***Biblical Counseling with Non-Christians***

**Eternal Hope for Earthly Struggles:**

**“Soul-u-tion-Focused” Gospel Conversations**

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**Presentation Focus**

God’s Word tells us to

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; making the most of every opportunity.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasons with salt,

so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:5-6).

In 1 Peter 3:15 we read,

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

In the biblical counseling world we have different convictions about and answers to the questions: “Should we do *biblical counseling* with non-Christians,

or, should we only do *evangelism* with non-Christians?”

“If we do counsel non-Christians,

*should* we counsel non-Christians differently than Christians? If so, why? How?”

This session uses 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:5-6; and other passages and biblical principles as a foundation for thinking through these important questions theologically and practically.

**It then shares** **a working model of**

**“soul-u-tion focused” gospel conversations with non-Christians**.

***Biblical Counseling with Non-Christians***

**Eternal Hope for Earthly Struggles: “Soul-u-tion-Focused” Gospel Conversations**

**Introduction: Some Real Life Scenarios**

* A Gospel Conversation on a Plane…
* A Gospel Conversation in My Pastoral Office…
* Your Real Life Examples…
* Your Convictions: “Should we do *biblical counseling* with non-Christians, or, should we only do *evangelism* with non-Christians?” If we do counsel non-Christians, *should* we counsel non-Christians differently than we counsel Christians? If so, why? How?”

**4 Biblical Compass Points for Biblical Counseling**

***Parakaletic* Biblical Counseling for the Evils We Have Suffered**

***“God Is Good Even When Life Is Bad”***

 **Gospel Compass Point # 1: Sustaining—***“It’s Normal to Hurt”*

 **Gospel Compass Point # 2: Healing—***“It’s Possible to Hope”*

***Nouthetic* Biblical Counseling for the Sins We Have Committed**

***“God Is Gracious Even When I Am Sinful”***

 **Gospel Compass Point # 3: Reconciling—***“It’s Horrible to Sin, but Wonderful to Be Forgiven”*

**Gospel Compass Point # 4: Guiding—***“It’s Supernatural to Mature”*

**4 Biblical Compass Points for “Soul-u-tion-Focused” Gospel Conversations**

**Gospel Conversations for the Evils Non-Christians Have Suffered**

***“God Is There; He Cares; & He Is Good Even When Life Is Bad & Seems Hopeless”***

 **Gospel Conversation Compass Point # 1: Sustaining—***“It’s Normal to Hurt in a Fallen World”*

 **Gospel Conversation Compass Point # 2: Healing—***“It’s Excruciating to Hurt Without Hope”*

**Gospel Conversations for the Sins Non-Christians Have Committed**

***“God Is a God of Holy Love Who Judges Our Sin in Christ or in Us”***

 **Gospel Conversation Compass Point # 3: Reconciling—***“It’s Destructive to Sin, Presently and Eternally Horrible to Be Unforgiven, but Wonderful to Be Forgiven in Christ”*

**Gospel Conversation Compass Point # 4: Guiding—***“It’s Impossible to Experience True, Lasting Change Without Supernatural Power”*

**I. Weighty Implications to Prayerfully Ponder and Biblically Examine**

* What do the Scriptures say about how Christians relate to non-Christians?
* Should every interaction with non-Christians be “directly” and “overtly” evangelistic?
* What examples do the Scriptures provide about how Christians help non-Christians who are suffering?
* What examples do the Scriptures provide about how Christians help non-Christians who are dealing with sin issues or relational conflict?
* What do the Scriptures teach about the dynamics and diagnosis of the unsaved soul?
* What examples do the Scriptures offer concerning Christians interacting with non-Christians regarding matters of the soul?
* *Should* we counsel non-Christians differently than we counsel Christians? If so, why? How?

