God's authority and psychology and human reason are used as the handmaidens and servants of Scripture one has found the proper relationship between God's Word and psychology in counseling. The toolbox of psychology is filled with useful skills and methods that the Counseling Shepherd may use. But the tools are always subject to the owner's manual of God's Word. Questions and prayer have been found to be very helpful tools for Bible-based counseling.

Part Two: Repentance – The Repentance Model

The three words, *Repentance*, *Forgiveness*, and *Hope*, in some ways form the basic summary of method and goal for all pastoral counseling. Repentance and forgiveness are rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, living, crucified, and arisen for all human beings. Both repentance and forgiveness lead to hope and give hope.

The first Song of Isaiah, set in its context, is a description of the hope towards which the Counseling Shepherd leads his client.

Isaiah 12:1-6

1 In that day you will say:

“I will praise you, O LORD.

*Although you were angry with me,
your anger has turned away
and you have comforted me.*

2 Surely God is my salvation;

I will trust and not be afraid.

*The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.”*

*3 With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.*

4 In that day you will say:

*“Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done,
and proclaim that his name is exalted.*

*5 Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.*

*6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”*

God’s anger has been turned away because of the shoot from the stump of Jesse upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests. He shall “delight in the fear of the Lord” Is. 11:1-3.

Isaiah 11:10

10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Christian hope always has Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and ascended as its object, base, and foundation. Secular hope is based upon human reason and a personal decision to be

optimistic in life. Christian hope is based upon the person of Jesus Christ who is true Man and True God. He is the Substitute for the sins of all people upon the cross. By His resurrection and ascension Jesus has given to all people eternal hope – the hope of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ.

St. Paul wrestled with the two kinds of hope in the world – that which is secular and that which is eternal. He writes:

Ephesians 2:12-13

12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Repentance includes both contrition and absolution. The Law of God is the tool of God's Word that leads a person to see his or her sin, to know the consequences for the sin, to feel sorrow for his or her sin, and to confess it before God. We call this work of the Law, contrition. The Gospel of God is the tool of God's Word that leads a person to see Christ crucified and arisen as the only hope for the forgiveness of that sin and, believing that, to beg for God's forgiveness, trusting in the mercy of our God of infinite love.

The Law is used by the Counseling Shepherd in an effort to produce contrition. The Gospel is used by the Counseling Shepherd in an effort to produce faith and proclaim absolution. When the pastor is talking about the fruits of repentance or the changes that repentance produces in a person he is encouraging the results of the faith that the Holy Spirit works in the believer in Jesus Christ through the Gospel. Yet, the Law is also used in connection with the fruits of repentance. In the area of the fruits of repentance the Law of God works as a guideline or a rule. How should I live my life as a Christian? How should I change my life as a repentant child of

God from a life of sin to a life of service to God? God's guidelines are found in his Ten Commandments, his Moral Law. The power to change from the life of sin to the life of service to God is found in the Gospel. A model or outline of repentance and its fruits which is loosely based upon Psalm 32 is found below.

The Repentance Model

Psalm 32

1. Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
2. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

3. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the day of summer.

5. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to Lord"

— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

6. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; Surely, when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.

7. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

9. Do not be like the horse of the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

10. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

11. Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing all you who are upright in heart!

The Repentance Model

A. vs. 1-2 Confidence is given that God does forgive sins because of Christ. Objective Justification.

B. vs. 3-4 Specific Law is spoken and heard

C. vs. 5a Sin is acknowledged. The is against God. True Contrition.

D. vs. 5c Specific Gospel is spoken and heard.

E. vs. 6-7 Faith in God's forgive-ness in Christ is confessed. Absolution is proclaimed.

F. vs. 8-10 Sanctified Christian living is discussed. The fruits of repentance.

(vs. 9-10 are a warning to produce fruits that are driven not by Law, but by Gospel.)

G. vs. 11 The joy of Christian living is experienced.

The Repentance Model

The right hand column in the repentance model presents the normal way that repentance would be addressed by a Counseling Shepherd with a member. This is an outline or a model. It is not a template that will fit every sequence of discussion. It is presented to serve as a handy reference tool for the pastor. The Repentance Model is helpful as a reminder of where the member is in the session and whether the pastor will be concentrating on Law, Gospel, or Law and Gospel.

Parts B and C - Contrition Section – use the Law to show sin and convict of sin

Parts D and E - Absolution Section – use the Gospel to absolve and comfort, to pronounce forgiveness

Part F - Fruits of Repentance Section – use the Law as a rule (this is how God wants us to live as Christians)

-- use the Gospel as the motivating power to encourage a change to Christian living (“Because God has been so gracious to me I will serve Him by....”)

Parts A and G are quite special. Part A, “Objective Justification,” will not always be used. Part G, “The Joy of Christian Living,” is the goal of your counseling, but you may never see it reach its God-blessed fulfillment because your client will probably not be coming to see you at that time. Things will be going well and in a God-pleasing way.

Part A. Objective Justification – Christ, Crucified and Arisen, Has Saved Every Human Being. Confidence is given that God does forgive sins because of Christ. Objective Justification

Part A employs the most comforting part of the Gospel. This is the message that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole world.

Objective Justification is a term used in Lutheran dogmatics to describe the fact that when Jesus lived his perfect life he lived it as the substitute for every human being. There are no exceptions. Jesus lived for all! It also is used to describe that when Jesus went to the cross he went to the cross making complete and perfect payment for the sins of every human being. There are no exceptions! When Jesus arose from the grave he arose from the grave in victory for every human being. No one is left out! All people are reconciled to God by Christ crucified and arisen. Faith is not a part of the discussion of *objective justification*. Here we deal with what Jesus did for all. If one takes what the Second Article of the Apostles Creed describes as the work of Jesus and notes that he did all of this for all people, one has the message of *objective justification*.

The comfort of *objective justification* is this: Jesus accomplished the forgiveness of sins for all people. All are declared right with God by the work of Jesus. No one is left out. That means that Jesus also earned the forgiveness of sins for me, too. I am the part of the all people for whom Jesus paid the complete punishment payment on the cross. I am not left out.

At times this message of *objective justification* will not be communicated first as is shown in the Repentance Model. Generally speaking, Part A will not be used with the hardened sinner who refuses to acknowledge sin. That person needs the Law. The person who needs to hear *objective justification* is the person who is actually so labored with guilt that he or she is afraid to verbalize what he or she has done to you or to God. You assure that person that objectively speaking, as a fact, since Jesus has paid for the sins of the whole world, Jesus has

paid for all of his or her sins, even for the sin about which he or she feels so much shame and guilt. In effect, what you are doing with this Gospel message is giving the person the courage to confess.

Your member may say: "I feel so guilty. I don't know if God can ever forgive me for what I've done."

You might say: "I hear the tremendous guilt that you are feeling. Could you read II Cor. 5:19 to me?" 2 Corinthians 5:19 *God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.*

"For how many people did Jesus go to the cross?"

"How does this reconciliation that Jesus earned for all on the cross apply to you?"

"You are a part of the world, aren't you?"

"Now, apply this to yourself. For whose sin has Jesus also died?"

"Then, you are a part of the world that Jesus loved so much that he died and arose to save. When Jesus went to the cross, he made the complete payment for all of your sins, even for the sin you are so afraid to talk about. Believing that Jesus has paid for your sin, tell me about your sins."

Empowered by the gospel, the person feels confident in the love of God to confess his or her sins to you. This is the purpose and the proper use of Part A in the sequence of the Repentance Model. It has another use. When you encounter a member who seems so hardened in denial about a sin that he or she refuses to confess it no matter how much you have applied the Law to him or her, it may be that fear or shame is really there, covered by a mask of hardness. Then you might say,

"Could you please read

1 John 1:7 – 2:2

7 the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

You might say,

“Every shred of evidence points to the fact you have sinned in this way. Yet, you refuse to confess your sin. ‘Atoning’ means to be ‘at one’ with God. For how many people’s sins is Jesus the “atoning sacrifice?”

“In chapter two, verse one, how do these words apply to you, ‘If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One?’

“Therefore, how does verse nine apply to you?”

“I want you to know for certain that when Jesus went to the cross, he went to the cross to pay for the sins of all people. That means that he has worked forgiveness for every sin ever committed. There is no sin and no sinner left out. Do you understand how this applies to you?”

If after further discussion, the person still refuses to repent, you may again flow into the Law by saying:

“You have heard how Jesus died for all sins upon the cross. But I see and hear you doing what is described in verses eight and ten. Look at those verses. What is God saying there?”

“God knows what you have done! Don’t try to make him out to be a liar! Confess your sin to God! You can lie to me, but you cannot lie to God! Don’t reject the forgiveness that Jesus has for you by refusing to confess your sin to God!”

This, of course, moves us out of the Gospel section and into the Law section.

Parts B and C: Contrition – The Law Section – Sin is acknowledged. The sin is against God.

Few Christians love to use this section. We don't like the Law applied to ourselves and we don't like to apply it to others. In some ways a false sense of Christian humility resists our efforts to apply the Law to others. "I am judging," we say. "I have sinned in similar ways, how can I call another person to repentance about this? I'll feel like such a hypocrite." When we need to apply the Law we also have to wrestle with the truth that no loving person likes to make another person feel bad. But it is not our objective to make a person feel bad. It is our objective in applying the Law to an impenitent sinner to bring that person to repentance. In this way we are doing God's work. If the motivation is love for our Savior and loving concern for the soul of another it is not judging and it is not hypocrisy and it is not meanness. In fact, it is our Christian responsibility to warn in love about sin.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. 8 When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. 9 But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

But, how to begin? If at all possible, let God's Word do the talking, not you. Let God's Word do the judging, not you. Let God's Word do the convicting and the condemning, not you. You might say, "Because I am so concerned out of Christian love for your soul, let's compare God's Law to what you are doing in your life. You are telling me how much you hate your former business partner. I want you to read this passage of God's Word for me."

1 John 3:15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

“What is God saying about your hateful feelings towards your former business partner?”

When you use questions and ask your member to apply the Scripture to himself or herself, God’s Word is speaking and judging, not you. Try to use examples and passages from the Scripture that are as specific as possible to the sin. Mention the sin specifically. If it is hatred, say “hatred.” Be specific.

A note about true contrition is necessary. Many people are ashamed because they got caught and have embarrassed themselves and their families. This is not necessarily true contrition. When a person is contrite he or she feels the guilt of having sinned against God. There is a fear of God’s wrath and punishment. It goes beyond, “I am sorry that I got caught.” It is “I am sorry that I have sinned against God.” God’s Law needs to be applied to the individual by the pastor to bring him or her to the point of admitting that he or she has sinned against God.

This brings us to the issue of Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

8 Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while— 9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done....³

Worldly sorrow is hopelessness. Worldly sorrow is the sorrow Judas. It is not repentance. It does not have the Gospel. It does not have faith in the Gospel. It does not believe that forgiveness is in Jesus. It is not assured and comforted by *objective justification*. Worldly

³ We have previously talked about the fact that our goal in the Repentance Model is not to make another person feel bad. We see in verses 8 and 9 how Paul wrestled with the same feeling about making a person feel bad as we do. But he sees the big picture. *8 Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while— 9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.*

sorrow is the suicidal despair of Judas, or that which leads up to it. Godly sorrow is the confidence and hope of Peter in Christ.⁴ Both contain sorrow because of sin. But Godly sorrow is repentance. Just sorrow for sin is not repentance. It is worldly sorrow. Repentance must always be sorrow for sin (contrition) and faith, with faith being the identifying factor. Repentance is both Law and Gospel, confession and absolution, contrition and faith, and sorrow for sin and the peace, comfort, and hope of forgiveness in Christ crucified and arisen.

While the Law is used like a mirror to show us our sin, (Romans 3:20 *through the law we become conscious of sin*), and to condemn us in our sins, (Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death*); the Gospel is used to comfort grieving and guilty souls, (Romans 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes*). The skill of rightly using Law and Gospel is a skill that is vital for every Counseling Shepherd to have.⁵ For example, if one begins to talk about fruits of faith or change from sinful living to right Christian living prior to assuring the client of God's forgiveness in Christ, one may become guilty of moralizing. Moralizing is using the Law to produce change rather than the Gospel. It is a way of using God's Word that is not in accord with Scripture. The Counseling Shepherd needs to know where he is in the repentance model at all times so that if he is trying to get the person to show contrition and confess the sin, the discussion may be directed by God's Law to that end.

Parts D and E – The Gospel Section -- Absolution – the Gospel pronounces God's forgiveness -- Specific Gospel is spoken and heard. Faith in God's forgiveness in Christ is confessed. Absolution is proclaimed.

After working with the damning terrors of the Law, it seems like such a pleasant prospect to be able to speak the comfort and absolution of the Gospel. And it is! However, there is a

⁴ John 21:15-19

danger in that. We may be very tempted to speak absolution very quickly: We may quickly say, "Your sins are forgiven. God loves you in Christ and has removed the guilt of this sin from you. I want to assure you that Christ has paid for your sin of hatred towards your former business partner and your sin is forgiven."

There is nothing wrong with saying those words or similar words of absolution right after hearing the confession of sin. But the temptation is to just let our words stand. It is as important to have God speak through his Gospel as it was to have God speak through his Law in the Law section of the Repentance Model. Use the Gospel tool that God has given to you. Spend time with the Gospel.

Begin with *objective justification*. Jesus Christ has paid for all sins for all people for all time. The payment is complete on the cross and is proven by his resurrection from the dead. You might say to your member, "God has forgiven you your sins because of Christ. Could you please read II Corinthians 5:19 for me?"

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

"What message have I just spoken to you from God?" (That my sin of hatred was forgiven by God because of Christ).

