

# Counseling seminar (Andy Farmer)

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[ 0 : 00 ] me, they're improving me, they're coming because they want to care for other people. And that's very exciting. Just to let you know, I've got a number of liquids up here, so I have my water, so I'll be hitting all these throughout.

I have my cup of coffee, and then this is blood because I'm a vampire. And I have to have it or else I start looking for people. So that's a fruit smoothie that I requested.

And Jen graciously brought it to me. So what I hope tonight is if we do this right, there won't be anything we talk about that you could not yourself turn around and act on and practice tomorrow. So this is not a let me dive into the deep end of complex things and try to talk you through people with multiple personality disorders, something like that.

Although if you're dealing with that, please feel free to ask a question and we'll dialogue. I want this to be as participatory as you would like it to be. So if you have a question, let's do it like this.

[ 1 : 20 ] We'll take some time at the end of each session. We'll do two sessions. And dialogue, questions, anything. And that can include if you're working, if you're trying to help somebody and you're just wondering how do I apply this to that, feel free to ask that question.

Now, my general rule of thumb is a lot of times you're asking these questions about people who are either in the room or that other people might know.

So I generally say, if you have a question about somebody you're actually ministering to, if they're female, call them Betty.

And if they're male, call them Chuck. So you say, my friend Betty. My roommate Betty. My husband Chuck.

Whatever. But, and let's try not to expose people. So if you need to change details so that people don't get exposed. But I do want it to be as practical as possible.

[ 2 : 22 ] And this may be, you know, beyond the church. It may be, you may be family members. It may be somebody you're interacting with at work. Other contacts at school. So, so it will be helpful for you and meaningful for me if we get some dialogue here too.

So I'm not going to push it. But what I would say is that if we have, if you have specific questions about something I say that's confusing, very possible, and it would be helpful to get that cleared up at that time, just raise your hand and I'll stop and we'll deal with that.

So, so that, because chances are other people are confused about it as well. Otherwise, if you just sort of have something, oh, I want to ask about this, we'll just, you know, just jot it down or remember it and then we'll just deal with it at the end of each session so we don't kind of get off track.

So, this material in various ways is called from stuff I teach to our pastors at our Sovereign Grace Pastors College.

As I talk about there, even using the word counseling for what I do is problematic.

[ 3 : 32 ] I heard Paul Tripp say one time that the idea that we counsel people out of problems is not found anywhere in the Bible.

Which is kind of awkward because that's why I have a job. One way I try to validate my ministry is to say I'm doing biblical counseling.

But even calling it biblical counseling has its challenges because what I can do, if I'm not careful, is talk people out of problems using the Bible.

And that delivers me back to the same issue, the idea that I think people change because we can talk people out of their problems.

But we do that, don't we? We talk to people as if our words should make a difference.

[ 4 : 41 ] As if what we have to say should be life-changing or at least make a difference in what they do. A good question to reflect on is how many times in this past month have you been in a situation where you were trying to talk somebody out of their problem?

You don't have to raise your hand or count, but just think about different contexts you've been in. Perhaps, oh maybe, somebody was trying to help you by talking you out of your problem. Think about it, your friend maybe, a spouse. If you have kids, how many times have you tried to talk your kids out of a problem? Someone you're trying to help in the church, someone you're trying to help at work.

We revert to counseling because we trust our words to do the work. We trust our insights, our information, our persuasiveness, our earnestness.

Just think about this past year and the conversations you may have had over social distancing or masks or race issues or politics.

[ 6 : 06 ] How many times have you or somebody tried to talk you into their way of thinking by throwing information at you that they think should revolutionize your mind?

How many times have you been tempted to respond with your own body of information and you end up with two people trying to figure out whose information is more compelling?

That's the challenge we have when we think that the answer to helping people is with our words.

When we do that, do people change?

Even if people respond to our words, do they go home as changed people? Those are the issues we have to face.

If we're going to talk about this idea and you're in a seminar, I may just be talking you into leaving. Well, he doesn't believe in it. And that's not the goal. But the issue I want to deal with is I want to get us away from the idea that the focus has to be on how well we talk or what information we have to share.

[ 7 : 23 ] Perhaps you've experienced what has been called unsought counsel. Like this past week, I was turning from the left-hand lane toward the right-hand lane and didn't notice a car in my blind spot.

And that car, somewhat ungraciously, through their horn, counseled me that I was doing wrong. It was unsought.

I wasn't asking for it. But we experience unsought counseling for people. People unload on us.

People just turn on us. People will say things to us that we find is unhelpful.

And so we still are faced with when we do that, when people give us unsought counseling, what are they doing? They're still trying to change our behavior. They're trying to make us conform to what they think we should do.

And that's the danger of over-trusting counseling as a technique. So the first thing we're going to do is a thought exercise tonight. You may have noticed over the past ten years or so that there is a...

[ 8 : 41 ] It could be described as a pandemic of superheroes in our culture. Think of all the movies, all the shows, all the...

Where superheroes... It's an infestation. We have an infestation of superheroes in our culture right now. People love superheroes because what you have is somebody who in some ways can seem ordinary, but they bring something extraordinary to the table that makes a difference.

So the thought exercise is this. What if you wanted to be a super counselor?

What would it take? What kind of superpowers would you need to be a super counselor? So here are some suggestions. If I'm thinking about being a super counselor, what are the things that might be helpful for me?

One is, if I'm a Christian, it would be great to have a direct line of communication with God where I could access all the knowledge and wisdom that could be needed in any counseling situation.

[ 10 : 01 ] In other words, if I interacted with you, I would know everything I could possibly need to know about you and about your problem and your circumstances.

That would be a counseling superpower. Another one might be, if I could actually see into your soul and be able to sort out all the things you're feeling and thinking.

I could organize the mess in your life. That would be a superpower. What if I was a counselor who had an encyclopedic knowledge of everything that has ever happened to you and how that interplays with your brain chemistry and your unconscious thoughts and your decisions?

And I could make sense of you over your entire life. That would be a superpower. What about if I had the gift of prayer that I could pray for you?

I could pray for your cancer. I could pray for your depression. I could pray for your fears. And it would instantly be dealt with. That would be a superpower.

[11:18] What would happen if I could be everywhere all the time, instantaneously available to you, 24-7, ready to talk, pray, whatever it took, you never had to deal with me not being available?

That would be a superpower. What if I had all that? Would I be a super counselor? I might be, or I might be nothing.

That's the point that Paul is driving at in 1 Corinthians 13 when he begins this way. If I speak in the tongue of men and angels but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, kind.

[12:42] It does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. So just a few conceptual quotes about this passage which we'll spend our time in this session dealing with. 1 Corinthians is a letter known for Paul addressing people who had an inordinate love and pride in spiritual gifts and were using them in a fleshly way.

And if you will, if you read that letter, you recognize the first thing Paul does is commend giftedness and then he addresses the improper use of gifts.

And so this is a context where people were enamored with superpowers in the way they lived their lives.

[13:58] In chapter 12 preceding this, you know that Paul, after he has addressed their fleshly focus on gifts, he begins to, he talks about the gifts and he sets them in proper order.

These are necessary. This is necessary for us to be the body. We need the gifts. Left you think you can be a giftless church. Left you think you can be cessationist in the way you understand gifts.

This is necessary for the church. But then in 1 Corinthians 13, he transitions, I'll show you a better way. And so then he does something remarkable.

He takes those gifts and he expresses them in their extreme form. If you had all this to the end, but have not love, it means nothing.

Hyper gifts, apart from love, mean nothing. And the interesting thing, if you notice here, is there's a contrast between verses 1 and 3 and verses 4 through 8, which is Paul is talking verses 1 through 3 about things that nobody will ever have and say this means nothing.

[15:11] And then he says, he gives you a list of things that everybody can do and says this means everything. There's nothing in 4 through 8 there that you and I can't do as believers.

It takes no extraordinary skill or maturity to be patient or kind. Isn't that a beautiful thing? To be truly effective, we don't need to be extraordinary.

We can be ordinary people. So there's a question we need to answer and that's this. Why does Paul say it's better to love than to be a super counselor?