 **A. Possible Implications of *Refusing to Counsel* *or Meet with* the Non-Christian**

* Am I losing an opportunity for “pre-evangelism?” For evangelism?
* Do they end up turning to godless/secular counsel?
* Am I communicating that Christianity is only relevant for the life to come, but not for this life? Am I communicating that Christianity is only relevant for “spiritual” matters, but not for “real life”?

 **B. Possible Implications of *Evangelizing but Not Counseling* *with* the Non-Christian**

* They quit meeting with you; you lose an opportunity to impact them now and for eternity.
* Their struggles with “lesser gods” (idols of the heart) are ignored and become a roadblock to facing issues of their relationship to the true God and they never come to Christ.
* They come to Christ!

 **C. Possible Implications of *Non-Evangelistic* *Counseling* *with* the Non-Christian**

* *Deuteronomy 8:1-13*: Will I assist someone to become a more self-sufficient sinner? Am I helping someone to not need God, or not sense their need for God?
* *Acts 3:6, 16-19*: Am I helping someone to find temporary “fixes-in-the-flesh” (“solution-focused” counseling), but failing to help them to experience lasting heart change (“soul-u-tion-focused” biblical counseling)? Am I helping someone to live somewhat better now (“solution-focused” counseling), but end up for all eternity without Christ?

 **D. Possible Implications of Providing *Biblical Counseling* through *“Soul-u-tion-Focused” Gospel Conversations with* the Non-Christian**

* Seeds of gospel truth and love are planted in their souls.
* They hear biblical “soul-u-tions” while applying wise “solutions” to their issues.
* They come to Christ!

**II. Practical Matters in Offering Biblical Counseling for Non-Christians**

 **A. Be Ethical and Honest: Agree Together on What You Are Doing, How, Why, and If…**

 1. Listen/Hear What They Are Asking for and Why

 2. Discuss What You Are Offering, How, and Why

 3. Be Honest About Your Convictions Regarding “Solutions” Versus “Soul-u-tions”

 4. Make a Collaborative Decision If/How to Proceed

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; making the most of every opportunity.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasons with salt,

so that you may know how to answer everyone”

(Colossians 4:5-6).

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”

(1 Peter 3:15).

 **B. Be Equipped: 2 Biblical Counseling *Character* Issues in Counseling Non-Christians**

 1. In My Heart, Am I Revering Christ as Lord?

 2. Am I Living a Life of Hope in Christ Alone?

 **C. Be Equipped: 8 Biblical Counseling *Competency* Issues in Counseling Non-Christians**

 1. Am I Equipped to Offer Wise Gospel Conversations?

 2. Am I Equipped to Offer Opportunistic Gospel Conversations?

 3. Am I Equipped to Offer Grace Gospel Conversations?

 4. Am I Equipped to Offer Salty Gospel Conversations?

 5. Am I Equipped to Offer Prepared/Responsive Gospel Conversations?

 6. Am I Equipped to Offer Hope-Giving Gospel Conversations?

 7. Am I Equipped to Offer Gentle Gospel Conversations?

 8. Am I Equipped to Offer Respectful Gospel Conversations?

**III. One Working/Developing Model for Biblical Counseling with Non-**

 **Christians: *“Soul-u-tion-Focused” Gospel Conversations***

**Gospel Conversations for the Evils Non-Christians Have Suffered**

***“God Is There; He Cares; & He Is Good Even When Life Is Bad & Seems Hopeless”***

 **A. Sustaining: *“It’s Normal to Hurt in a Fallen World”***

* **John 4/Jesus As a Model**

 1. Explore and Enter Your Non-Christian Counselee’s “Level 1” Story of Suffering (What Is Happening *to* Them)

* “Data Collection Leading to Soul Connection…”

 2. Empathize with and Embrace Your Non-Christian Counselee’s Pain

* “What does it feel like to try to face loss without Christ to turn to?”