"How does the word, reconciliation, describe the relationship between God and you?"

"Look carefully at this passage. Who does it say was the active one in reconciling you and God?" (God)

"I said that you were reconciled to God, but you won't find the word, 'you,' in this passage. How do you know that you are included in the number of those who have been reconciled because of Christ?" (I'm a part of the world.)

⁵ WAYNE D. MUELLER in *Modern Moral Dilemmas*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee: 1991, pp. 1-11.

“Again, what did God do in Christ for the world?”

“Again, how does that include you?”

“Can you tell me what this means to you?”

“Do you believe that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and that means that Jesus has also reconciled you to God even though you have committed this sin of hatred?”

“I am so happy to hear that because of God’s grace you believe this. Your sins are forgiven. Your sin of hatred has been paid for by Christ, your Savior. I am happy to absolve you of your sin.” Note the words, “your sin of hatred.” Be specific in the Gospel section. Identify the sin that has been forgiven.⁶

What has happened is that you have moved from *objective justification* to *subjective justification*. Think of *objective justification* as the objective fact of Christ crucified for the sins of all the world of sinners and arisen in victory. It is an objective fact whether the person (your member) believes it or not. Think of *subjective justification* as *objective justification* plus faith. Faith appropriates what Christ has done for the world to the individual who now believes that Christ has forgiven his or her specific sin on the cross. Faith is the Holy Spirit’s gift as He works through the Gospel message.

Part F: Fruits of Repentance – Sanctified Christian living is discussed – a warning to produce fruits that are driven not by Law but by Gospel.

The Law has three uses. It is used as a mirror to show us our sin. It is used as a curb or a club to put fear in our hearts and to frighten our Old Adam into fearful submission. It is used as a rule or a guide to show us how God would have us live Christian lives. It is this last use of the

presents a good discussion on the use of Law and Gospel in our modern society.

⁶ A clear and simple demonstration of the application of the Gospel through a questioning method is found in H. Curtis Lyon, *Counseling at the Cross*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee: 1991.

Law that is employed by the Counseling Shepherd in the Fruits of Repentance section of the Repentance Model. The sin has already been confessed. The mirror use of the Law is not necessary, nor is it productive. The Gospel of absolution has already been spoken so there is no need to speak about God's terrible wrath at sin in order to frighten our Old Adam. But there is a need to talk about the direction the change from sin to fruits of repentance should take. Here is where God's Law is used as a guide or a rule.

How would God have me live my life as his forgiven child? This is the first question that commands our attention in the Fruits of Repentance section. God's Ten Commandments and Christian common sense serve as our tools in answering this question.

How am I going to get the strength to make this change and to do what God wants me to do? This is the second question that needs to be addressed. The answer for this question is found in the Gospel —Jesus Christ crucified, arisen, ascended, and eternally present with your member. Jesus is the power. His power is communicated to your member through his Word.

Romans 1:16

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

You are talking within the realm of the Law of God used as a guide when you are talking to your member about direction for the future or changes that need to be made in his or her life to bring it in line with a sanctified, Christian life. The key thing to remember is that fruits of repentance are not like penance. Nothing the repentant sinner will do post-absolution will make up for or will make the pre-absolution sin right with God. Jesus has already done that. Christians do not prescribe fruits of repentance. We encourage fruits of repentance. Some fruits of repentance are obvious. An apology to the one to whom you lied, for example, along with telling him or her the whole truth, would be a fruit of repentance for that specific lie.

We quote several pertinent points from a discussion of Fruits of Repentance found in Professor Armin Schuetze's theses on "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage."

"Thesis 8 *Repentance calls for proper fruits. Scripture does not outline these in detail for every situation.*

"The term 'fruit' implies willingness and a degree of spontaneity. Fruit is produced without legal compulsion. Hence we find that Scripture has not set up a code book that specifies the exact form which fruit of repentance must take in the case of every sin. But broad principles can be recognized.

"Fruit of repentance is to desist from the sin for which one repents.

"Fruit of repentance is to restore, if possible, what sin has ruined.

"Fruit of repentance is to amend one's sinful life, to replace evil with good.

"Fruit of repentance is to do all to the glory of God, whether we eat or drink, or work or play."⁷

The skill of the Counseling Shepherd in the area of Fruits of Repentance is not to be adept at prescribing fruits of repentance for members, but to be adept at leading members to recognize what a consistent application of God's Word might be in the situation being discussed. Sometimes we will need to point out to our members how inconsistent they are in comparing Scripture to the fruits of repentance that should be evident in their lives. Here we will use the Law as a guide. We will use the Gospel to empower and motivate. The Law will not be used as a "bit and bridle" in the Fruits of Repentance section. Trust in the "Lord's unfailing love" which "surrounds" us will be the motivation for living a sanctified Christian life.⁸

Prayer is one of the fruits of faith in Repentance. The believer in Jesus Christ knows in faith that God hears and answers his or her prayers for the individual's good. The believer in Jesus Christ talks to God in prayer. Prayer is something done by the believer, not by God. The answers to prayer are God's work. God answers our prayers in his time, according to his will, and always for our good. Sometimes the answer to our prayer is, "No!" So, from our

⁷ Armin Schuetze and Frederick Mazke. *The Counseling Shepherd*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee: 1988, pp. 237-238.

⁸ Psalm 229-110

perspective, there is an uncertainty about prayer. There is, of course, no uncertainty about God's love for us in Christ. There is also no uncertainty about the fact that God hears our prayers and that he answers them. The uncertainty is found in the fact that we don't know what's good for us the way that God knows what is good for us. We really do not know for what we ought to pray.

Prayer is not a Means of Grace. God does not speak to us through prayer. In prayer we are speaking to God. Only God's Word and Sacraments are Means of Grace, means by which God's grace come to us, means through which God speaks to us. The Word of God and the Sacraments are God's perfect tools. They are from God. If the believer in Jesus Christ wants to hear God speak to him or to her, he or she must be in contact with the Word of God. Prayer is from the believer to God. Our prayers will always be imperfect because they originate with us. God's answers to our prayers will always be perfect. We will not always get that for which we pray, not because God is unloving or imperfect, but because we have not prayed for the right things or because God, in love, chooses to answer our prayers in ways that are far better for us than what we outlined in our prayers.

Turning members to the Word of God for strength is productive. Turning them to prayer for strength would be like turning them to good works for strength. It is unproductive and un-Scriptural to view the act of our praying as our source of strength. The One to whom we pray is our source of strength. As a part of the fruits of repentance we always should be encouraging our members to get involved with the Word of God, public worship, private meditation and Scripture reading, directed Bible study, and memorization of Scripture. We will turn our members to prayer as an exercise of their faith as a fruit of repentance. We will also teach them how to pray and encourage them to pray, but contact with the Word should come first. It is the power of God for our salvation.

Part G: The joy of Christian living is experienced

Psalm 32:11 *Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

Living the Fruits of Repentance is living the joy of Christian, sanctified living. It is living in state of knowing and believing God's great and enduring love for each of us. It is a time of growth in knowledge about God through His Word, in joy in his love through his Word and Sacrament, and in growth in sanctification. We learn how to live a life of repentance (the fruits of repentance) by living that life under the overarching guidance of God's Law and strength of his Gospel.

The Repentance Model is also a model because it is repeated daily. As we daily sin, so we daily go to God in contrition and faith and receive his forgiveness. The wonderful assurance of Christ's never-ending, ever-faithful love compels us to strive to grow in the fruits of our repentance. We need to remind our members that they will sin daily. They need to have the courage of trust in their faithful God to walk through the repentance model on a daily basis.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Summary

Give me courage to confess, Lord, before your throne.
For my silence and my shame crushed me to the bone.
And your heavy hand has brought forth nothing but a groan.
Ah, my sin has been against you, and you alone.

Give me your unfailing love; pardon by your grace,
Wash away my guilt and sin; cleanse without a trace.
Open wide your loving arms: this prodigal embrace.
When I know not where to flee, you're my hiding place.

Give me strength to bear the cross I must bear each day.
 For you, too, were tempted, Lord, and in every way.
 Keep the devil, world, and all my thoughts at bay
 That I glorify you in all I do and say.

Give me joy your Word to share and your praise to sin.
 Let me witness to your ways so that I may bring
 Sinners to your healing hands where, soothed of death's dark sting,
 We may stand among the saints with our Heav'nly King.⁹

The Repentance Model is a tool that can serve as an outline to structure a Law/Gospel presentation in a counseling session. With God's Word as his tool the Counseling Shepherd is confident that God will be with him to bless his work with clients. The objective of repentance counseling is always to bring the sinner to experience the peace, comfort, and hope of his or her loving Savior who was crucified and arisen for the sins of all people of all the world.

⁹ John H. Hildebrand, *Give Me Courage to Confess*, 1998. Tune – "Processionale, Paris, 1697, ADORO TE. Presented to Alan Siggelkow by Pastor Hildebrand in recognition of what was taught in the Pastoral Counseling class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Part Three: Basic Counseling and Communication Skills

See Separate Handout

Part Four:**UNMARRIED MALES AND FEMALES AND GOD'S GIFTS OF SEX AND MARRIAGE**

As believers in Jesus Christ we seek to glorify God with our bodies. We do this by living our lives—including our sexual lives—according to God's Word. The following principles, drawn from Scripture, are designed to describe God's gifts of sex and marriage particularly as they apply to unmarried males and females. It is our prayer that they will be used, not as a legal code book, but as helpful guides for Christian instruction and lifestyle.

1. God himself established marriage as an institution for this earthly life (Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 22:30).
2. Marriage begins when a man and a woman are freely and unconditionally joined to each other as husband and wife in a lifelong union (Genesis 2:24).
3. Because marriage is a contract, it must be established by a public commitment. The way in which this public commitment is expressed may take different forms in different societies and cultures, and includes following the laws of the state regarding marriage (Genesis 2:24; Romans 13:1-2).
4. Engagement, as normally viewed in our culture, is not marriage because the couple's consent does not fulfill civil and social requirements for marriage.
5. Sexual intimacy is a blessing from God (Song of Songs 1:15-16; 4:1-7; 5:10-16).
6. God limits sexual intimacy to those who are married (Hebrews 13:4).
7. Those who engage in sexual intimacy outside of the bounds of marriage are sinning (Hebrews 13:4).
8. In all areas of life, including sexual intimacy, God expects us to be guided by his Word, not by the attitudes and practices of society (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).
9. God instructs us to avoid speech, entertainment, or activity that might tempt us to sin sexually or to demean in any way his precious gifts of sex and marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 5:3-4).
10. God urges us to keep even our thoughts pure (Matthew 5:27-28; Philippians 4:8).
11. God counsels us not to use our Christian freedom in such a way that we lead weak Christians into sin (1 Corinthians 8:9; Matthew 18:6).
12. God wants us to avoid words or actions that might encourage unbelievers to sin. He wants us to live in a way that leads them to praise him (1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Peter 2:12).
13. God's children will repent of sins against the Sixth Commandment, trusting that their sins are forgiven for the sake of Jesus, who perfectly kept all the commandments and paid the death penalty for sin in their place (1 John 1:7-9).
14. As a fruit of repentance, God's children will seek to use God's gifts of sex and marriage in ways that are pleasing to him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

Part Five: Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage – 12 Theses by Prof. Armin W. Schuetze

1. Marriage is a union, effected also by God, and is to be terminated only by God through the death of a spouse. Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5-6; Eph. 5:31; Ro. 7:2; Mt. 22:30.
2. The will of God that marriage be permanent must be emphasized among our Christians living in today's society. Mt. 19:6; 2 Tim. 4:2.
3. Although God wants marriage to be permanent, man can break the bond, but when he does, he becomes guilty of sin. Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5-6.
4. According to Scripture the sins of sexual unfaithfulness (adultery) and of desertion break a marriage bond. Mt. 5:32; Mt. 19:9; Mark 10:31; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor.7:15.
5. Terminating a marriage bond by common agreement involves both parties in sin. Lk. 16:18.
6. When a marriage has been broken, the one who sins is called on to repent of his/her sin. Jn. 4:16; Jn. 4:29.
7. The church (pastor) will assure the penitent person of the Lord's forgiveness as well as the forgiveness of fellow Christians. Jn. 4:26; 2 Sam. 12:13.
8. Repentance calls for proper fruits. Scripture does not outline these in detail for every situation. Lk. 3:8; Eph. 4:28.
9. Fruits of repentance may consist in efforts to preserve a marriage relationship or to reestablish one that has been broken.
10. Fruits of repentance for the divorced person may be the firm intention and promise to live a godly life in a new marriage. 1 Cor. 7:10-11; 1 Cor. 7:2,9.
11. The church and its pastors will carefully seek to avoid offense when ministering in the case of a broken marriage. 2 Sam. 12:14
12. Our concern in dealing with these difficult cases is not the purity of the church nor simply the purity of life of the individual, but the proper application of law and gospel in the interest of the individual's repentance and eternal salvation.

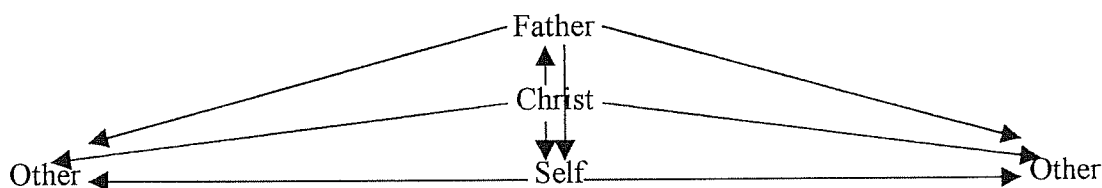
Quoted from Armin Schuetze and Frederick Matzke, *The Counseling Shepherd*,

Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: 1988. Pp. 230-243.