Why is it better? Well, I think to understand that, we have to understand Paul's appeal ultimately to the law of God and Christ.

That he is talking about something that Jesus said this about. What is the one thing most needed?

[16:22] Jesus was asked. What do you need most in this life? You don't need these gifts. You don't need to keep the law. You don't need to do all these things.

What is the one thing? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. That's why this is important because this is where Jesus places the emphasis.

Jesus places the emphasis not on giftings but on love. And so all Paul's doing is applying it then to the Corinthians.

Why is this? Because authentic ministry of any kind occurs at the intersection between loving God and loving others. Where loving God and loving others happens is where we do ministry.

If I say I love God but do not love my neighbor, I have not love. If I try to love my neighbor without loving God from whom all love comes from, I'm not truly loving my neighbor.

[17:29] So they're the intersection. We live, brothers and sisters, at the intersection in our ministry of loving God and loving others. If we're going to effectively help other people, we need to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength.

If we're going to effectively love God, we need to be committed to loving other people. It's not optional. God will bless ministry that we do out of love for Him and love others.

No one will ever be truly helped by us if we offer them counsel that doesn't have as its primary goal their love for God and love for others.

We're not fixing problems. We're not making people different. The goal is always very simple. How can I help my brother love God and love others?

It's a wonderful thing because you have complex people who need a simple answer. For our ministry, whether it's serving or giving or speaking to others, it has to be grounded in love.

[18:47] For this reason, the word I tend to use is personal ministry. That's what I call what I do. Someone comes to me and says, I understand you're the counseling pastor, which I'm not. I just oversee our quality control of the counseling we do as pastors.

I'm a pastor. That's what I do. All of our pastors counsel people. It's part of our job. It's part of our calling. But when someone comes and says, I understand you're a pastor who does counseling.

Can you counsel me? You will never hear me say, yes, I'll counsel you. I'll say, hey, let's get together. I'm doing everything I can to disconnect what I do from counseling.

Because counseling comes embedded with all manner of unbiblical assumptions about my role and their role in the process. I was telling someone today, someone, and this, I don't think you should all this, I never schedule multiple appointments.

You've heard people say, let's get together like once a week for like say the next two months or whatever it is. I never do that. I never do that. I end every session with, so, how'd it go?

[20:10] I guess, okay. You want to do it next week? Okay. And I've done that with some people for years. Not always next week, but I never, why? Because I don't want people to be, to be, people to number one, to be dependent on frequency of meetings or that I'm essential to their, to their dealing with their problem.

I don't want myself to feel essential to the problem and I want to come alongside them as in their, in their life. I don't want to build them into the way I want to do ministry.

And so it's okay to say, listen, let's get together a few times. That's great. But there's something in the nature of therapeutic counseling that is, we've got to have multiple sessions because we're working problems.

that starts to move us away from the primary goal of loving God and loving others. So, what we're going to do here is figure out what ways can we apply this passage to how we help other people.

And I'm just going to break it down sort of phrase by phrase and we're going to walk through it and hopefully it's helpful to you. So let's begin. Love is patient. In other words, love is long-suffering.

There's all these words here that are very rich in biblical meaning we're not going to unpack.

[21:26] But love suffers long. An implication of that is this. Loving ministry, loving personal ministry doesn't set a timeline for anybody's change.

We have a great tendency to sort of say it like this. We don't mean it but we kind of say it like this. I'll invest my time this way as long as I'm seeing a certain amount of change in you.

And we negotiate how much commitment we're willing to make based on how much change they're willing to give us. Now we don't do that necessarily in our thinking but that's implied in how we try to help people.

We have an agenda that requires somebody to change for us to be willing to make the investment in their lives. So if we're patient we recognize that my agenda for your change is kind of irrelevant because the only agenda that matters for your change is God's agenda.

I may repeat some of these things a couple times but they just come to mind. This is one thing pastors really struggle with and you may struggle with it too. When someone comes to you and they bring a problem they say, listen, can I talk about something?

[22:43] And they bring that problem to you. You may be like me where you sort of feel like boom, the problem is now at my doorstep. I gotta fix it. I gotta solve it. I'm the terminal answer to their problem.

But that's not the way life works. They just happen to run into me. Right? Maybe they were directed to me. Maybe they just felt vulnerable when I was there and they opened up their lives.

The way life is happening is they're on a path and we intersect them at a certain point. There's no guarantee that we're really supposed to be part of their solution. So why do we feel the responsibility to make them change because we are now investing in them?

No, we're just meant to be part of God's process in some way. So we want to make sure that our orientation to people is not with an expectation of change based on our investment.

Second of all, loving ministry, if it's patient, endures the fruit of someone's sin. And that can be hard.

[ 23 : 52 ] Paul Tripp said it like this, in personal ministry, the sin of the person you are helping will eventually be revealed in your relationship. You have these quotes there.

If you are ministering to an angry person, at some point, that anger will be directed at you. If you're helping a person who struggles with trust, at some point, she will distrust you.

A manipulative person will seek to manipulate you. A depressed person will tell you he tried everything you've suggested and it didn't work. You can't stand next to a puddle without eventually being splashed by its mud.

So if we're going to move toward people in personal ministry, we have to move toward them with the idea that I'm going to need to be patient because this is not going to be a smooth ride in a lot of cases.

And when we do that, we find that we're really motivated by love. A second, love is kind. I'll say it like this, loving ministry smiles.

[ 24 : 58 ] It doesn't have a game face. My first real opportunity to do what I would call formal personal ministry, I was leading a small group before I became a pastor.

Very new leading the group and there was a man in the group who was I think an unbeliever and he was dating a single mom in the church who was a believer and he was a nice guy but he was kind of rough and he basically, he was brash and he would say anything and everything and he was intimidating.

And so, I felt like I needed to talk to him about the fact that he was involved in this person's life and it was creating challenges for her and her kids and she was asking me to kind of help with that.

And so, I set up an appointment with him and at the time I was actually working in commercial real estate so I had a suit on and I had an office and so I thought I'll get him into the office and I'll do a power play.

Now, that wasn't really the way I was processing it but I feared him. I didn't want his brashness to come out at me. And so, he came in and I had him sit down across the desk from me so every possible power move I could produce I put into play.

[ 26 : 28 ] I had my suit on. It was my, so it was my turf in my arrangement and here he is and I, and I had on this game face. My face was really stern.

It was, because I was, because I geared myself up to confront him. And so, I kind of start with my spiel which I'd rehearsed and, and like, like, a minute into it he just said, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. What is this? Well, this isn't you. And he just, he just, and it ended up being a good conversation because he was gracious when I wasn't.

Because he was kind when I wasn't. He said, what do you want me to know? And I said, well, listen, man, I just feel like that you're not aware of how vulnerable. And we just started talking and it really turned into a good conversation.

But he had to confront the fact that I was having a, I was, I was mostly protecting myself. I wasn't being kind to him. That's happened multiple times. There's so many times in my life I've had to call people back and say, listen, or, or grab them on a Sunday morning, listen, I think I was, I was impatient with you.

[ 27 : 38 ] I don't think I was kind to you. We need to be willing to do that if we're truly kind. So we don't want to have a game face. We, again, one of the things I did, I set opposite of him.

And one of the things that we learned in counseling class was our goal in counseling, using that terminology, is not to sit across from somebody and look at a problem, but try to figure out how do we get on the same side of the table so we can look at problems the same way.

How do I get on, how can I come over to your side of the table? How can I, that's, that's kind. I don't want to look at it from my perspective and try to get you to see it from my perspective.

It doesn't mean that we're necessarily going to agree, but if we can get on the same side of the table, maybe we can actually talk about it in a way that's helpful. And this is important. Loving ministry doesn't make promises it can't keep.

This often happens when you have people and you're, you're, you're administering somebody who is, I would call a difficult person, a person who may be, let me give you a scenario, maybe you're, you're familiar with this.

[ 28 : 56 ] Sometimes we call them needy people, they're emotionally needy, they seem to, they seem to have a, have a bottomless well of need for, for input, for care, for attention.

And, and so what will often happen is a person who's got those kind of struggles, no matter where they're coming from, that tendency will come into a church environment or a fellowship environment and will seek out people who have mercy tendencies, people who are merciful.