 3. Expose Your Non-Christian Counselee to Jesus as a Man of Sorrows

* Tell your story of facing suffering face-to-face with Christ…
* Explore Jesus’s story… Isaiah 53:3-5; Matthew 26:36-46; John 11; Hebrews 4:15-16

 **B. Healing: *“It’s Excruciating to Hurt Without Hope”***

* **1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 1:3-9; John 14:1; John 16:33 As Models**

 1. Explore and Enter Your Non-Christian Counselee’s “Level 2” Story of Suffering (What Is Happening *in* Them🡪Thirst/Despair/Meaninglessness/Hopelessness…).

* “What does it feel like to face earthly hurts/thirsts/despair without eternal hope?”

 2. Encourage Your Non-Christian Counselee to Explore Hope’s Source: Expose Them to the Father of Compassion and God of All Comfort and to Jesus Who Overcomes the World

* 1 Peter 3:15: Tell your story of finding hope in Christ…
* Explore the Father’s story and Jesus’s story: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; John 14:1; John 16:33

 **C. Reconciling: “*It’s Destructive to Sin, Presently and Eternally Horrible to Be Unforgiven, but Wonderful to Be Forgiven in Christ”* (Paradise🡪Desert🡪Thirst🡪Cisterns)**

**Gospel Conversations for the Sins Non-Christians Have Committed**

***“God Is a God of Holy Love Who Judges Our Sin in Christ or in Us”***

* **Proverbs 1:30-33; Jeremiah 2:12-13; Matthew 7:3-5; James 4:1-4; Luke 15 As Models**

1. Listen to Your Non-Christian Counselee’s Story of the Destructiveness, Selfishness, and Futility of Sin

* Proverbs 1:30-33: “Where are they eating the fruit of their schemes?”
* Jeremiah 2:12-13: “Where are they digging broken cisterns that hold no water?”
* Matthew 7:3-5 and James 4:1-4: “Where are blind to the reality that they are eating and devouring others?”

 2. Listen Together to God’s Story of Holy Love (Justice/Grace): Romans 2:4

1. Enter Their Unforgiven Story: *Unforgiven:* “We all have it comin’ kid!”
2. Examine Possible Sources of Guilt Removal (Broken Cistern or Spring of Living Water?)
* Hear their story of “penance” (Works Righteousness)
* Luke 15: Tell Your story of homecoming…
* Luke 15: Explore Jesus’ story of welcoming sinners home…

 **D. Guiding: “*It’s Impossible to Experience True, Lasting Change Without Supernatural Power”***

* **Matthew 12:43-44; Romans 7:14-25; Ephesians 5-6; Romans 6-8 As Models**

1. Explore Your Non-Christian Counselee’s History of Trying to Change

* “How is their story like Paul’s story in Romans 7?”
* Revisit: “Solution-focused” versus “Soul-u-tion-focused”: “I Can Do All Things Through Self (Cistern)” or “I Can Do All Things Through Christ (Spring)”

 2. Examine Paul’s Struggle to Change and Paul’s Conclusion: Romans 7:24-25

 3. Expose How Christ Changes People: Romans 6-8; Ephesians 5-6

* Share your story of progressive sanctification in/through/for Christ…
* Share Jesus’ story of changing people and then empowering them to change…Romans 6-8; Ephesians 5-6

**Conclusion**

**Jesus *the* Way to Real Life Today and Eternal Life Forever**

* Connect Their Suffering (Thirsts) and Their Sin (Cisterns) to the Savior (Spring of Living Water)
* Whether Sustaining, Healing, Reconciling, or Guiding; Jesus Is the Only Way, Truth, and Life—Their Only Spring of Living Water
* John 2-4: Journey with Them to Jesus for Wisdom for Living: Jesus Is the Wisest Person Who Ever Lived
* John 6:68: Journey with Them to Jesus for Salvation from Sin: “To whom shall we turn? You alone have the words of life!”
* John 7:37-44: Journey with Them to Jesus for the Quenching of Their God-Thirst
* John 10:10: Journey with Them to Jesus for Sanctification and Abundant Life: Jesus offers us eternal life forever and an abundant life now…