Part Six: Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a Fruit of Faith or a Fruit of Repentance

The Scriptures speak of forgiveness in two spheres of activity. In one sphere only God is active. This is God forgiving me and the rest of the world of sinners because of Christ crucified and arisen. This is a vertical sphere of activity. Forgiveness comes from God above to me and the world of sinners below. In the second sphere of activity God and the sanctified believer are both active. Out of love for God and in response to God forgiving me in Christ, by God's grace, I forgive my fellow human beings. This is a horizontal sphere activity. This includes my fruit of faith in which I forgive myself for the sins I have done against myself and others and my fruit of faith in forgiving others when they have sinned against me. All of the horizontal activity of forgiveness is a good work. It is a fruit of faith and repentance. Through Word and Sacrament the Holy Spirit guides (use of Law) and motivates and empowers (use of Gospel) me to forgive myself and others. The graphic demonstrates this:



On the cross Christ has earned forgiveness for me and all others. The punishment payment was made to God, the Father. The upward arrow from Christ to the Father illustrates this. The downward arrows from the Father and Christ to Self and Others illustrate the objective fact that God in Christ has reconciled the world to himself. The horizontal arrows from Self to the Others illustrate the fruit of faith or repentance that are our acts of our forgiving others. The horizontal arrows show that the result of forgiveness for me through Christ crucified and arisen in my sanctified Christian life is that I forgive myself and all others who have sinned against me.

Dictionaries, Scripture, and Forgiveness

Webster defines forgiveness as “an act of forgiving or state of being forgiven.” It is the past participle of forgive. He gives the following definition of the verb, to forgive: “to cease to feel resentment against on account of wrong committed; give up claim to requital from or retribution upon (an offender);... remit the penalty of...”¹⁰

In classical Greek ἀφίεναι means “to send off,” “to hurl,” “to release,” “to let go,” or “to let be.”¹¹ A weapon might be hurled at an enemy. The verb used to describe the action is ἀφίημι. The weapon is released from the hand. The word was also used in classical Greek to describe releasing someone from an office, marriage, obligation or debt, though never in a religious sense. It also took on the meaning of “to pardon” and “to remit.” It was a legal term in this sense.

In the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament the word was used to translate Hebrew words that meant to release, surrender, leave, or remit. “The object of remission is sin or guilt...”¹² Sin, lawlessness, ungodliness, and accusations are described as being remitted. Contrary to classical Greek usage, the one who forgives is God. “The relationship of man to God is thus conceived of in legal terms, and this is quite alien to Greek thought.”¹³

New Testament Greek builds upon the understanding that had been given the word by the Septuagint translators of the Old Testament. Forgiveness is “almost always that of God....To this extent the concept is the same as the OT and Jewish idea of forgiveness. Yet there is a new and specifically Christian feature. For the community realizes that it has to receive from God the

¹⁰ *Webster's Third International Dictionary, Vol. I*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago: 1966, p. 861.

¹¹ Gerhard Kittel, Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I*, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI: 1972. p. 509.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 510.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

forgiveness which is offered to men through the saving act which has taken place in Jesus Christ.”¹⁴

Since God forgives us by the saving act of Jesus Christ we can make some Scriptural deductions about the meaning of forgiveness and the process of forgiveness.

- a. God is our Creator/Judge. We are responsible to Him.

That is why the psalmist writes:

Psalm 119:120

My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.

St. Peter wrote about the responsibility that we have towards God.

1 Peter 1:15-16

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

It is a sin not to be as holy as God is holy. It is a sin to fail in our responsibility towards God.

Leviticus 5:17

17 "If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible."

The Creator's punishment upon those who do not fulfill their responsibility to him is swift and fearful.

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death.

- b. Our salvation is God's saving act for us in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man, our crucified and arisen Savior.

John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

1 Peter 3:18

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

It is not the idea of God being loving and gracious that we need to proclaim, but the act of God in saving us.

Romans 5:18

18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

1 John 2:2

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

- c. Forgiveness of sin through Christ crucified and arisen is for all sins of all people of all time.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

- d. Faith enters the picture of forgiveness as the receiving organ of God's act of saving us in Christ crucified and arisen. Faith is not a good work that earns salvation for us.

Faith is God's gift to us by the power of his Holy Spirit through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves. it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Louw and Nida offer some interesting observations about language usage and understanding within cultures. “It is extremely important to note that the focus in the meanings of ἀφίημι, ἄφεσις, and ἀπολύω is upon the guilt of the wrongdoer and not upon the wrongdoing itself. The event of wrongdoing is not undone, but the guilt resulting from such an event is pardoned. To forgive, therefore, means essentially to remove the guilt resulting from wrongdoing....Some languages make a clear distinction between guilt and sin, and terms of forgiveness are therefore related to guilt and not to wrongdoing. Therefore, ‘to forgive sins’ is literally ‘to forgive guilt.’ Though terms for ‘forgiveness’ are often literally ‘to wipe out,’ ‘to blot out,’ or ‘to do away with,’ it is obviously not possible to blot out or to wipe out an event, but it is possible to remove or obliterate the guilt”¹⁵ (Louw and Nida, 1989, v.1, p. 503).

This understanding is of great importance for the Counseling Shepherd to address to the person who says that he/she cannot forgive another because that would make the event of the wrongdoing something that did not ever happen. It is important that the individual realizes that forgiveness does not take away the event or even certain impacts of the event upon our lives. For example, Jack may have unlawfully taken a diamond ring from Jill. Jill may forgive Jack for his theft, but may still take him to the public court to seek restitution for the loss of the diamond ring. Jill’s forgiveness of Jack means that she has let go of the hatred and anger and bitterness she felt towards him and she no longer desires God’s punishment upon him. She does not want her anger and lack of forgiveness to rule her life or to separate her from her God. But she may still press charges in civil court to see Jack prosecuted for his crime. Jack may know and believe that God forgives him for his stealing. Yet, Jack has been found guilty in a court of law and has been sentenced to repay Jill for the diamond ring and to a punishment of a sentence to jail. His

¹⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Second Edition, Vol. 1*, United Bible Societies, New York: 1989. P. 503.

jail term does not pay his debt to God. Jesus has done that already. His jail term pays his debt to society and Jack needs to be counseled to accept his civil punishment and to serve his time without bitterness or anger at God or at the system.

The Relationship Between Repentance, Forgiveness, and Hope

There is a progressive relationship between repentance and forgiveness and hope about which we need a reminder here. Forgiveness comes from God as the absolution part of repentance. Forgiveness of our brother or sister who has wronged us is a fruit of repentance. Hope is also a fruit of repentance. Forgiveness produces hope. Forgiveness because of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is the central aspect of the three terms – repentance, forgiveness, and hope. Forgiveness is also a part of the end product – hope. Forgiveness makes us hopeful – forgiveness by God in Christ and forgiveness of the other, forgiveness of self, and forgiveness by the other of us.

Forgiveness and its Opposite, Unresolved Anger

A person who is truly forgiving is a person who has trust. When we keep a record of the wrongs that someone has done against us and when we hold on to unresolved anger, we show a lack of trust in God's justice. There are two parts to God's justice. There is God's wrath:

Romans 12:19

19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

There is God's mercy:

1 John 1:9

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

The forgiving Christian denies his or her own anger and emotional pain and fear and trusts that God will take care of the need for justice, the need to ease the emotional pain, and the

need to remove the fear. When the person who has sinned against us refuses to repent of his or her sin, the forgiving Christian who has been sinned against views God's justice as the perfect immediate and ultimate solution. The forgiving Christian follows the will of God:

Ephesians 4:31

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

The forgiving Christian expects and desires to see God's mercy. He or she is not a Jonah, angry at God when God forgives.¹⁶ The forgiving Christian trusts in the mercy of God. The forgiving Christian prays that God would lead the one who has sinned against him or her to repentance and forgiveness. This is the ultimate goal of trusting in God's justice.

Unresolved anger destroys our relationship with God. The most serious consequence of our refusal to forgive is how our grudging hate destroys our relationship to God.

Matthew 6:15

15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

This is the most destructive alternative to forgiveness. There are others that have been identified by Christian psychology. We quote the Chinese proverb, "the one who pursues revenge should dig two graves."¹⁷ Refusing to forgive is like voluntarily staying in the role of slave to the one we refuse to forgive. If slave is too strong a word, perhaps we could use the phrase, "willingly letting another continue to control us." "One of the most serious consequences of lacking forgiveness is that we become bonded to those we need to forgive, and indebted to those who need to forgive us, which in effect gives others control over our lives."¹⁸ "Setting others free means setting oneself free, because resentment is really a form of attachment....'As the avenger

¹⁶ Jonah 4

¹⁷ C. K. Benson, "Forgiveness and the Psychotherapeutic Process," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, Vol. 11, (1)*, p. 76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

we are controlled, rather than in control.”¹⁹ Clinging to the hate and anger that is a part of refusing to forgive enables us to avoid grieving and may also provide us with someone to blame for our problems. This “...illustrates the close relationship between facing responsibility and forgiving.”²⁰

So many people like to believe they are trapped in an unforgiving attitude because it is necessary for the offender to apologize or to repent prior to their forgiving them. “Part of our role may be to help the client give up the notion that forgiveness needs to be based on someone else’s behavior. To believe that means that we remain victims.”²¹

Thus, there is a circularity to the process of forgiveness. Those who cannot forgive are doomed to live out what they cannot forgive in the one who sinned against them. Those who by grace through faith in Christ have received forgiveness from God are led to forgive the hardest of all persons to forgive – themselves. They are able to love themselves as God loves them. They are thus able to love their fellow human beings. Forgiveness is not found in the harsh reality of God’s Law or of human law. **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth** expresses no hope for forgiveness nor for an end to the circular fallout of vengeance and revenge and refusal to forgive.

Forgiveness is found in the grace of God in Christ Jesus. This grace is God’s unconditional love for us and for all in Christ.

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

We are not in a position of should and ought. We are not under the curse of the Law. We are free. Christ has made us free. Our reaction to this freedom is to set others free by forgiving

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77, quoted from T. Hersey, *Beginning again: Life after a relationship ends*, Merit Books, Laguna Hills, CA: 1984.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

them. By so doing, in a psychological sense, we free ourselves from that which is opposite to God's love and grace – our own lack of forgiveness. We, who have been forgiven, forgive. It is natural and loving and open and honest. It is living in liberty and in freedom. Forgiveness is the joy of Christian living.

We will not express God's forgiveness to the person who is impenitent. That would be spiritually harmful for them. But to refuse to forgive and to hold vengeance in our hearts towards that same impenitent person will be spiritually harmful to us. The forgiving Christian, by the grace of God, trusts that God's justice (his wrath and his mercy) will rule. God's justice is perfect. Ours will always be tainted with vengeance and sin.

Sharing God's Forgiveness – Scriptural and Psychological Concepts

A forgiving heart is a heart that shares forgiveness. The forgiving heart recognizes and believes that it has been forgiven by God and in thankfulness the forgiving heart responds by forgiving others. The following outline helps us to understand this and to understand the way Scripture views forgiveness and the way the psychologists view forgiveness.

1. Scriptural view of forgiveness:
 - 1.1 Forgiveness is NOT a sign of weakness or of giving in.
 - 1.2 Forgiveness is NOT condoning, excusing, or covering up sinful behaviors.
 - 1.3 Forgiveness is NOT mere words (e.g., "I'm sorry." "No problem, I forgive you.")
 - 1.4 Forgiveness IS not holding on to my angers and trusting in God's justice.
 - 1.5 Forgiveness IS the fruit of faith that trusts in the perfect justice of God's wrath and mercy and rejects my sinful need for revenge.
 - 1.6 Forgiveness IS a reflection toward others and a sharing of the forgiveness that God has given to me in Christ.
2. Psychological view of forgiveness:
 - 2.1 Forgiveness is an intellectual exercise that develops into an emotional reality.
 - 2.2 The psychological object of forgiveness is to free people of their anger and guilt.
 - 2.3 Forgiveness...
 - 2.3.1 helps people to forget painful experiences of the past.
 - 2.3.2 frees them from the control of the past (control by events and by people from the past)
 - 2.3.3 facilitates reconciliation
 - 2.3.4 decreases the likelihood of displaced anger in present relationships (displaced anger is being angry at person "A" in the past but acting out your anger towards person "B" or others in the present)
 - 2.3.5 reduces levels of anxiety and depression.
 - 2.3.6 Increases the possibility of understanding the other person.

Even a quick comparison of number one with number two above shows a person that the Scriptural view of forgiveness always includes God:

God forgiving Christian plus God plus the one being forgiven.

The psychological view of forgiveness primarily involves benefits for the person who is encouraged to be forgiving.

The Counseling Shepherd works with Scripture and the Relationships in a Process

It takes some explanation to speak about forgiveness as a process theologically. In our vertical relationship with God, forgiveness does not exist as a process because forgiveness comes from God and flows to us by grace through faith in Christ. Forgiveness from God is complete and perfect.

II Corinthians 5:18-20

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

It is done by God. He has forgiven all people in Christ. "Not counting men's sins against them" means that the sins of all are forgiven. This was accomplished by Christ crucified.

I John 1:7 ...*the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Forgiveness is total because God's Son is the perfect payment for sin who became true man to be the perfect substitute for all humans.

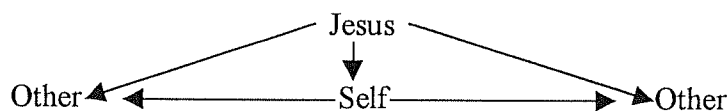
I John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

God is the reconciler. He has done it all for all the world. All who believe in Jesus have their sins forgiven.