And they'll let, they'll, they'll latch on to a merciful person. And because that merciful person initially cares, they, they let that happen. which is, which at some point is okay.

But then the merciful person begins to feel responsible. And the person wants them to feel responsible. And they'll say things like, I don't, I've never had a friend like you.

I don't know what I would do if you weren't in my life. For, for, for once in my life, I feel like I finally have somebody who knows me.

[ 30 : 06 ] So what happens is you're there and then you begin to recognize you're over your head. And now they, and now it's just you. You realize all the other people who were kind of there initially in that group have all kind of stepped aside and said, you go girl.

And, and, and so you're there and you recognize this is starting to swallow you whole. and so then you pull back and find various ways to try to manage them back into the group or, or separate or change your number or something.

And that comes across to them as massive rejection. I, I made myself vulnerable to you and what did you do? You rejected me. And then there's an explosion and then they disappear.

And then they retreat. And you're left with what happened. And they're left with a cycle that's going to start again.

It's a cycle. It's a cycle. It's a rejection cycle. And we in good intentions play into it. Why? Because we promise ourselves, we promise ourselves to them in ways we can't deliver.

[ 31 : 21 ] We can't be that. We become functional Jesus to them. We replace their need for God with us. Why? Because it can make us feel good to be that needed.

Number two, we can, we can overemphasize the value of our care and actually undermine our understanding of the body of Christ by letting them attach to individuals.

People who have that tendency have a difficult time in social relationships. You'll see, you'll hear people say things like, well, I don't like superficial. I only want to be deep.

If you're here and you don't like superficial, learn to like it. Superficial is where you build bridges.

Superficial is where true trust is built. None of us like superficial. Although, I like superficial. A lot of guys like superficial. We can live our whole lives superficial. Not everybody.

[ 32 : 27 ] But, but there is a danger to think, I just don't like superficial. I only want depth. Because with depth becomes, becomes premature expectation and premature dependence.

So we want to let, we want relationships, whether they're, they're friendships or just ministry relationships, develop on a path that allows us to have space to, to, to, to be close and not to be close and, and be in groups and be together and, and not always interact.

those kind of things are necessary for any good relationship, particularly a, a ministry relationship. Another thing can happen in this kind of a situation and you may have experienced this as well. It sometimes happens when people are struggling with things like, like, addictions or life controlling problems.

Their, their life is like this. If you watch them live their life, it's just all over the map, right? They're just, you know, I don't know where, I don't know what they're doing.

And what they really want us to do is follow wherever they go. They want us just to run as fast as they're running and follow wherever they want us to go.

[ 33 : 43 ] Guess what? We'll never be able to do that and we will frustrate them in our attempt.

What I recommend we do when we have somebody who is chaotic in the way they're doing things and living their lives, I recommend you fix a position and you say, here I am.

And you let them run around you. Because over time, if they're confident, you're not going to chase them. And they're confident that, that you're going to stay there.

You're not going to go away. You're just going to be here. Then they'll begin to adjust to where you're standing. They'll recognize that they can't text you at all times, day and night, and have you respond simply because they're sending you a text.

I have a whole, I'm going to rant at some point tonight about texting, but not right now. But that's what happens. See, it's not kind to fall into unhealthy patterns that other people have for their lives trying to help them.

So, love does not envy or boast. The background behind that a bit is that there was tremendous jealousy in Corinth over who had what gifts.

[ 35 : 04 ] And they were, people who were boasting they had this gift or boasting they were of this apostle and other people were envious of this gift or this apostle. So he's saying love does not envy or boast. So loving ministry does not seek personal identity from doing ministry to others or prove competency by doing ministry to others.

We don't want to seek identity. One of my concerns about people who go into counseling, not that everybody does, but a lot of people go into counseling because of a need to feel helpful to other people.

I had a one, I can remember it vividly, I do a lot of counseling on Saturdays when people are off. So one time I had, I don't think I had five appointments in a row on a Saturday which was a lot for me. And I got to the end of the day I was tired. But I felt, you know, each one of them I felt like God was just there and met us and I felt like there was just the sense of the, the sense of this was valuable and they were expressing it, thank you so much.

And I walked out of my car and I said, Lord, this is what I'm called to, this is what I feel like my gifts are, this is what I feel like is my calling. And I, this doesn't happen often, but I had one of those moments where I felt like God almost spoke audibly to me.

[ 36 : 38 ] Right? And I know it's the Lord because when the Lord speaks that way to me, he calls me sport. So, so he's a sport. If you're going to take credit for all that's happening, you're going to need to take the blame as well when it doesn't happen.

And I was like, okay, I don't know. And from that point on, I take no credit, I get no satisfaction for a good day of counseling. I take that to the cross.

Lord, if there's anything that happened to your purpose that's good, it's because you've done it. Now, I, I love people and I, I love when a relationship gets furthered along and where we have fellowship and I want to rejoice in fellowship, but my sense of, of being helpful to other people, I want to crucify.

Because if I'm being helpful, that means I'm not counting on God being helpful. So we don't want to boast in that. Another thing we don't want to do is we don't want to, loving ministry does not care who gets the credit.

Which you will find over time. You invest and pour your life into somebody's life. And then they say, well, you know what, she was, she was, she meant well.

[ 37 : 58 ] You know, she tried, but this person over here, that's where, and they start talking about how God changed them and you're saying, I said all those things a year ago.

And you start to feel jealous that you're not getting credit for the work you did. That's that tendency to envy and boast. Love is not arrogant or rude.

Loving ministry does not speak presumptively into someone's trial. For example, do we really know how someone is feeling?

There is a great tendency that we have because we're diagnosticians. Because that's what therapeutic counseling culture teaches us to be, to diagnose people.

And so we tend to interact with somebody and we diagnose their problem and then we start speaking into the problem with no understanding of context.

[ 39 : 07 ] No understanding of who is this person in their problem. We don't really care because we're problem focused because a lot of therapeutic orientation because of the nature of what it is, because the nature of you've got a limited amount of time and you have to have a strategy to tackle problems, is a lot of times data collection for the sake of therapy.

It's not relationship for the sake of mutual change. And so we tend to want to, we buy into that. We buy into the idea where we can have this encounter and we know what they need.

But we have to ask ourselves, do we really know what someone needs or someone is feeling? Have you ever sat down with someone and felt like they already decided what you needed before you even started to speak?

Someone had told them what you're dealing with, you started to come and talk to them and you felt like they'd already developed conclusions about it. One of the hardest things to do is to see a situation and not presume you have the antidote.

That takes a great amount of self-control. Particularly if you do a lot of ministry like I do, I can read people and have a pretty good idea of what they're dealing with just through experience, through the range of counseling people.

[ 40 : 34 ] But that doesn't mean I really know. At best it's conjecture and educated guess. But if I impose that upon them, I'm making their struggle fit my assessment.

And we cannot do that. The other thing we can do is we can have an experience and then try to use that and leverage that to speak into other people's experience.

And we can't use our own experience. Now there is a way to tap into. It's actually anti-therapeutic because in a therapeutic culture you're not meant to bring your own experiences in.

You're a clinician and you're meant to keep it within the clinician boundaries. Sometimes biblical counseling you do bring experience in. It's essential. But how we do that is not, oh, I know you lost this, I lost this.

There's no comparison at that level between what you've lost and what I lost. I'm not helping you by imposing my experience onto your experience. So we can talk about how to do that but we have to be careful not to assume that our experience can speak to other people's experience.

[ 41 : 44 ] love does not insist on its own way. Loving ministry does not impose our way of thinking on another person. What we think, not only how we understand their problem but how we understand how to deal with problems.

You might be somebody who is a rational process or the way you deal with problems is okay, what's the issue?

How do I define it? How do I look and see what the Bible says about it? And then how do I produce a game plan for change for my life? That might work great for you. It may have nothing to do with the person who you're meeting with.

You can't impose that on them. You may be a person who feels like what you've got to do is you've got to pull the emotions out. You've got to take what is inside and you've got to bring it out to the surface and then we have to deal with it that way.