Ephesians 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

Acts 10:43 *Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*

Since the work is done by God it is complete and perfect. Forgiveness is an instantaneous, accomplished fact. *"It is finished!"* Jesus said from the cross. Thus, it would be contrary to Scriptural record to say that forgiveness is a process in our vertical relationship with God as we see the arrow pointing from God to us.



Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

But we are imperfect people who live in an imperfect world. Yet, as believers in Jesus Christ, Christians strive for perfection. We know that we will never attain perfection here on this earth because of the sinful part of us that will never completely leave us. Therefore, we look to Jesus for forgiveness. He is God's Son, who became incarnate, lived a perfect life for all people, died as the substitute for all, and arose to assure all who believe in him of heaven. Jesus is the hope of those who believe in him.

The process of forgiveness occurs in our horizontal relationships with others here on earth. It is a part of our sanctified Christian living. By God's grace we need to overcome, through God's power, the sinful part of us that desires to continue with our lack of forgiveness for the one who has sinned against us. It is a struggle. We sin daily. God's forgiveness is ours. But a part of our sin is our refusal to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. Because of our sinfulness, our forgiveness is a process.

Forgiveness is also a process because we are emotional people who feel the pain and hurt of betrayal and lovelessness on the part of others directed against us. Thus, the

Christian/psychological writers present different processes for forgiveness. We have greatly adapted Veenstra's process from his article, *Psychological concepts of forgiveness*²² on the following page by setting it into columns. We have added a column in which we have placed Luke 17:3-4. This Bible passage describes the process of forgiveness in outline form from the viewpoint of the offended (the one sinned against). The second column is our adaptation of the stages of forgiveness which Veenstra promotes. The third column lists some dangers that need to be noted by the offended and the counselor at each stage lest the offended shortcut the process to the degree that forgiveness is not present and deep-seated resentment continues to fester. Such shortcuts would include a member's client statement about forgiveness that does not constitute forgiveness but is weakness or giving in, or condoning, excusing, or covering up sinful behaviors, or mere words. Much of the second and the third column have been altered from the original concepts of Veenstra. Check out the forgiveness that is spoken by your member to see where they are. Note the areas in column three that need addressing.

It is hoped that this model or process, summarized in this way, will be helpful to the counselor in encouraging his or her clients along the road to forgiveness. This model or process is tied to the concepts shown in the previous chart that compared both the Scriptural and the psychological views of forgiveness.

It is important to note that not everyone will go through these stages consecutively, or that all will begin at the first stage in column two. Some will be at point F in five minutes. Others will take several months to get there. The Counseling Shepherd is advised to adapt this chart to each individual member.

²² G. Veenstra, "Psychological concepts of forgiveness," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 11, (2)

DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP PROCESS

- From the viewpoint of the one who has been sinned against

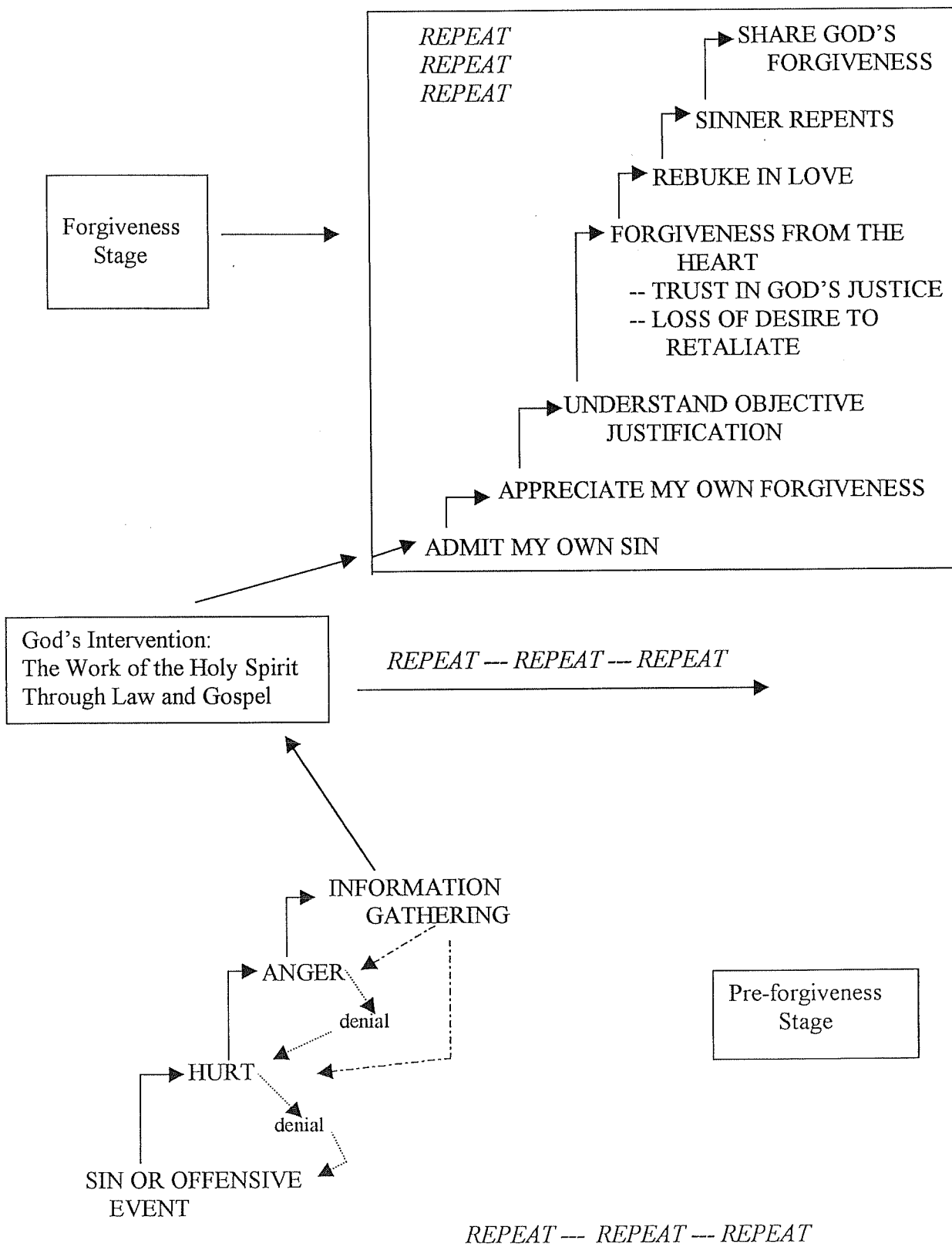
<u>Luke 17:3-4</u>	<u>Stages of forgiveness in process</u>	<u>Dangers to avoid at each stage</u>
<i>"If your brother sins,</i>	A. Presented with the wrong,	A. Overlooking the wrong, ignoring
<i>rebuke him,</i>	B. Determining the wrong convict	B. Excusing the wrong
<i>and if he repents,</i>	C. Hearing the wrong admitted D. Recognizing contrition and faith spoken by the offender	C. Condoning the wrong D. Pardoning the wrong. Ignoring the need on the part of the offender for contrition and faith.
<i>forgive him.</i>	E. Release the wrong. Forgiveness as releasing.	E.1. Confusing forgiveness with restoring. E.2. Confusing recovering first love (the way the relationship was before the offense) with creating reborn love (realistic, non- idealistic, and not-so-naïve, mature love).
<i>If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."</i>	F. Rebuilding right relationships through a trust-building process. Forgiveness as trusting.	F.1. Confusing cautiousness with doubting. F.2. Thinking that the fruits of repentance that are seen automatically mean the extinction of the old sinful behaviors. F.3. Not giving trust time to be rebuilt.

The structure for a portion of the charts on the next two pages was suggested by two charts developed by Charlotte Rosenak and G. Mack Harndon.²³ Many changes have been made to them to make them more Scriptural and Lutheran. Note on the *Stages of Forgiveness* chart how denial occurs between each stage on the lower level until anger is reached. As new information is gathered, the offended will slip back into anger and hurt with each new revelation. The forgiveness stage includes a humble and repentant search of self and of God's forgiveness of self prior to a renewed understanding of objective justification. The one sinned against forgives from his or her heart the one who hurt or offended them. The desire to retaliate is gone and is replaced by trust in God's justice – both his wrath and his mercy. The one sinned against rebukes in love the one who sinned against him or her. By God's grace the one who sinned repents. The one sinned against shares God's forgiveness with the penitent one who sinned against him or her.

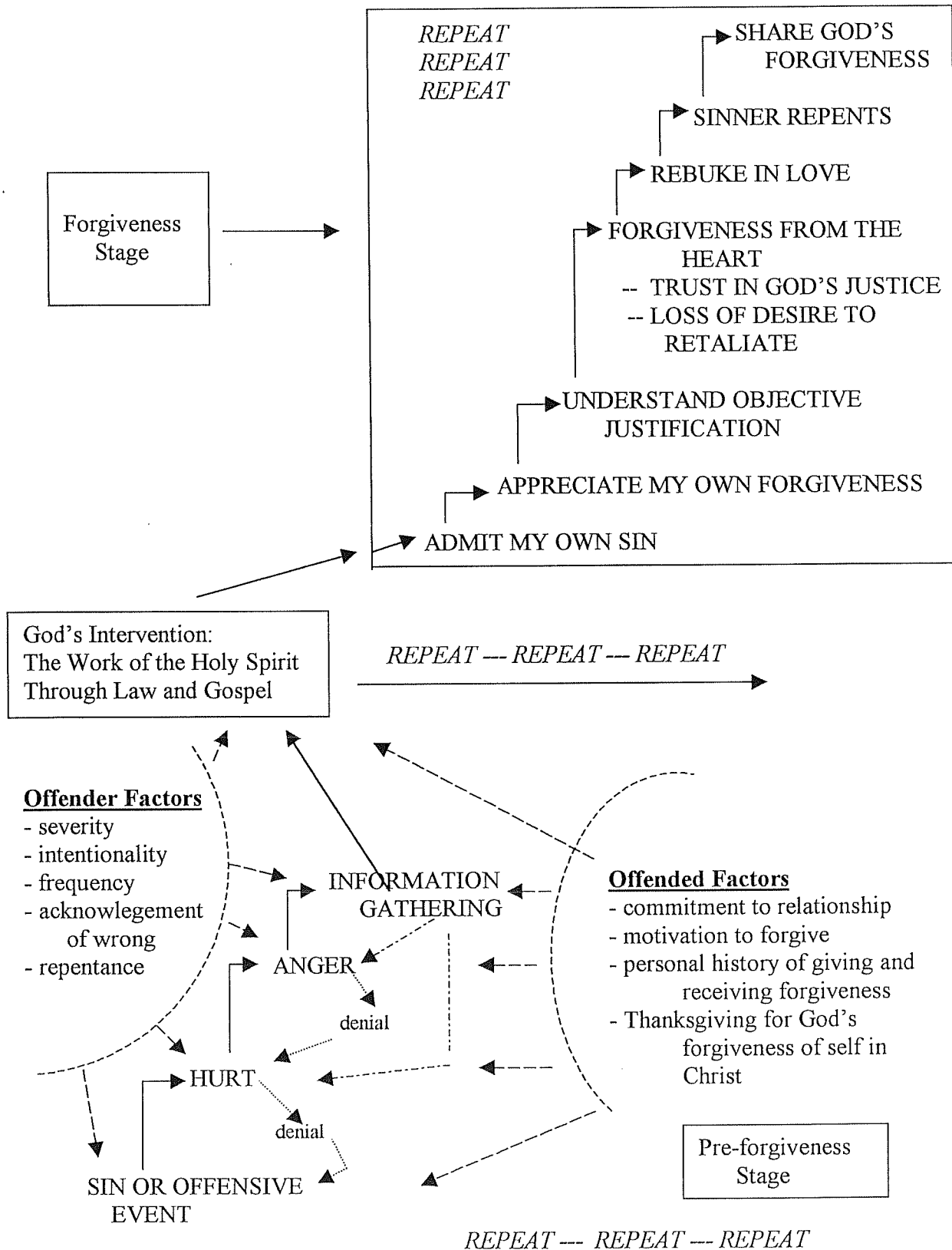
The *Forgiveness Process* chart shares the same stage or step structure as the *Forgiveness Stages* chart. The over-riding and all-permeating basis is also God's intervention through His Law which convicts and His Gospel which forgives through Word and Sacrament. The additions on this chart are the offender (the one who has sinned) factors and the offended (the one sinned against) factors. These are factors which in a psychological sense seem to have an impact upon the readiness of a person to forgive.

²³ C. M. Rosenak and G. M. Harnden, "Forgiveness in the Psychotherapeutic Process," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, Vol. 11, (2), 1992, pp. 188-187.