You're going to frustrate a lot of people because frankly they don't like talking about their emotions and nothing you do and if they try you'll find it really is unfulfilling for them and for you because they don't have the skill to do that.

[ 42 : 52 ] It's not who they are. So we have to be careful not to think that our way of handling problems is the way they should handle problems. One quick application of this and I hope you don't have to deal with this but it's one of the great mistakes people make dealing with domestic abuse.

Someone is in a domestic situation where there is domestic abuse going on and well-meaning friends who are discovering it are become very can become very aggressive in telling the person what they need to do to get out of it.

Understandably we see somebody in a horrible situation we want them out of it but one of the things you cannot do with someone in a domestic abuse is be another controlling voice.

They've already got one controlling voice in their life. They don't need a person who's in a domestic abuse situation has lost the ability to think as a personal agent.

They only know how to think based on how somebody else is defining their life and if you come in and are also doing that they won't differentiate. They will follow what you say but it won't be their decisions it will be them making decisions because of your pressure and the problem is you're not there to deal with the consequences of the decision they make and when someone is in a domestic abuse situation there rarely ever is a good choice.

[ 44 : 29 ] it's only how many consequences in a bad choice there are or how many choices there are and what were the consequences. In someone trying to get out of abuse there's never a clean road and so we want to be very careful what we're trying to do in a domestic abuse situation if you're trying to help somebody is you're trying to help them reclaim their own voice.

help them to understand no you can differentiate between the oppressor and their perspective of you and who you are.

So they ask you what should I do? I don't know. I don't know it would be wrong for me to presume I know what you should do. I'd be taking control of your life and that's the exact thing you don't want. So this is a case where we're dealing with somebody we can't impose our thinking into their situation or we can do great damage. Love is not irritable or resentful.

Loving ministry is not easily provoked and you've known this some people just seem wired to you know to irritate you. They just whatever they do the way their texts come across the way anything they do even they just happen to catch you they have an amazing ability to catch you at bad times. [ 45 : 57 ] Right? When you're not doing well that's when they're not doing well. Or they just are not very fun people. And so you get no relational benefit and they're just kind of irritating.

They seem to exist for no other purpose than to push our buttons. we have to recognize that love does not let that change our perspective about somebody.

And loving ministry also doesn't take up offenses that's being irritable when and this will happen sometimes in marriage situations where maybe you're talking to a spouse that's really struggling with the way they're being treated and you hear all this stuff from their perspective and that forms an opinion about the other person and then you start relating to them and the other person based on what they've told you as opposed to what really is going on.

And you take up an offense and now you start to feed their struggle with that person. It doesn't have to be just a marriage. It can be a roommate situation.

It can be a work situation. We have to be careful in counseling not to take up the offenses of others. Another thing that can happen is at times we may become the bad guy.

[ 47 : 22 ] That'll test us when suddenly we start getting blamed for things. I'm this week I'm going into situations there's kind of a group of situations that are all separate but they're all having this week where I'm in some sense the bad guy.

I'm not trying to be. And I'm hoping to avoid it but I know how things are playing out and I'm going to be the one in a situation not delivering what somebody wanted.

And that's hard for me. It's really hard for me because I love approval. And I've been praying even this morning I was praying Lord give me courage enough to be gracious and humble and loving but not shrink back from what I need to say in the situation.

And I've got two or three of those happening this week and I'm I kind of wish I could stay here a few more days. It would be great. Tomorrow night let's come back we'll do this again. And there will be folks if you do personal ministry who feel like you're part of their problem.

And that will test your love. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. We have to be careful not to dwell on the evil in a situation the wrong in a situation we have to look for what's right what's holy find what God is doing even in difficult situations look for the grace we look to trust here's a difficult one somebody who has lied to us somebody we know is not telling us the whole truth we distrust them we have to fight for trust we can't have a relationship if we don't give their words credibility if we sit there the whole time and recognize they're just lying through their teeth or I feel it we can't help them so trust is something that's very important we have to work on from our end ken sandy said this he's a he's a counselor and a peacemaker and he said love always looks for reasonable ways to trust others to hope that they are doing what is right and to interpret their words and actions in a way that protects their reputation and credibility this means we have to be very careful how we speak to other people about the people we're caring for doing personal ministry is you have to develop compartments for people you have to be careful what you say about other people because you're going to not only slander and gossip but you may infect somebody else's view of somebody based on what you're experiencing it's very important to be careful with that and then love bears all hopes believes and endures all things that's that wonderful end that culminates in love never fails the love of God is inexhaustible the promise of God is not just for the person we're seeking to love it's for us as well that's why

[ 50 : 37 ] John said in 1 John 4 beloved let us love one another for love is from God it doesn't come from one it is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love and this and this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world that we might live through him in this is love not that we have loved God but that he has loved us that's the preamble and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins that's our gospel that's our gospel Lord I can love others because you

have loved me in Christ beloved if God so loved us we also ought to love one another no one has ever seen God if we love one another like we just talked about God abides in us and his love is perfected in us isn't that a beautiful promise if I am seeking to make the priority how to love others God abides in me God meets me not because I'm an effective counselor but because I have allowed the love of God to be shed abroad in my heart and other people simply receive the benefit of what God is doing in my life Jonathan Edwards said it this way I'm going to close this session with this saints too may be the instruments of comforting and establishing one another one another in faith and obedience of quickening and animating edifying one another of raising one another out of dull and dead frames and helping one another out of temptations and onward in the divine life of directing one another in doubtful and difficult cases of encouraging one another under darkness or trial and generally and this is what I love of promoting each other's spiritual joy and strength and thus being mutually fellow helpers on their way to glory if you want a good definition of personal ministry it's there promoting each other's spiritual joy and strength and thus being mutually fellow helpers on their way to glory so that's that's the vision for ministry if we lose that we are not doing God's will we are doing our will so any questions in application or situations where you might think it'd be good just to dialogue a little bit okay yeah yeah

Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, yeah. So the question is, I'm talking to someone who doesn't profess Christ. I'm presuming they're an unbeliever. And they're looking for something that fits their understanding of how change should happen apart from God because they're not dealing with that.

So what you're dealing with is what point does counseling become evangelism? Right? And one of the things I love is we don't draw hard, fast lines between counseling and evangelism.

[ 54 : 50 ] Evangelism is the counseling of the unbeliever toward Christ. Counseling is the evangelism of the believer toward Christ. We're always heading the same direction.

If my brother is struggling, they're probably looking for practical answers as well. So the great thing about it is you don't have to have massively different approaches to deal with believers or unbelievers.

You're the essential character in there. You're just being who you are and allowing God to work. So we'll talk in the next section about the power of I don't know.

I don't know how to help you with that is a huge way to help people who are looking for those answers. And then you can say, well, you know, what I would practically do is just help somebody unpack what they're asking for.

What you'll find is many people who are their initial thing of what they're asking for is a fairly shallow understanding of what's needed. Even in a therapeutic sense, you know, a good counselor is never going to accept the person's problem description as what I need to address.

[ 56 : 06 ] That's the presenting issue. So you have a presenting issue in a therapeutic approach, but you're looking for what the underlying issues are. And so it's okay.

One of the things I do is I'm okay giving some practical advice to people. You know, I'm okay saying, well, have you tried this? Not because I'm asking them to trust it, but because it tells me a lot.

If I say, so by a situation where, let's say, I'm speculating into your world. You know, I've got a friend. She's an unbeliever. Her...

Yeah. Yeah. Um, and she's in a relationship that is creating problems for her, but she, so she wants to fix the relationship to make it work right.

And she's asking you, how can I help fix the relationship? And you're going, dump the dude. Um, so, uh, but you can't say that because that'll just turn her off.

[ 57 : 09 ] And so you might say something like, well, have you tried, and, you know, fill in the blank. Have you tried sitting down and saying, listen, let's talk about where our relationship is going, which freaks a lot of those guys out.

Um, no, I never tried that. I'm afraid to. I'm afraid he might leave. Well, try it. If she doesn't try it, what do you have there? You have a wonderful saying, well, you know, I think I suggested something you didn't seem like it would work.