STAGES OF FORGIVENESS



FORGIVENESS PROCESS

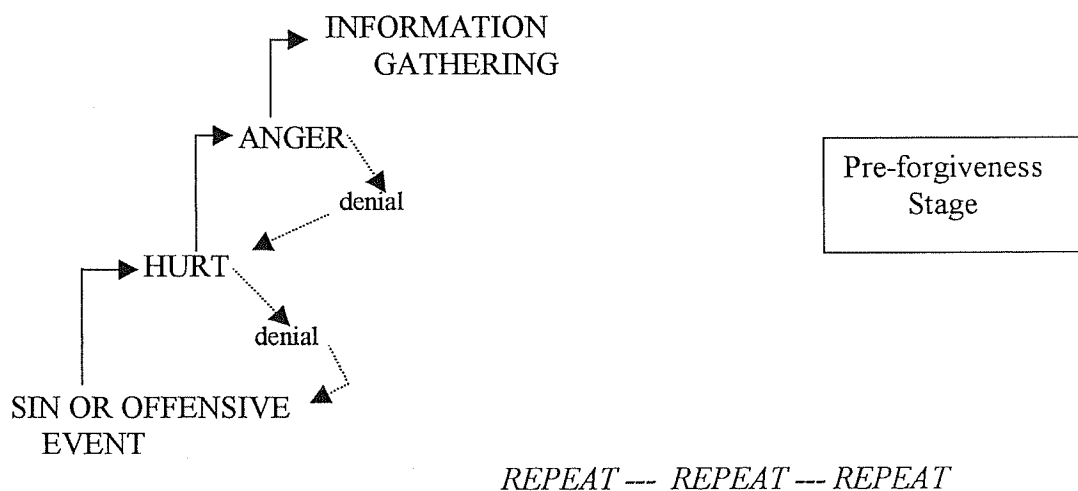


Pre-forgiveness Stage

There are three distinct stages in the forgiveness process. The first stage is at the bottom of the chart. It is the **Pre-forgiveness Stage**. The second stage is in the middle and is key to everything positive in the forgiveness process. It is **God's Intervention: The Work of the Holy Spirit Through Word and Sacrament**. The third stage is the result of God's Intervention. It is the fruit of faith and repentance – the **Forgiveness Stage**.

The words: REPEAT --- REPEAT --- REPEAT are found in three places on the charts to emphasize the fact that this is an often repeated process each day for the forgiving Christian.

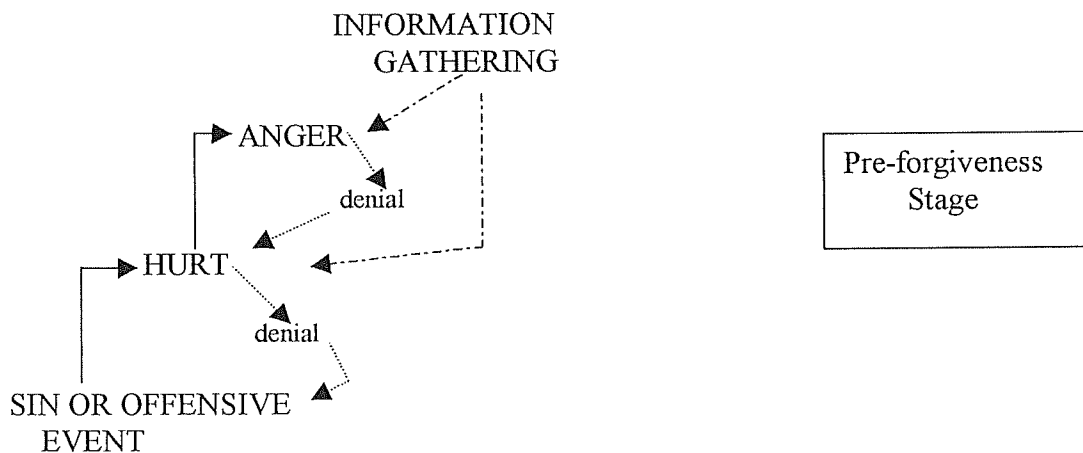
We begin with the pre-forgiveness stage.



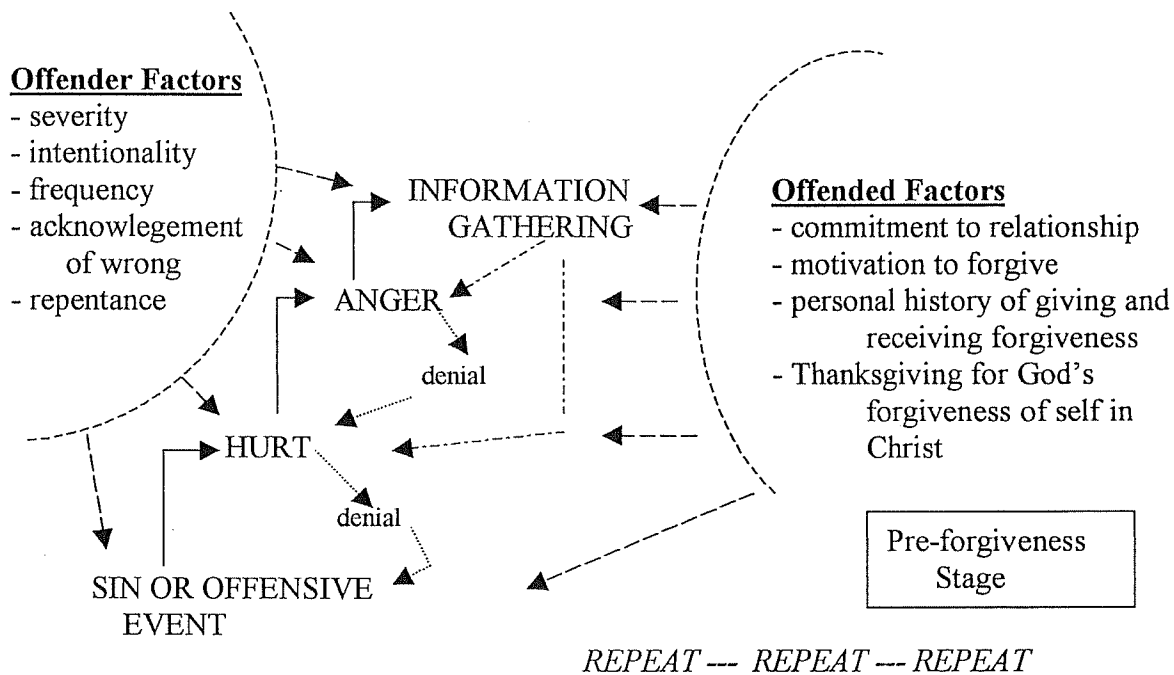
The person sinned against feels hurt followed by anger at the sin committed against them and the person committing that sin. There is often denial involved with the hurt and the anger. Often the offended one feels both hurt and anger at the same time that they wrestle with denial. “How could they?” “I feel so betrayed.” “I don’t believe it!” “I’m really going to get them for this!” “How dare they!” “Are you sure he really did that?” “Oh, this just breaks my heart.” These and many phrases like them in a string of conversation over a period of time show how the person sinned against wrestles with all kinds of emotions and disbelief in the beginning of the

pre-forgiveness stage. As more time goes by the one sinned against find out more about the sin and its circumstances and its consequences. Without the intervention of God's Word, the offended one reacts in anger. Acts of vengeance and malice are planned. Plots are made to get revenge. Angry and spiteful words are spoken towards the one who sinned. The relationship between the two people is very antagonistic. There may even be violence as the relationship deteriorates and the tension rises. A cycle of anger and even violence is formed. Without God's intervention through his Law and Gospel, these people will stay in sin. Anger will consume them. There will be no peace or comfort and they will think that their only hope will be for revenge. The Counseling Shepherd needs to provide that intervention. He needs to listen carefully to the client. These charts may be helpful to share with your member to help him or her to see and understand what is going on and why he or she needs to forgive from the heart.

The dotted arrows on the following chart show the denial. The arrows that are made up of dashes and dots show the impact of finding out more about the sin. The one sinned against is stuck in a circle of unresolved anger and hurtful emotions in the pre-forgiveness stage.



Various environmental, emotional, and spiritual factors have an impact upon the one sinned against. The Pre-forgiveness stage drawn on the Forgiveness Process chart lists some of those factors. They are listed as both Offender Factors and Offended Factors.



Offender Factors

- What is the severity of the offense or sin? (in society? in the eyes of the offended one?)
- Was the sin intentional? Was it spontaneous? How much planning went into producing the act of the sin?
- What is the frequency of the sin? How often was it repeated?
- Did the sinner acknowledge that it was wrong? Is there sorrow?
- Did the sinner repent? (contrition and absolution)

These factors have an impact upon how much hurt and anger the one sinned against will be feeling. They have an impact upon how long they will feel that hurt and anger. They have an impact upon how willing the one sinned against is to hear God's Law and Gospel.

Offended Factors

- What is the commitment of the one sinned against to the relationship between himself and her self and the one who sinned against him or her?

The pastor will want to explore this aspect carefully several times in the counseling process. There can be a lot of confusion about this issue in the mind of the one who has been sinned against.

- What motivation to forgive does the offended one have? This is tied to the person's faith and trust in God's justice – his wrath and his mercy.

This is also tied to the history of forgiveness in a person's family and to the spiritual understanding of forgiveness that a person has through Christ crucified and arisen. This may also be tied to material circumstances in the life of the offended one. Can I survive financially without the one who sinned against me? The counselor will need to explore motivation carefully.

- The personal history of giving and receiving forgiveness has been partially discussed above. There is a certain "trust" in the process of forgiveness that many people have never experienced in their lives. It is important to ask about these experiences of forgiveness in which your member was forgiven by someone else or in which they previously forgave someone else.

- How thankful does your member feel for God's forgiveness of himself or herself in Christ? This is a transition question that leads you to present God's Intervention: the work of the Holy Spirit through Law and Gospel.

God's Intervention: The Work of the Holy Spirit Through Law and Gospel

It is hard to call God's intervention a second stage in the process of forgiveness. God's intervention by the power of the Holy Spirit through Law and Gospel is the center of forgiveness. It is what makes forgiveness a good work and not a sinful action done for personal gain. God's intervention through Law and Gospel is what makes repentance true repentance. It is also what makes forgiveness true forgiveness. It is so much more than a stage of forgiveness. It is the power that produces forgiveness. It is God's model of forgiveness for us lived in our lives. It is the fruit of repentance. It gives us peace and comfort and hope in our earthly relationships. For structural reasons we have shown God's intervention through Law and Gospel in a second stage position, but it is off to the side. It does not come from us. It comes from God to us. It is the power of God's grace in our lives.

Romans 1:16

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

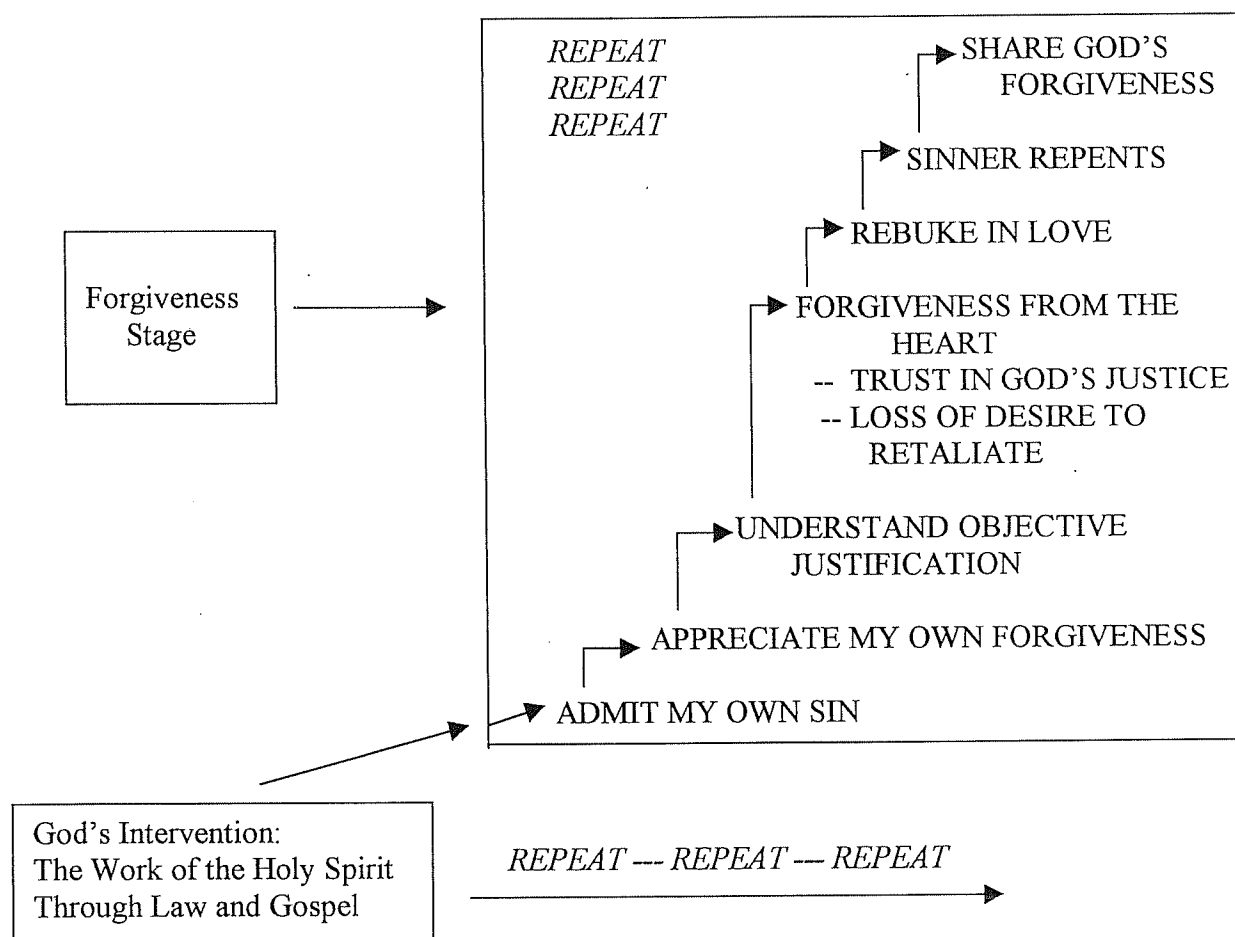
Romans 10:17

17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

We have carefully examined the work of the Holy Spirit through Law and Gospel in the Repentance Model section. We refer you to that section for review. We also will demonstrate how the Holy Spirit works in us through Law and Gospel as we discuss the forgiveness stage.

The Forgiveness Stage

FORGIVENESS PROCESS



I Admit My Own Sin

In order to trust in God's justice, both his wrath and his mercy, a person needs to have true Christian humility. This means that a person knows who he or she is in the eyes of God.

Only God's Word – his Law – can show us who we really are by nature in the eyes of God. St.

Paul tells us who we are in

Romans 3:10-12,20

10 As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands,

*no one who seeks God.
12 All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one."*

20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

As a sinful child of God, I am fully capable of committing any sin possible. I am by nature evil. It is natural for me to think, speak, and do evil. I do evil even when I do not want to.

Romans 7:18-19

18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

I Appreciate My Own Forgiveness

Because of my sinful, I am unable to produce good in the eyes of my God by my power.

Romans 8:7-8

7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

I can only plead for God's mercy like the tax collector in the parable of Jesus.

Luke 18:13

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

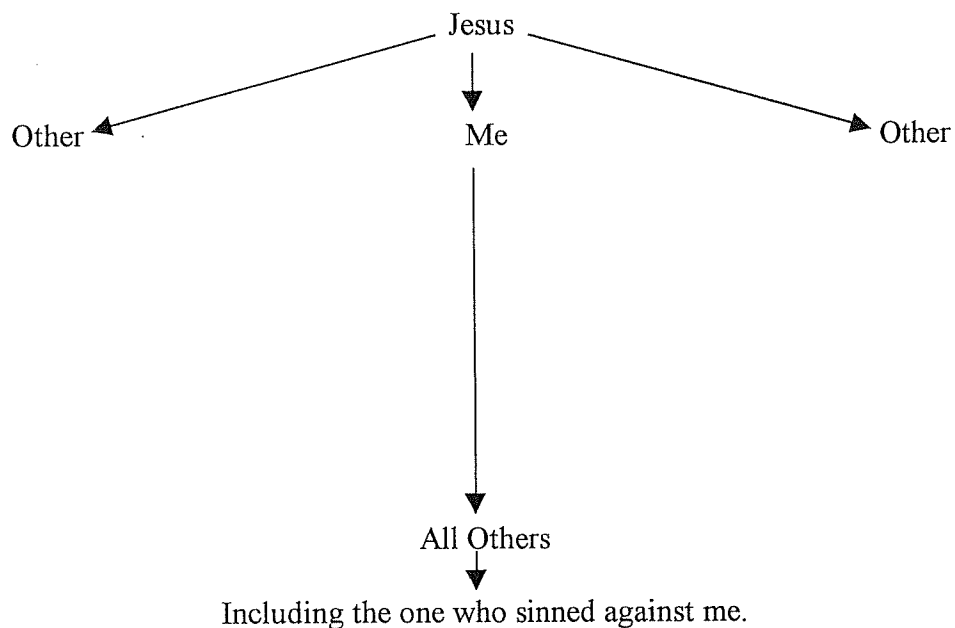
This is why I appreciate my own forgiveness. It is God's gift to me. God has forgiven all my sins no matter how great they might be. God has forgiven me in his grace, for Jesus' sake, not because I deserve it.

Romans 5:8

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

I Understand Objective Justification

The confidence that we have of our forgiveness and salvation rests on the fact Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Because He died for all people, he not only forgives my sins, but also the sins of the person who has sinned against me.



1 John 2:2

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

I Forgive from the heart, trusting in God's justice and losing the desire to retaliate.

It is because Jesus won forgiveness on the cross for the sins of all people that the forgiving Christian forgives from the heart. Because of God's grace to me and to the world of sinners in sending Jesus to be our Savior, the forgiving Christian has the willingness, the readiness, and the desire to forgive another sinner. That other sinner does not have to repent first or first say, "I am sorry," before we forgive him or her. Forgiveness from the heart requires

nothing from the other sinner. Our forgiveness of the other sinner is a reflection of God's gracious and free gift of forgiveness in Christ.

Only the believing child of God who trusts in God's forgiveness in Christ crucified and arisen will have faith to forgive in this manner. The child of God no longer keeps a record of wrongs. He or she forgives another from the heart, trusting in God's justice, both his wrath to punish and his mercy to forgive.

Ephesians 4:32

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

I Rebuke in Love

When we loving rebuke someone who has sinned against us we do not "dump on them" because of their sins against us. Such a tirade of anger would be an act of revenge and not a loving rebuke. When we rebuke another in love we show the one who has sinned against us his or her sin because we want that person to be led to repentance, so that they may have God's forgiveness.

Matthew 18:15

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

Luke 17:3-4

3 So watch yourselves.

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. 4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

We may use the Repentance Model described in Chapter Three to rebuke in love.

I Rejoice When the One Who Sins Against Me Repents

My joy at the repentance of the one who sins against me is not the joy of vengeance, but of thanksgiving. Unresolved anger and hate have turned to love. I love because Jesus first loved me and I love to see all for whom Jesus died repent. As a part of repentance, we pronounce absolution. We say, "God has forgiven you and so do I."

I Share God's Forgiveness

The wonderful and gracious power and joy of sharing God's forgiveness is God's gift to each believer as a part of the priesthood of all believers. This is the epitome of forgiveness. The forgiveness that Jesus won for all sinners becomes ours through faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. This is Subjective Justification. This, by grace through faith, is also a gift of God.

John 20:21-23

21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

We review what has happened here. With forgiveness from our heart we have rebuked a sinner in hopes that we may share God's forgiveness with him or her. If that person refuses to repent we cannot share forgiveness with him or her. Since Jesus paid such a great price so that we and all the world have the gift of God's forgiveness, we are very careful not to give or withhold forgiveness lightly. But we cannot be the perfect judge of repentance. Only God can judge whether or not a person's repentance is sincere. Therefore, if repentance is spoken, we share God's forgiveness with that person. Our sinful nature tells us that we have to be absolutely sure that the person is "really sorry" before we grant forgiveness. Our sinful nature tempts us to be filled with anger or distrust of a person's penitent words if he or she acts too happy too soon. We like to see groveling and pain and tears. We may even be tempted to say, "Show me this fruit or that fruit of repentance prior to my forgiving you." That would be demanding penance

and would be an un-Scriptural requirement on our part. Yet, we will look for fruits of repentance and will counsel to receive them. But at the same time we understand that a child of God daily struggles with temptation and sin. We will be careful to note the struggle as well as the lapses back to sin.

Choosing Not to Remember and Healing Over Time: Forgiving and Forgetting

Jeremiah 31:34

*“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”*

While this passage is often used as a proof passage for the saying: “forgive and forget.” We do not find a place in the Bible that tells us to forgive and forget. This often-used cliché places a burden of guilt upon a victim of a sin who is unable to forget another person’s sin against him or her. The sin may have greatly impacted the victim’s life. For example: John may have been angry at Paul, his co-worker, and may have in his anger used a hammer to hit him in the back. Paul is the victim of John’s sin. Paul may not be able to walk because of the injury to his spine. He forgives John, but he will never forget what John did to him. Each time he tries to move his legs and cannot he will remember the sin that John committed against him. What is important is that Paul does not remember that sin in anger.

Psychologically we are told that the cognitive process of forgetting involves information in long-term memory fading in its organization and availability of retrieval. We know that God is omniscient. He has eternal memory. In that sense he forgets nothing. He cannot forget anything. When God chooses not to remember our sins it is because he has covered them with the blood of his Son, Jesus.

When a memory of sin and its consequences intrudes upon our thoughts, as sanctified believers we immediately choose to turn that thought over to God’s wrath and mercy so that we

may show forgiveness from the heart. We keep ourselves from dwelling upon sin and its consequences so that we do not experience renewed anger or pain. This does not mean that we have denied our anger or pain. This does not mean that we have “stuffed it.” We choose, by God’s grace, as believers in Jesus to follow his command “*not to let the sun go down while you are still angry.*”²⁴

Our immediate action when such temptations to remain angry and hateful come upon us is to focus our thoughts on Jesus and his forgiveness for us and for all. We allow each day to hold the trouble of each day. Over time, healing will take place and the painful memories of the sin committed against us will have less intensity, be of shorter duration, and have longer intervals between them.

Summary

The process of forgiveness is complex. It needs to be repeated again and again, every day, and perhaps many times a day. Our motivation to forgive does not depend upon what the one who has sinned against us does, but upon what Jesus has done for us. This outline of the forgiveness process has been presented to you for your understanding and as an aid in sharing with your clients the peace, comfort, and hope that comes from forgiveness in view of God’s mercy. It is felt that the charts may be useful outlines for your use as you counsel with children of God. They have also been developed to be used as presentation, confrontation, and development tools for you to use and discuss with your members.

²⁴ Ephesians 4:26

Part Seven: Hope and Hopeful Solutions

Hope in Psychological Thought and Bible-based Counseling

There are some very evident differences between Bible-based Counseling and secular counseling in the area of hope. These differences find their roots in western culture.

In *Philebus*, Plato has Socrates say: **Ἡμεῖς δ αὖ διά παντός τοῦ βίου ἀεί γέμομεν ἐλπίδων** -- "Thus, we therefore through all of life have always been filled with hopes" (my translation). Others have translated it this way: "...and that mankind are filled with hopes in every stage of existence."²⁵ The Greeks did not carry the concept of hope as solely an expectation of good. Hope could also have the meaning of an expectation of bad for the future. All hope was considered to be dangerous because there was no certainty to the future. It is dangerous to put any confidence in that which was not fact but which was mere hope because it was felt that there is no certainty to both the future and hope. The Greeks believed that only a god could be certain of the future. To the Stoics, hope is simply man's projection of the future.²⁶

Modern secular psychologists and counselors have also considered hope to be dangerous because, since hope based upon Christ is rejected, they see no certainty for the future based on mere hope. Therefore, most theories of secular counseling will not mention hope. Bible-based pastoral counseling is all about hope. This is Christian hope that is rooted in God and in His work of redemption for all sinners and that is offered to the individual through the Church. The tension between secular counseling and Bible-based pastoral counseling is severe on the issue of hope. Most of the studies being done at this time on hope in the realm of secular counseling flow out of the work done by nurses with cancer patients and other terminally ill patients.

²⁵ Robert Maynard Hutchins, Ed. In Chief, *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 7, *Plato*, Benjamin Jowett, Translator, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago: 1952, p. 624.

²⁶ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, Wm. B. Eerdmann's Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI: 1964, p. 521.

It is especially in the area of anxiety and depression that hope is important in our counseling ministry as Counseling Shepherds. We have a tool which is scoffed at by many secular counselors, but which they cannot reproduce in their counseling. Secular counseling can teach coping. It can help people learn how to cope. But the methods of secular counseling cannot offer people hope that is lasting. You have the secular skills to teach coping. You also are able to give people lasting hope in Christ crucified and arisen. That hope is described in several passages:

Romans 15:4

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

While the Greek word for endurance means patient endurance and not coping, it has some of the thoughts associated with what we call coping in it. Patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures give us hope.

Colossians 1:5

5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel.

Once again, the Gospel is the key to giving hope.

Romans 8:24

24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

Hebrews 11:1

1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

These two passages are quoted together to emphasize the relationship of hope to faith.

Lessons:

- The Scriptures and the Sacraments are the tools that you will use to produce hope. All of the counseling skills that you have studied in books and learned

by experience and all the methodology that is helpful in counseling are not the real effective tools of your ministry as a Bible-based counselor. Skills and methodology are teaching aids. The Gospel in Word and Sacrament is the most effective tool because it produces an eternal hope.

- No other counselor in all the world has more effective tools than the Bible-based counselor to produce and encourage hope in the souls, minds, and lives of people.
- That which produces and encourages and strengthens faith in people, namely the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, is that which produces and encourages and strengthens hope in people.
- Use the tools that God has given you to His glory and the good of His people.

Christian hope is always fixed upon Christ Jesus. It embraces three elements:

- Expectation of the future
- Trust
- Patience of waiting

All three of these elements are often welded together into one Biblical passage.

2 Corinthians 1:9-10

9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.

Here there is an expectation of a future deliverance and a trust that God will do it. Patient waiting is implied.

2 Corinthians 3:12

12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

Assurance and certainty are emphasized because of the Gospel ministry and message which give us hope. The hope is the expectation of the glory of heaven. Trust in God and in his Gospel hope gives us boldness.

Facing possible death in his imprisonment, Paul writes:

Philippians 1:20

20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Speaking about Jesus as the ground and foundation of hope, Peter writes to a group of people expecting great trouble from persecution because of their faith in Christ.

1 Peter 1:13 & 21

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Here again we see expectation for the future, trust in God, and advice and planning for the future as a part of hope. Jesus is the central object of our hope as we expect his second coming.

Romans 12:12

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer,

Paul writes. He can write this to us because his trust on which his hope is based is in God for his future. He is not only patient in his waiting, he is even joyful. Another passage that expresses a similar thought is Paul's prayer in

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faith and hope describe the joy of Christian living. The hope is certain because it is based upon the all-powerful creator who has already sent his Son to be the perfect and complete Savior of all people. A hope that is based upon God and not upon flimsy human experience and weak human power and control of the past, present, or future, is beyond measure a joy in this

troublesome world. This sure and certain hope offers comfort and peace. It is the foundation of Christian Law/Gospel pastoral counseling. This hope is certain of forgiveness of sins past. This hope is based upon repentance that is both contrition for our sins and faith in God's absolution in Christ crucified and arisen. This is a hope that motivates and encourages us to change our lives of sin to lives that are lived according to God's will. This hope enables and empowers change. This hope is the basis for the joy of our Christian living.