What do you think you should do? You know, tell me what you think you should do. I don't know what I should do, so I'm asking you. Well, you know, but I gave an option, and you didn't seem to like that one, so let's try something you want to do.

And then you slowly exhaust the practical solutions. Well, it looks like nothing's working. Are you happy? You know?

And then you can start dealing with questions, well, are you happy? Is, you know, is this, does the relationship make you happy? How do you define what you want in a relationship? So, I mean, I'm going way into a totally, like, one that doesn't exist.

[ 58 : 20 ] But what you're doing there is you're connecting with people at their point of felt need, but you're not letting them keep you there. You've always got a better agenda.

And eventually I'm going to help them see that what you really want is far deeper than what you think. And that's where you have to have that vision, Lord, help me to love them, because you have an agenda for them that's not mine and not theirs.

So, is that helpful? Yeah. I don't know who that person is, but I'm assuming they don't exist. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

How do we prevent burnout? Now, where I can tell is when I'm not sleeping well.

If things are on my mind and I'm not sleeping well, then I realize, okay, I'm in too deep. Right? Now I'm carrying their problem into my sleep, which seems like Jesus says, don't do that.

[ 59 : 38 ] Right? So, it starts to become an issue for me of repentance. Lord, I can't help them. You're the burden bearer. I'm not. I mean, we're going to talk about burden bearing. But, so I think when it comes to that, different people have different thresholds of when it's too much.

Sometimes it's good to have people around you know what it looks like for you if you're carrying it too heavily. I think it's good to have diversions.

You know, rest and diversions are very helpful. So, how do I rest? How do I Sabbath myself from all of this? God is the only 24-7 being in the universe.

I'm not. And then how do I divert myself? What do I find enjoyable? How do I reclaim who I am when a situation seems to be one of taking that over?

So, like I don't suggest, okay, let me go read some more counseling literature. No. You know, I would say Harry Potter. I don't, something that takes you out of it.

[ 60 : 46 ] A movie, music, art, whatever. So that you can just, because you're not doing, you're not going to, we're not going to help each other by stressing out. We're not going to help anybody by stressing out.

And most likely that person doesn't want you to stress out. And what I found is sometimes my stressing out is my way of validating how much I care. And I have to own that.

So, people are different, but I think it's an important one. If you feel like you're burning out. Burning out typically is when we're carrying a weight that God doesn't want us to carry. Or we've let somebody else define the way we're helping them in a way that we're following their agenda.

And we're not at liberty to follow God's agenda. So, sometimes, I'll just go ahead and do my texting thing now. Don't ever counsel with texting.

That's my general policy. I'll say it again. Don't ever counsel with texting. That is anathema in this day and age.

[ 61 : 51 ] But I have never seen it go well. Texting is flat communication that allows other people to interpret your intent based on a limited amount of communication.

And it leaves you vulnerable to quick, unconsidered responses as opposed to thoughtful engagement.

Texting itself is a terrible counseling tool. I tell pastors this all the time. I'm watching guys. I'm thinking, are you counseling? Stop. You know, you're not going to help that person. And guess what happens?

Once you start responding to them, now you're on the hook for their pace of texting. So, when and however, this is a generational thing.

I know. So, I'm going to act like an old person. If you are used to talking about complicating things with your thumbs, I would suggest another way.

[ 62 : 53 ] Number one, I would suggest if someone texts you with an open-ended problem, you don't have to respond at all. Just because we live in a culture where people text you assuming you're going to respond.

What are they doing? They're taking control of your life. They're reaching into your life and they're saying, right now, I own it. And we give in to that. So, I'm not saying don't respond. But I'm saying you set the pace for a response.

If you have somebody who tends to want to open their problems up through texting, then you set the direction of that. So, one of the ways you can do it is someone says, you know, I'm terrible right now.

I need to talk. If you're going to text back, say, when would be a good time? I want to talk right now. Well, I can't talk right now. What about tonight? What are you trying to do? You're trying to figure out whether there's... Another way of looking at it like this. There are emergencies, there are crises, and there are problems.

[ 64 : 02 ] An emergency requires 911 or a trip to the hospital. That's an emergency. A crisis is something that somebody is in that you want to be as responsive as possible to them.

A problem is just something that exists that you'll engage in. Everybody wants to make their problems into crises and their crises into emergencies. What we're trying to do is make sure we only deal with emergencies as emergencies.

Crises as crises and problems as problems. Just because somebody feels their problem is a crisis doesn't mean it is. So it takes knowing that person. And if all we're doing is responding to them on text, we're not getting to know them.

We're letting them dictate by texting how we should understand their problems. So I'm saying it in kind of a categorical way. And I know that, you know, relationally it can break you away from people.

But I do recommend that you take control over the texting mechanism that you use. And you choose to use it. Like I choose to use my office when I let somebody into my office and when I don't.

[ 65 : 16 ] Because when they're in my office, I'm all there for them. And if you're going to let them into your texting environment in that moment, then you need to be all in it.

And not trying to manage them through it. And that's what I find a lot of people trying to manage people's problems through texting. Not actually help them resolve them. Any questions about that? That's a pretty categorical statement.

And it's an old person statement. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. I think it's wonderful. I mean, the question is, what about sending a Bible passage? I think it's wonderful, but how is it contextualized? You know, is it just some verse came to your mind you just throw at them?

[ 66 : 21 ] I'm not saying that's what you do. But if they get a Bible verse in response to their question, are they going to say, well, he's blowing me off. What are most of them to do is say the Bible doesn't work?

No. Now he's just kind of put me in my place. Or are you saying, listen, man, I really, you know, I've been thinking about what you just said.

I prayed about it. I'm going to offer you a text. I'm not saying it necessarily fits you, but it seemed to be relevant for me. Can I share it with you and you can let me know whether it's helpful or not? You know, we have to contextualize things. Otherwise, we're just throwing Bible verses at people. So there's ways to do it. Or one powerful way is if you've been interacting with someone and you know they're struggling and you are praying for them and God brings a verse to mind and out of the blue, unprovoked, you say, and I do this a good bit, was just praying about you today, praying for you today, and this text came to mind.

Just want to encourage you with it. It should not be a thou shalt not kind of text, but what can encourage and edify somebody? That can be powerful, and that can set a ministry relationship up in a wonderful way because they recognize you're going to be a Bible person.

[ 67 : 40 ] But we want to be careful not, I don't want to get into it, so I'm just going to send them a Bible verse, which is not what you're saying, but it's something we have to be careful with. So, good. Other questions?

Yeah, come on. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. How do I cope with being a bad guy? Well, here's what I do. I hug everybody. So, if I know I'm the bad guy, if I had a counseling appointment with somebody and it didn't go well on Saturday, on Sunday, they're getting a hug.

And I'm going to force them to push me away. Because if I'm going to be the bad guy, you're going to have to show me. Because sometimes you can just realize they're not, and ultimately they're not, they're not, they're not necessarily unhappy with you unless you did something that was angry or

sinful.

They're unhappy with the result of the experience. And they don't necessarily want to attach it to you, but it does that because they are struggling. So, I think I've learned that most people aren't.

[ 68 : 49 ] My friend JT and I do a podcast and we did one on friendship. And he's 30 years old and I'm 62.

And so, part of it's just how people relate over, and he's black and I'm white, so it's how we relate over race issues and how we relate over generational issues. So, we did one on friendship, and I said, you know, so how do you define friendship?

And he went into this really eloquent sort of description of shared life and all that kind of stuff, and it was beautiful. So, he said, how do you define friendship? And I said, I think I define friendship as anybody who would make an effort to attend my funeral.

Those are my friends. You know, if you would get up and get dressed and come to my funeral, you'd probably like me. And so, that's how I do it. I said, okay, this person isn't happy with me, but yeah, I think they'd still come to my funeral.

If they're not going to come to my funeral, then I want to go and resolve it so they'll come at some point in the future when I die. But, so I think that we do, we recognize, yeah, it's not about me.

[ 69 : 59 ] Sometimes it's about, I'm just a messenger. I'm just part of the problem they're dealing with. So, don't take it personal. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, yeah, how do we say no? Again, over years I've learned me saying no is my moral authority spoken into their lives. I don't know if my moral authority, even as a pastor, should have that kind of weight.

That's conscience-binding weight. What I want to do is if I see somebody where they're clearly disobeying something in the Word of God, I want to open up the Bible and I want to say, so listen, let's just talk about this.

You're saying you're doing this. The Bible says this. How do you reconcile them both? So I don't do a lot of don't do's. I do a lot of knock yourself out. It ain't going to work. What are you really after? It seems like your method isn't matching up with what you say you want.

[ 71 : 36 ] I want to glorify God, but I want to have this relationship this way. I think they're going two different directions. A good way to understand it is there's far more folly than there is direct disobedience in most people's lives.

Folly is just stupidity and foolishness, not actually acting on what you know to be true. There are some people who are rebellious. There's some people who, and you'll know that.

I've sat with people who, when I opened up the Bible, I said, well, it seems like this, but you have committed to doing this. And I've watched their face hardening, and they will say, I don't care what the Bible says.

Once we get there, we're in a different category. Then my conversation is not stop. Then my conversation is more so tell me on what basis you have assurance in Christ.

I can't question their salvation. But the Bible gives me warrant to question their assurance. You have confidence that you're a Christian even though you're living a life in opposition.

[ 72 : 47 ] That's what Matthew 18 ultimately drives to. So we want to be very careful. I think Christians can too often use their own moral authority or confidence that they know what particular command is relevant to that person and use that conversationally as opposed to having the word come into play and saying, well, let's talk about what's here.

That's one way I'll use the Bible is I think this is fairly clear. How do you relate to that? So, yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So you're talking particularly personal problems, not like, you know, you need your car fixed or things like that. Ministry, okay, yeah, yeah. So what do you deal with when you feel like you see the problem and it needs to be resolved?

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you is a good rule to follow. That's in the Bible somewhere. Do you want to be treated like that? Do you want to be treated like, oh, I need to get you to fix your problem?

[ 74 : 20 ] Because what that's communicating is you're bothering me. Your life is bothering me right now. It's complicating my life and you need to fix it as opposed to I care about you.

Now, there'll be situations where you realize I get thrown into something and there's a whole big mess here and I've got to help sort it out. But still I have found, and we'll talk about it in this next session, the patience to say I need to let the problem come to me in a way that I can relate to it in a way that they say you get it is how I'm going to do really effective ministry.

Because at the end of the day, I'm not responsible for their change. I'm responsible for my participation. That's what I've got to keep my focus on. And that should help me when I'm thinking, oh, I've got to fix that.

I've got to change that. Because, first of all, who says you're the one that God wants to do it? And second of all, who says you know how it can be changed? And you just end up...

We tend to use pressure. If you have a high-performance church, pressure becomes... Because you probably, many of you, are used to living under pressure in the way you work in school.

[ 75 : 33 ] Ministry is diametrically opposite of that. It's a non-pressure situation. It's a non-pressure environment. It's a pressure relief. It's a grace-replacing pressure orientation. And so you do have to sort of leave a lot of that at the door when you're doing it.

Let's take a quick break, and then we'll jump into the second session. And we'll finish up with the other questions after that. So thank you guys. Wonderful thoughts. And we'll take about maybe a five-minute break. Okay, we're going to get started again.

Just want to make sure you guys get out of here at a good time. Again, the outline, if you don't have it, is back in the back there.

So what we... First session is sort of a vision. It's how do I think about why I'm doing what I'm doing. And this session is going to be more... geared a bit more toward how do I actually do what I'm trying to do? What are ways I can do this? And so we're going to go to Galatians chapter 5 and beginning in verses 25.

[ 76 : 50 ] And we're going to go into chapter 6 here. And so Paul writes, If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Interestingly, he's pulling language from 1 Corinthians 13 there. At least it's common language. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

But let each one test his own work and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.

For each one will have to bear his own burden, his own load. A key point in this section is loving personal ministry is expressed in how we bear one another's burdens.

[ 77 : 56 ] That's the imagery that Paul is driving at here. And we'll see how we get there. In verses 25 and 26, that's a summary of the previous parts of the end of chapter 4 and end of chapter 5 on life in the Spirit.

What it means to be free. What it means to be free in the Spirit. What it means to be a Christian. And Paul summarizes it in verses 25 and 26 that we're set free from sin and called to live by the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit.

There are ways we can live, and he says this in verse 26, that are unspiritual. And he uses things like provoking one another, envying one another, and being conceited.

Some of the things that we were concerned about in the past, in the previous session. How we can try to counsel one another. But then, if we pretend like that chapter break isn't there, in other words, we don't move into chapter 6, but actually, it's the same thought continuing, which is really what's going on.

We see the contrast between walking in the flesh and how that affects relationships and walking by the Spirit, which is inherently not self-centered and not self-protective and not self-exalting and is instinctively others' focus.

[ 79 : 31 ] You see what Paul's doing there. He's saying, if you walk by the flesh as it relates to others, it will look like this. If you walk by the Spirit, beginning in verse 1 in chapter 6, it will look like this.

And he begins with brothers. That includes us all. That means this is not for the gifted. It's not for the mature. It's for all of us. Paul lets us know that this Spirit-led, other-centered life that we're

meant to live in is meant to be a family trait.

It's meant to characterize the family of God. It's not a gift of the Spirit to some to exercise. It's the fruit of the Spirit that marks us as a family.

So as a family represented here in Trinity Cambridge, you want to have these things functioning.

That's when we talk about personal ministry. We don't talk about a ministry of counseling, although you can have that.

We don't talk about who are the counselors in the church. No, we're all counselors. We're all doing personal ministry. It's who we are and how we function toward one another.

[ 80 : 42 ] It's an impulse toward mercy and redemption and gentleness and humility. Paul says, lest you be tempted. He's concerned that you and I who attempt to live out this can be tempted ourselves.

There's no spiritual hierarchy. We don't get beyond temptation. One of the things we talked about here is how we can be tempted by other people when doing ministry. We can be tempted in that experience.

We're all prone to wander. All susceptible to temptation. We need each other. As Paul Tripp has once said, we are people in need of change helping people in need of change.

That's what we are. The operative principle here is in verse 2. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. So what is the burden that he's talking about first?

Well, he talked about it in verse 1. If you see someone caught in sin, someone trapped or ensnared, but that isn't necessarily all because there's actually a parallel passage in Romans 15 where Paul is making the same common argument and he uses the same terminology and to get the full picture of what we're talking about here, we look at there, Romans 15.1, we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

[ 82 : 11 ] So that's parallel. Like there's the same word being used there. That word bear in Romans 15 is the same one being used by Paul in Galatians 6.2. In other words, there are strong believers and weak believers.

Weakness can come through immaturity or a lack of knowledge in Romans 15 or it can come through the ensnaring of sin. Sometimes we're ministering to people where the issue is not primarily a sin issue.

The issue is they're weak. They're issues, they're vulnerable. We don't want to attract everything like it's a sin issue. We don't want to be sin police. We don't want to go in after sin as if, okay, where's the sin here?

In fact, I tend to start with the operative assumption that there is no sin, not because I don't believe people are sinners because I know we are, but that sin isn't driving this, that there's a weakness driving it, that you, because I think that allows me to help someone see sin for themselves and not me being the one trying to force them to see it.

So I'm very reluctant to point out sin. In fact, I think it's much easier to point out sin than it is to point out grace. If I, in my own mind, if I can't point out grace then I'm not ready to point out sin.

[ 83 : 24 ] Even if it's slapping me in the face. Sin is easy to see. Grace is hard and that's where we want to give our attention. So we look at their weaknesses. We all have sin, we all have weaknesses and we all battle sin.

We will all be weak and needing help at times. The key verb there that's translated bear is the Greek word *bastazo* and this is not like a type of coffee at Starbucks.

It's a verb in this case, in both cases, Romans 15 and here, which has a range of meaning that comes around the idea of lifting up or raising up or coming alongside and carrying with someone of helping someone endure and sustain what they're carrying.

It's not tolerance or patience and interestingly in Galatians 3, 13, Paul exhorts the Colossians, Galatians 3, 13, Paul exhorts the Colossians, bear with one another.