Hopeful Solutions

The outline of an hour and a half first session with a member that is found on the next page contains both the Repentance Model and elements of what has often been called Solution-Focused Therapy as it was taught at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, by Dr. Elam Nunnally and others. Frederick Matzke, MSW, of Wisconsin Lutheran Christian Counseling and Alan Siggelkow had lengthy discussions of this method of counseling when Alan served as Fred's intern while doing field work for classes at UWM. Alan remarked that Fred did something like Solution-Focused Counseling with his clients. Shortly after Alan received his MSW, Fred and Alan jointly taught a Summer Quarter class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in which they began to refine the concept of what they now call *Hopeful Solutions*. We discuss this method because it seems to us to offer hope to clients.

We do not present Hopeful Solutions as the only way to do Bible-based Counseling. Most of you will continue to use the methods you learned in school and what you have learned from experience. We simply present Hopeful Solutions as something we have discovered that serves as a useful tool in talking about hope with clients. It is hoped that the way we have used Hopeful Solutions as a part of the Repentance Model will serve as a model for you to use another method of therapy with the Repentance Model.

While Hopeful Solutions is rooted in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, it is not a parrot of that method. We have put it in the context of the Repentance Model and have used the parts of it that seem to us to be in agreement with Scripture for Bible-based Therapeutic Counseling.

**The Structure of a First Session Using Law/Gospel Repentance Counseling
And Hopeful Solutions**

Joining and explanation of procedures. "How can I help you with God's Word today?"

1. Assessment of the problem, sin, or need to which God's Word will be addressed.
2. Confidence is given that God does forgive sins because of Christ – Objective Justification
(Depending upon the circumstances, this may or may not be included)
3. Specific Law is spoken and heard.
4. Sin is acknowledged. The sin is against God. True contrition.
5. Specific Gospel is spoken and heard.
6. Faith in God's forgiveness in Christ is confessed.
7. Absolution is stated.
8. Sanctified Christian living is discussed. The Fruits of Repentance.
 - a.. A warning is included not to produce fruits driven by Law, but by Gospel.

(Use of Hopeful Solutions Begins Here)

b. Description of the problem is given in behavioral terms. This description notes priority, frequency, severity (scaling), precipitants, behavior sequences, past attempts to resolve the problem and results of those attempts.

c. Exceptions to the problem are sought (when doesn't the problem happen)

- new
- recurring
- past
- future (goals)
- thanksgiving to God is noted for these exceptions

d. Goals are explored. With God's help, we plan to....

Essential goal data includes:

- goal statements
- indicators of achievement or progress (small signs of reaching the goals)
- discussion of how life will be different after the goal is reached

Optional goal data includes:

- motivation to reach the goal (scale of 1-10). Exploration of Gospel motivation, renewal of Gospel motivation
- confidence in reaching the goal (scale of 1-10). Exploration of level of hope in Christ. Use of the Gospel to increase hope in Christ.

e. Consultation or planning break (5 minutes)

f. Feedback to counselees

- thanksgiving to God
- compliments to clients for their cooperation
- directives (tasks, homework)
- interpretation, explanation, reframing, educative comments.

g. Next steps, i.e., arranging for next session, referral, or other.

9. Prayer for God's help.

10. The joy of Christian living is experienced.

You have noted that Hopeful Solutions begins to be used in the above structure at point 8.c. This is in the Fruits of Repentance Section of the Repentance Model. This is the section in which pastor and member are talking about changes in the member's life as a fruit or a result of repentance. It is important that this sequence be followed:

1. Objective Justification
2. Law
3. Gospel Absolution
4. Fruits of Repentance
 - 4.a. Law used as a rule or guide for sanctified Christian living
 - 4.b. Gospel used as the motivation and encouragement for such sanctified Christian living.
 - 4.c. Hopeful Solutions

If you begin to talk about changes in a person's life prior to working through repentance you may be encouraging work-righteous thinking in the mind of your client and you will be doing moralizing. This is why the sequence of the structure listed above in points one to four is so important. No matter what your secular method might be that you might use in place of Hopeful Solutions in connection with producing client change, to be counseling in a God-pleasing and Scriptural way, you must first apply Law to convict of sin in the Law section of the Repentance Model and then you must absolve with the Gospel in the Gospel section. Only then can you address the changes towards sanctified Christian living which your client, with God's help, will make.

With this axiom in our minds we begin to discuss some of the skills of Hopeful Solutions noted in the structure of a first session.

HOPEFUL SOLUTIONS COUNSELING: Assessment as intervention during the first session.

Note that what you are assessing here and what you are intervening in here is in the patterns and habits of your members. Many of these patterns and habits have been sinful in the past. Therefore as a fruit of repentance, you and your members desire to see them change these sinful patterns and habits. This is your work together with your members in the fruits of repentance section of the repentance model. While some of these skills can be helpful – the opening questions and scaling questions, for example – in earlier places in your counseling session, most of them are best used in the later parts of your session, after you have finished applying Law and Gospel and after you have heard contrition and spoken absolution. Here you are in the realm of fruits of repentance.

TRACK ONE – Exploring present and past exceptions and solutions (very usual track)

In Connection with Fruits of Repentance

Track One is the usual and normal way that Hopeful Solutions work is done. Sin has been confessed and is forgiven. You are still in session with your member and you both agree to examine the problem again to see what changes can be made so that the sinful pattern of their living may be changed to sanctified Christian living. They may even say to you, “We understand and believe that Jesus has forgiven our sins of Can you help us with ideas of how to change so that we don’t continue to think and act the way that we do?” They know the power of God’s Word. Their request does not diminish that power nor are they trying to circumvent the power of the Word. They are looking for practical suggestions to implement the change. But they are often also looking for very practical things that show them hope that the change can be made. So you begin to discuss Hopeful Solutions in connection with the Fruits of Repentance section of the Repentance Model.

a. A warning not to produce fruits driven by Law but by Gospel

So that your member doesn’t think that the advice that you give or that he or she may discover in therapy is the power that produces the change they want, you remind him or her that God is in control. It is by his grace and power that we make changes in our lives.

b. *Description of the problem in behavioral terms.*

b.1 *Use Hopeful Language*

Actually, you can begin to use hopeful language at the very beginning of your session. Here are some opening questions that are designed to accentuate hope.

■ Hopeful Opening Questions

- How can I help you with God's Word today?
- How can God's Word be a help to you today?
- How can you be helped by the Word of God today?
- What are you hoping to change?
- What are you hoping to be helped with God's Word today?
- What is your goal in coming here?
- What are you hoping to get from our time together today?

■ Use the past tense

Throughout the process of Hopeful Solutions work it is important that you refer to the problem in the past tense, using "were" and "have been" instead of "are" and "is."

Examples:

Pastor may say: Can you describe what went on between you and your son just before you said that you lost your temper and hit him so hard that you broke his nose? In order to explore ways for you and your son to communicate better I think that it is important for us to discuss what has been going on and the sequence of events that usually lead up to the arguments between the two of you getting out of hand.

Member: We are having so much trouble with our teenage son. We never know where he is. He just leaves the house without telling us where he is going and who he is going to be with. He is disrespectful and he goes with the wrong crowd. We don't know what to do. At times he is so depressed he just sits in his room. Then, "poof," he's gone and we don't know where he is.

Possible Responses:

- a. **Common** So, you are here because you are having trouble with your son.
- b. **Hopeful language** So, you are saying that there have been difficult times with your son and you wish they were different. Can you recall times when things do go differently?

- Demonstrating the expectation (hope) of change by using "yet," or "when" instead

of “if,” and using “will” instead of “would”

Examples:

Member: Not lately. (Pause.) I do remember once when we were together, he offered to help with the yard work.

Possible Responses:

a. Common It has been a long time since your son was not a problem and it took you a long time to remember.

b. Hopeful language When you think of the time he did help you, what was different about that? (Exception frame.)

- Depathologizing through relabeling; for depressed use “down in the dumps,” for panic attack use “feeling anxious, uncomfortable.” But, “sin” is still “sin.” Call sin by its name. If you depathologize by relabeling sin you are not helping your client face the terrible reality of his or her sin, you are confusing him or her if you call sin “a mistake in judgement,” or an “error.”

Examples:

a. Common You said he is so depressed that he just sits in his room.

b. Depathologizing You stated that at times he feels so hopeless that he thinks his only choice is to sit in his room. Are there times when he doesn’t feel so hopeless? (seeking an exception)

■ Normalizing

■ Continually feedback, “Of course,” “Naturally,” “Me too”

■ Be careful about the “Me too” stories. They can get too personal or they can easily get the session “off track.”

■ Be careful: Sin may seem normal, but don’t let normal mean acceptable.

■ Ask questions that presuppose change, emphasize exceptions, solutions, strengths, and hopes. The suggested “session-opening” questions above are some of these types of questions.

c. Exceptions to the problem are sought.

The chart on the next page shows the Hopeful Solutions Process. It is explained in the text which follows.

The Process of Hopeful Solutions

The sinful problem or pattern of acting, speaking or thinking.

(Or the mental disorder or addiction)

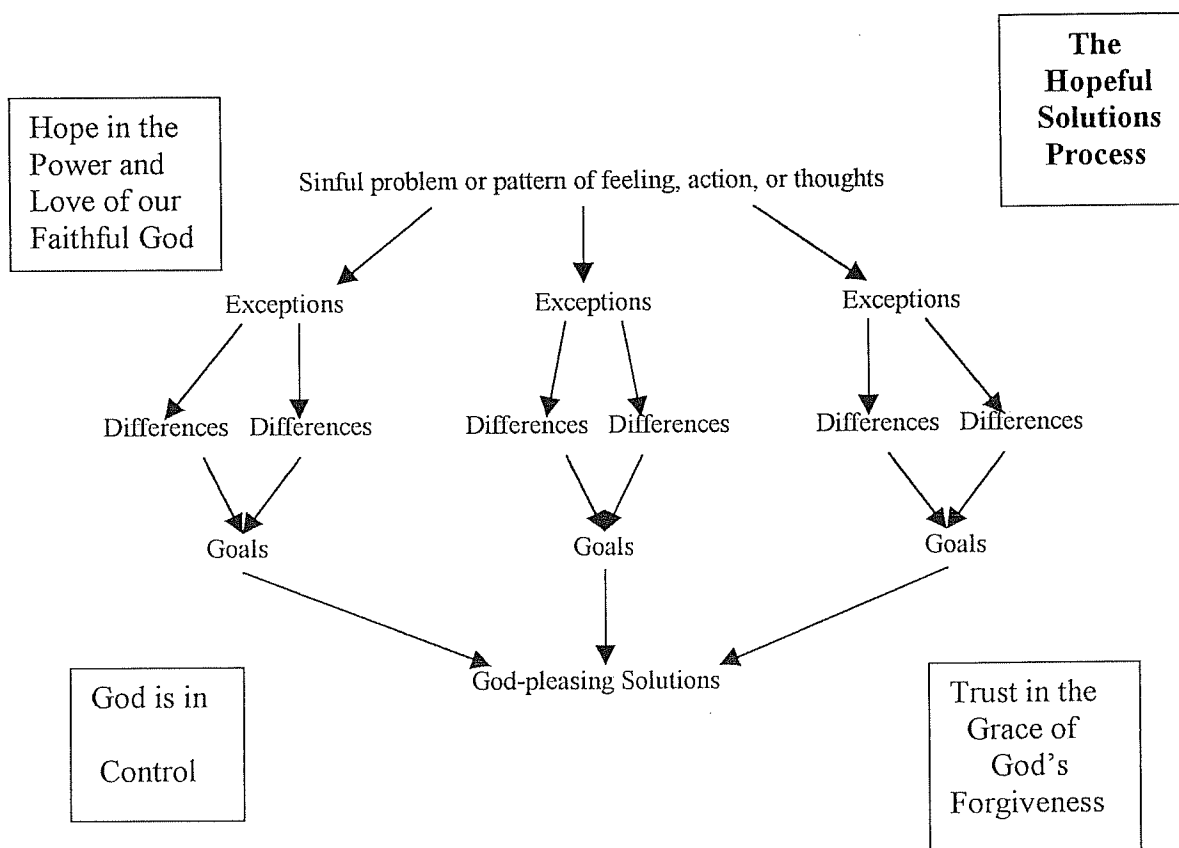
**Over-riding truth that impacts everything in the process:
God is in control. We trust in the power and love of our faithful God who has reconciled us
to himself in Christ.**

Search for Exceptions (times when the problem is not predominant)

Examine what is different about the exception times

The differences suggest small and realistic and attainable goals

The exceptions, differences, and goals offer hope for solutions



It is helpful and hopeful to find out when the problem does not happen. There will be key events or words or thoughts that happen when the exception happens – when the problem does not happen. You might ask: “On a scale of one to ten with one being almost never and ten being every waking hour, can each of you tell me how often you argue during the day?” “So there are times during your waking hours when the problem does not happen.” You want to explore with your member what made those exception times in the past when the problem did not happen different from the times in the past that the problem did happen.

These might be very new exceptions which occurred in the very recent past, even in the time between when your members called to make an appointment and when they came. You might ask: “In between the time when you called to make the appointment to come and now, how has your problem changed?” “What is different or what changed about the problem between the time when you made the phone call to make the appointment and now that you have actually come?” Very often thought patterns have changed, people have gotten serious about the problem, or people have seriously begun to communicate during this in-between time. You want to explore what is different and how your members can do more of what is different.

Exceptions can be recurring, happening again and again. They can be one time only exceptions from the past. They can be imagined exceptions for the future. We’ll talk more about these later.