Same English word, different Greek word. That word has to do with the idea of being patient, of long-suffering with people. It's a different word.

[ 84 : 40 ] This word here, *bastazo*, has to do with actually moving toward people and helping people carry a load. One image that comes from that is putting your shoulders under somebody, helping them by carrying a load.

An illustration I love that I think about a lot is how many of you ever tried to carry like a queen-size mattress up a flight of stairs? If you have lived in an apartment, you know what I'm talking about.

By yourself. Like trying to muscle a queen-size mattress upstairs by yourself. Virtually impossible. Use those handles, they don't work.

In fact, you know, they're not actually to carry it, they're actually just flipping handles. I learned that. They have no ability to be put any weight on them. So if you're trying to carry, they don't work that way. I don't know why they don't put real handles on them, but they don't.

So it's like that. So if someone is carrying this up the stairs and you see them carrying it and you say, whoa, let me get out of the way so I'm not in your way. And then you applaud them.

[ 85 : 49 ] Hey, you're doing a great job. Great job, man. I don't know if I could do that. You're doing a great job. That's not bastazo. Bastazo is when I go and I get a part of that and I lift it up and you and I both carry it together.

That's the idea behind what Paul's saying with this idea of bear one another's burdens. It doesn't mean that we take the burden off of somebody. It doesn't mean we carry it for them.

It means we come alongside and help them carry their burden. It's not a gift or a role. It's a particular way we express love.

How do we know that? Because in that same verse he says, and so fulfill the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? We find that in Galatians 5, 14 later in the chapter.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. So you see how this ties back into our first session on love.

[ 86 : 52 ] This is practical loving people. In the previous section we talked mostly about how do we posture ourselves in love toward people but we want to start looking at how do we actually do love in personal ministry.

So the opposite question is what if I don't want to do it? What if I don't want to do this stuff? This is the I'm an introvert excuse.

It's not my gift. Actually I'm not a people person. I don't get energy from helping people. I get energy from being by myself.

Or it's the I need boundaries to protect me from toxic people bail out.

Oh that person huge toxic. Can't deal with it. I need my boundaries up. Or it's the and this is a favorite one talk to the pastor dodge the situation.

[ 87 : 58 ] Have you ever talked to Sean about this? Sean would be really really helpful. That's what we do. That's how that's not bastazo folks. You know you cannot put boundaries up and help people carry burdens.

A question you might have well Andy what about somebody who does have that effect on us and do we need to have boundaries? We can talk about that but the motive the therapeutic idea behind boundaries is set entirely on faulty psychological principles which is the way we protect ourselves and grow is to keep sinners out of our lives.

To keep difficult people. here's the problem with that is we can't. The only way to do that is to virtually eliminate anybody. When we do that what happens is the boundaries go taller and grow thicker and fewer and fewer people get behind them.

So not a big boundary fan. Here's the other question and this kind of gets to all of us.

How many of you sitting here tonight would define yourself as a needy person? My guess is that none of you would want to be described as a needy person.

[ 89 : 31 ] As someone who's a burden to others. If I met you in a small group how would you introduce yourself? Hey I'm the group problem.

I'm astonishingly self-absorbed I'm hypocritical I'm stubborn I'm insensitive and I dominate conversations with my outlandish opinions and I don't bring snacks.

That's me. We don't define ourselves that way. We tend to define ourselves as okay people. You ever notice that whenever we put ourselves in a continuum we're kind of right in the middle?

We're never on the extreme on the continuum. We just move the extreme. We could be the extreme on the continuum. We just move it out to outlandish ends and put ourselves in the middle.

That's what we tend to do. We are all somebody's needy person. There's somebody who sees you as a needy person. There are people in my church who see me. I've got a fellowship group who sees me as a needy person and who gets exasperated with how hard it is to care for me.

[ 90 : 39 ] Because I so dodge any meaningful depth of confession and opening my life up. I'm like a bad glued together onion.

You peel off layers. You have to slice down the middle to get to me. There are no layers that are coming off. I have glued them all on tightly.

But you're a burden to others. Somebody has to ask God for grace and love to bear your burdens. And so we do it for one another. There is no burden-free zone in the Christian life. There are no burden-free relationships among God's people. Bastazo can't be about the eradication of burdens in our midst.

We cannot view personal ministry as a chance to fix everybody's problems so we're all doing okay. God will not let his body all do okay at one time. He won't.

[ 91 : 42 ] There's never been a church in history where everybody was doing okay for a day. It just doesn't happen. Somebody is stinking it up somewhere.

Because God is at work in people's lives to make them holy and he doesn't try to do it as a group project. He uses the group so that people can change over time.

There's no herd immunity when it comes to sin. There'll be constant variants of burdens invading our lives because there are constant mutations of sin in our hearts and constant trials in this sin sick world around us.

So again, not every burden is because I'm sinning. Sometimes I have a tragedy. Sometimes I have a crisis. Sometimes I have a health issue. Sometimes I lose my job. Sometimes I lose my place to live.

Sometimes I wreck my car. Sometimes things happen. And that's a burden that we help people carry. So we want to deal with this. So I want to talk about three ways we can help learn to carry burdens.

[ 92 : 52 ] So the first way is this. We want to seek to understand the person and their burden. We started talking about this already, but I want to focus in on it. If we're going to help, we need to seek to understand the person and their burden.

Did you ever have somebody help you with something by doing it the way they think it should be done? So let's say you're trying to pack a car. You ever try to pack a car with someone who thinks they know how to pack a car?

And you've got it all laid out and they're saying, no, this needs to go there. We need to put this there. I've got an unhealthy number of friends who feel like they're experts in packing.

And I've just learned it could be my stuff, but I don't even talk. Just go for it. Because I realize they don't care the way I want to pack. It's my stuff.

They don't care because they're expert packers. And so they do it. But that's what we tend to do. I'm a good fixer of problems. Let me take care of this for you.

[ 94 : 01 ] We're not understanding. The problem is the person thinks they can help from their point of view, but they don't really understand. Good bastazo is help that knows more than the problem.

We've talked about this. It understands the person in their problem. It means we need to do something that really isn't all that popular. I'm going to tell you to do something that is not very popular these days.

Stop talking and listen. What would our culture have been like over the past year if we stopped talking and started listening?

What would racial conversation look like if we stopped talking and started listening? What would political discourse look like if we stopped talking and started listening?

We are not good listeners. We need to become a good listener. How would you define a good listener? Let me just give you some pointers here. We need to be good listeners, folks.

[ 95 : 17 ] If we're going to minister, we need to be good. That's what should be known about us. He listens well. She listens well. That's our first entry card. We listen, number one, to care.

Listening isn't simply data collection. Listening is a way we express care. When someone feels listened to, they're willing to open up their lives. If someone feels listened to, even if you don't fully understand them, they feel like they want to help you understand them.

listen. Amen. Amen. My friend Robert Chong, who's a pastor of counseling and sojourn church, says this. He says, listening is a gospel practice.

We must listen to God, to self, and others. Good listening goes hand in hand with good questions. We tend to talk more than listen.

Amen to that. We tend not to explore what we hear and often make assumptions that lead us to a wrong understanding of the complexities of the struggle.

[ 96 : 19 ] One of the things that happens a lot of times is we listen enough to where we feel like we can take their complex problem and make it simple from our perspective. We don't allow the complex to stay complex.

We make it simplified on our end, though it's complex on theirs. That's what he's after here. The goal of listening and exploring is to better understand the person's story, which includes sin and weakness and suffering, and point them to Christ and the gospel so they can come to understand their own story in light of God's larger story, redemption.

That's where we get beyond problem solving. The problem is just the problem. What we want them to do is encounter Christ, which means we need to reflect Christ in the way we listen. So we listen to care.

Here's an interesting thing. A friend of mine who I teach this class with, he didn't create himself, but I think it's very helpful. In a therapeutic understanding, I use therapeutic to mean coming from the therapeutic world, the psychological world, the counseling relationship looks like this.

therapy. There's somebody sitting in the chair. There's a counselor. And there's a counselee. And they're sitting in the chair.

[ 97 : 50 ] I'm a terrible artist. So they're sitting in the chair. And so this is good counseling right here. This is the goal. Back and forth communication.