Whenever you note an exception time when the problem did not or does not occur, remember to thank God with your client for those good times. Those exception times give them hope for expanding and lengthening the good times compared to the bad times in the future. Questions you might use to explore hopeful solution patterns in the past and bring them into the present and the future might be:

- “What is different about the times when..... (you are getting along, he shows you respect, you do have fun together, and so on)? “
- “What are you doing more of then?” Explore the sequence patterns (who does what and when?)
- “How do you get that to happen? What do each of you do differently?”
- “What difference does it make when.... (things go well)? What does that enable you to do?”
- When a member reports something which appears to be new or different, even if they place little emphasis upon it, ask “How is that different from the way you might have handled it... (one week, or one month, etc.) ago”
- Rediscovering forgotten solutions: “Have you ever had this difficulty in the past? How did you resolve it then? What would you need to do to get that to happen again?”

d. Goals are explored.

Goals are built off of the differences that are discovered about the exception times when the problem does not happen. Your member tells you that at the times when he can control his anger at his son he is usually thinking about how thankful he is to God that God gave him his son. You might say: “So, one of the differences about the times when you can control your anger and the times when you cannot control your anger is that you think about your son as a gift of God to you. How might it be helpful to you to do more of that?” “How often during the day could you schedule yourself to think about that?” “When would be the good times to do that?” “How would you do that?” “Can we use that as kind of a goal?” “How would you state this goal?” Your member may come up with a goal somewhat similar to this: “Each day at each meal and when I come home from work and when I go to bed and wake up I will say a short prayer of thanksgiving to God for giving me my son. Just prior to the times when I might expect to have a confrontation with my son, I will say the same prayer and think the same thoughts of thanksgiving to God for the gift of my son.”

Some suggestions regarding goal setting:

- Break goals into small steps: Ask – “What will be the very first sign that things are starting (continuing) to be on the right track?”
- Have clients describe what they want rather than what they don’t want.
- Have clients describe goals in behavioral and concrete terms.
- Make certain that the goals are realistic.

e. Consultation or planning break

This can be a helpful tool. The break should be about 5 minutes long and should occur when about 15 minutes are left in the session. If you plan to take a consultation or planning break it probably would be best to prepare your members for this as you begin your counseling sessions by telling them that you plan to take a break about 15 minutes before the session time is up. You will use the time to review what has been accomplished in the session and the five minutes or so that the planning break will last will give your members time to think about what has happened in the session and to think about what he or she wants to say in the remaining ten minutes of the session.

Suggestions for the planning break

Make sure that your member understands that you are taking the planning break to pray and meditate on what has happened in the session and to arrive at some plans for the future. Suggest to them that they might want to do the same thing during the break, or if several members are present that they might want to talk over what has been discussed thus far in the session.

Find a spot where you can be alone and pray a prayer of thanksgiving that you have the opportunity to help these members. Add a prayer for guidance. Then read over and answer the following questions. Your answers will provide positive reinforcement for your clients and may lead to messages that you want to use. Ask yourself:

- How can I remind my member about God's love and presence and power and forgiveness in his/her life?
- What can I say positively about my member which can provide a hopeful atmosphere?
- What things are already being done by my member that are working, that are hopeful, that are positive, or exceptional that I can highlight and encourage?
- What fears does my member have that I might want to support or remove?
- Does my member have fears about changing the sinful habitual patterns of his or her life that I need to normalize?
- How can I help my member give glory to God for the changing that is occurring in his or her life?
- If more than one person is present, how can I offer support from the Word for each individual?

Scaling Questions and Goals

Sometimes goals may be formed from scaling questions. The member is asked, "On a scale of one to ten with ten being absolutely all the time and one being never, how often would each of you say that you argue during the day?" One member may give a figure of five, the other may give a figure of seven. They might then agree on six. (They don't have to agree on any number, however.) You might ask, "What would be a realistic number to set as a goal that would show that you would be arguing less this week?" They might agree to try for a four. This is a very general non-specific goal and can only be a starting point to get you to a more specific goal. So, you might ask, "What things would you have to do, think, or work at, this week to lower the incidence of arguments from 60% to 40% of the time?" Here your member would be setting a measurable, timed, realistic, and specific goal.

Very often in marriage counseling or relationship counseling a member of the group is surprised by the answer another member of the group gives to the scaling question, "On a scale of one to ten how committed are you to making this relationship work?" Very often the person whom they view as the problem gives a high answer. "I am committed 100% to making this

work.” The surprised one will answer, “I would have expected you to answer a two or a three not a ten! You sure don’t show it!” You can explore this misperception and misreading with them. “How can you show him?” “What kinds of things would be signs or beginning indicators to you that she really means it – she is at a ten in her commitment to your relationship.” Always ask for the small, starting things that will be indicators. These are excellent areas of discussion for change in actions, attitudes, and words. The smaller the indicators of change towards the positive in the relationship, the greater the hope your members will have of attaining them. Change towards sanctified Christian living will not seem so overwhelming, even though they believe that God is helping them. They also will not be deluded into expecting perfection the first week of counseling. You keep assuring them that growth in sanctification is a reality with God’s help. You might say, “With God’s help, these small goals that you will work at this week are things we can build on for larger changes in the future. You will not be perfect in making these changes in sanctified Christian living. I am sure that God will bless your efforts and your relationship will improve as you work at these things.”

f. Feedback to members after the planning break

Thanksgiving to God -- A word about compliments

The first thing to remember about compliments is honesty. The second thing to note about a compliment that you might give your member is that an honest compliment, even about a small thing, is extremely valuable as an indicator of hope to your member.

Compliment your members by:

- Noting anything hopeful and worthwhile that the member is doing or thinking about doing in or out of the complaint or problem context (attending church, prayer, using God’s Word, etc.).
- Normalizing – “It is normal for you to feel fearful and concerned as you try to make these changes that will make your life better. Remember that God is with you.” Refer to appropriate Bible passage.

Matthew 28:20

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- Validating important issues. Tell them that it was good that they could identify as many of the important issues between them as they did. These are the specific things to ask God in prayer for help. These are the specific areas to work at in during the week and in the future.
- Praise and thank God as you compliment:
 “I am so thankful to God that he has led you to see the importance of getting help in this problem.” “I thank and praise God that he has led you to repent of your sin and to strive and plan and work at how you can amend (change) your sinful life to a more God-pleasing life. He will be with you to strengthen you. Remember his promise:
 Hebrews 13:4-5
God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

Directives – homework, tasks, etc.

This is assignment time. This is the time to be directive. The homework assignments for the week should be:

- From Scripture
 - Short
 - In keeping with the problem and the goals for solution
- Related to the intelligence level of the member
- Simple
- Repeated several times during the week
- Carefully and clearly explained
- Agreed to by the member.

Another homework assignment might be the hopeful solutions first session task:

- “Between now and the next time we meet, notice what’s happening in your life that you want to continue to happen.”
- Or, “Note when things are going better and what you are doing differently at those times.”
- Have your member keep track of these times and the differences on paper and bring them in for discussion at your next session.

The next time that you meet, begin by following up on their homework assignments.

Explore what they learned from the Scripture they studied. Remind them of the task of looking for the things that are going better and what they are doing different at those times. Discuss

these items with them at the beginning of your next session with them..

TRACK TWO -- When there are no exceptions, ask difference and future-oriented questions.

Sometimes members cannot come up with times when they feel good or feel better or are more at peace with themselves or each other. In other words, they say that there are no exceptions. The problem is always there. At such times you might ask

Difference Questions

- What is different about the times when the problem is less intense/frequent/or shorter in duration?
- What is different about the times when something good comes out of the problem? (you two actually do sit down and talk about the problem because you are both so frustrated by it)
- When your members talk about the complaint or problem and don't want to move from their talk about the problem to talk about hopeful solutions, then ask: "How did you get that argument to stop?" "How do the arguments stop?" "How do you start functioning again?" "What enables you to get up and get to work in the morning?"
- "What is different about those times from when you can't function, get up, etc.?"

Future-oriented questions

These are the "big change" or "miracle" questions. These questions call upon the member to imagine a time when the problem would be gone and to note what would be different about how he or she feels or how they are getting along. It is from the differences that you begin to form the small goals from which the pattern for change (fruits of faith) is constructed.

- "If you went to sleep tonight and a big change happened so that when you woke up tomorrow your problem disappeared, what would be different?"
- "Are there pieces of this change already happening? What are they?"
- "What could be one or two small things you could do next week to bring you a bit closer to your big change?" Here you are moving towards setting a goal?
- "What would others notice about you that would be different the day after the big change happened and you no longer had the problem?"

- “What would your spouse or children say that you will be doing differently after the big change happens?”
- “If I were a fly on the wall of your house (at work, in school) what would I notice that was different in your life after the big change happened?”

Again, the importance of finding the exceptions is to note the differences between when the problem is there and when it is not. These differences help set goals. Building upon the comforting hope of being right with God with our sins forgiven and the joyful hope of the eternal presence of the Holy Spirit with us, this exception, differences, small goals, to solution sequence is a sequence that is hopeful.

TRACK THREE – If there are no exceptions, no differences, and no vision about the future without the complaint or problem, then trace the complaint sequence.

Seem confused and note the outcome

It won't take any acting skill at all to seem confused at this point. You are! Use that

confusion to help them find a hopeful solution. You might say:

- “I just am really confused. You are repentant. You say you forgive each other. Yet, the problem still persists. What do you think needs to happen?”
“Should we review the Scripture?”
- Note that this is a turning point in the session.
 - You may retrace your interview to review the Scriptures or to explore more areas about Law and Gospel, repentance and forgiveness issues.
 - You may have to redefine the goals you and your client have set.

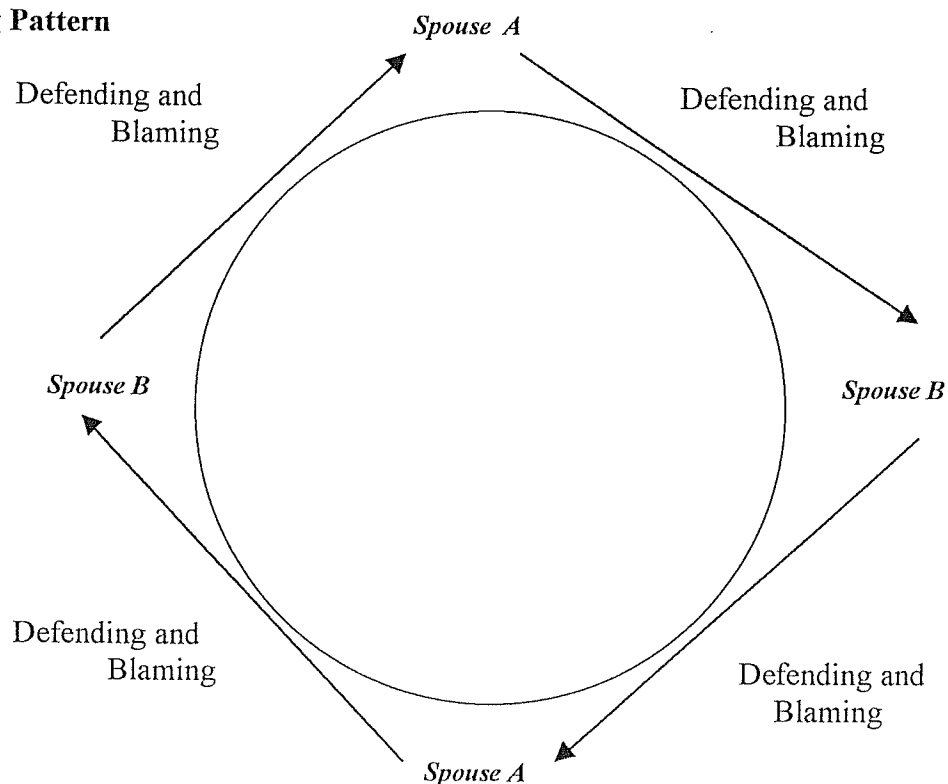
Ask about the complaint patterns and explore perceptions and behavior for a baseline. This serves as data to design a pattern interruption homework task.

A pattern interruption homework task is something your member can do at home that breaks the pattern of the problem. Very often if the pattern of thinking or acting and reacting can be changed, the problem can be eased.

- Assess your members perceptions or frames
 “How do you see the problem?”
 “What is your best guess as to the reason this is happening?”
- Assess behavioral aspects of the complaint sequence: Ask them to give you a description as if they had video-taped the problem going on.
 Ask for a recent example of **what** happens when the problem occurs. (Do **not** ask about **why**.
 Identify the **sequence** of events surrounding the problem.
 “Then what happens?” **Keep on asking this until you can say:**
 “This is the pattern as I see it, is that correct?”
 “How can you break the pattern – not do – or do things differently?”

An example of a rather typical blaming pattern follows. It can be very helpful to your members if you chart this pattern out for them on a chalkboard or newsprint easel, then you can use it again at further sessions.

The Blaming Pattern



You might ask: “This seems to be the pattern of arguing you did. Is that correct?”

“Let’s explore for solutions.” You explore for exceptions; for times when the couple is not in the pattern. You will ask about what makes those non-pattern times different. The differences will lead you to your goals. The process gives your member hope.

Summary

Hope that is founded upon Christ crucified and arisen is not ephemeral or nebulous. It is as sure and certain as Christ is sure and certain. It is as lasting and enduring as is He who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Hopeful Solutions is a process of questioning that is especially helpful in the Fruits of Repentance Section of the Repentance Model. It identifies problem exceptions to find differences about the times when the problem does not happen. These differences form the basis for developing goals for Christian living. These goals must be in agreement with God’s Law. It is a hopeful process of counseling.

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