That's what therapists are going for. They don't want to just talk to people and they don't want to just be talked to. They want to have dialogue. What's the distinctive difference from a Christian orientation?

The distinctive what's that? Yeah. It's not a dialogue. It's a triologue. Because there's here who is also speaking and also listening.

God is always in the room, folks. He has an agenda. My agenda is only good as it's relative to his agenda. God is speaking.

Am I being part of God's speaking ministry or am I carrying on my own speaking ministry apart from him? It's a wonderful thing to recognize in any relationship. Again, another reason that texting counsel can be so unhelpful is because it forces dialogue instead of triologue.

[ 99 : 04 ] I'm not aware of the presence of the spirit. I'm just responding to a question in a horizontal way. The vertical dimension is everything. If this is happening and there's nothing happening here, or worst case, we are resistant to what God's doing or ignoring what God's doing, we're actually doing more harm than good.

And so listening, your experience of counseling someone, of doing personal ministry, is going to be as much listening for the Lord as it is listening for others. And that's how you care for people.

I want to hear from the Lord. I want to hear how God is speaking through this before I speak. So we can dialogue with that if you want to, but that's a very important aspect of it. We're in a triologue with people.

We also listen to learn. Ed Weld said this. Some of these quotes from Ed are from the counseling class I did in seminary where he was just talking and I was just taking notes.

But Ed said this. He said, are your conversations dialogues or intersecting monologues? He's talking about one-to-one counseling. Do you track?

[ 100 : 16 ] Do you really listen? Are your comments actually responding to what the other person said? So often our comments are what we've been holding on to while we've got the other person drone on and on and on.

We've been forming our language rather than responding to what they're saying. When in doubt, edit yourself. If the other person is troubled, they won't hear very much.

Delete advice wherever possible. Let them tell the story as naturally as possible. Follow them. Interrupt as little as possible.

Even if you think that you don't get the sequence and the facts and it's confusing to you, don't worry about getting all the facts down. Let them tell their story in an uninterrupted way.

If you were asked questions, especially theological ones, or asked for advice, first understand why the person is asking.

[ 101 : 23 ] thing. And that's a really important thing. When someone asks you a theological question, they're not rarely looking for a theological answer. They're expressing a theological frustration.

And they need help to know how to get that answer from God, not from you. The same with advice. People looking for advice are looking for fixes that you can provide.

What moves you in their story? You see what he's saying there? What is it like to be with them? Do you enjoy or value or esteem the person?

Are you scared of the person? Can you describe the person in a way that the person says, that's me? That's how you know you've done good listening is when you say to them, so here's what I hear you saying, is this what you're saying?

And they say, yes, that's it. Then you've done good listening. But until you're able to ask that question and get that answer, you don't know for sure if you really understand. We need to understand the person in their story.

[102:36] What is your experience when you feel someone is trying to understand you? Think about conversations over the past year. Think about conversations you've had where people have not had any interest in understanding you and conversations you've had where people have tried to understand you.

How does that affect your soul? How does that affect your desire to engage? Because we're learning. So number two, we speak in line with the wisdom of God.

God. I have found over the years that the best place to align with the wisdom of God is to learn three words and use them often and those words are I don't know.

I don't know is a universal acceptable counseling answer. It works in every possible situation. It never fails.

No one will ever shout at you if you say I don't know. No one will ever treat you like you're mistreating them by saying I don't know.

[103:51] No one will ever say you're controlling them when you say I don't know. No one will say that you're being harsh to them when you say I don't know. We need to have that.

I want you to practice I don't know in your home. I want you to practice it on text. I don't know. Get used to it. It will serve you so well because what is it doing? Is it saying I don't know but there must be somebody who does.

And you're not preaching in it. You're just saying there's a void here that I can't fill. And that void creates the opportunity for wisdom from God.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. By saying I don't know we're acknowledging we truly aren't omniscient. We truly don't know everything. And so we give room for the wisdom of God to happen.

[104:52] And so there are very practical implications to this. As we speak and now we're talking about speaking. We're not just listening. We're actually speaking. Now we're in the place where we get a chance to share.

We want to speak softly. In other words we don't want to come across aggressively. We don't want to come across shrill. We don't want to come across overly emotional.

We want to speak calmly to people. We don't want to use intensity to manipulate. We want someone to feel like we're responding even to their intensity with calm.

So you could say let's speak calmly. What that does is it communicates I don't know but I care. I care about you. Again it's almost impossible to speak softly through text.

Text is at best flat communication with no inflection. Unless you put emojis to it and those never work. my one emoji I it's a problem of needing to wear your reading glasses more than you do.

[106:07] So somebody texted me something that was very sensitive and it was something they were really going through. And I was in the middle of something and we have the kind of relationship where I don't but I wanted to let them know I got it.

And so I pushed that emoji thing that has the tear just letting them know I was feeling it. But I missed it and I pushed the one that was winking at him.

Which was highly inappropriate in the moment. And I should have used my glasses to make sure I chose the right one. So yeah, be careful with emojis.

Let's speak humbly. We don't want to assume we've got the answers. We've talked about that before. Again, we've talked about the problem of comparing experiences.

There is a way to do that. If you've gotten, if you're interacting with someone and you're at the point in the conversation where their struggle, their situation is three-dimensionally in play and you're dialoguing over it and they've allowed you into it, I think there's a way to say, now listen, this

reminds me of something I felt when I went through this.

[107:38] I know it's different. I don't want you to think I understand that what I experience is what you experience. but this is how it affected me. Does that make any sense to you?

What are you doing there? You're not saying I know your experience, you're saying I had this response to something and I'm trying to better understand your response.

Is my response similar to your response? So your situation might have been fairly minor and you can say that, listen, it was not what you dealt. My loss was not what your loss was, but I remember feeling that I walked into rooms and nobody cared about what I was going through.

Does that make any sense? Is that what you're, yeah, that's what I'm experiencing. Okay, that's helpful to me. Now I feel like I understand better what you're talking about. You can draw on your experience, but you can't overlay your experience onto someone else's experience.

You can draw on it by drawing on the feelings or even your responses. You know, I had something happen to me one time where someone did this and, you know, I think you may have responded much better than I did.

[108:55] I responded this way because I was struggling with this. Does that make any sense? And you let them tell you whether or not it fits or not. It's a way you can use your experience.

You want to be very careful with this. We want to speak clearly. Very important. Communication happens with reception, not delivery. Just because we think we've been clear is not the same as having good communication.

Again, Ed Welch says this, very, very helpful insight. Why don't people follow through with advice? Is it because they're unteachable?

Perhaps. advice. But more likely, the advice may be good, but it may not be in sync with what the Lord is doing in a person's life.

We need to recognize that we may have accurate things to say, but they may not be relevant. Underline that.

[109:55] That's hugely important. You can be accurate, but not relevant to a person's situation. And if we have accurate and relevant things to say, we need to say them in a helpful way.

If we give advice, we need to give advice that serves the person in how they process, not how we process. How do you respond to someone who comes back to you having not responded to your counsel, may say as much about your confidence in your counsel as it does about their desire to apply?

Isn't that true? If they haven't done what you thought, you may think you're absolutely clear and they're just ignoring it. Maybe you weren't that clear. Or maybe you gave them an impossible assignment.

The focus of advice should be what God is up to and what a person can hear. That's what I'm always trying to filter down to. What do I think God is up to here? Can I speak into that?

And what are they capable of? And I've got folks in my church who are capable at any point in time of very little change. And so I don't want to hold out.

[111:07] Well, listen, you need to do this. Let's say, for example, I'll give you one thing I do.

Someone is struggling spiritually and you can identify that their struggle, well, among other things, they have no devotional life.

They're just not having a devotional life. And so what you want to do is you want to say, well, listen, get your Bible, I want you to start reading every day, and I want you to pray, and they'll say, yep, sign me up, and they get two days in and they're done.

Right? You don't build any habits that way. So what I've learned to tell people is I call it my 5-5-5 plan. If somebody's in that case, even if they are doing some devotions, I say, listen, let's try this. Why don't you, whatever you're doing, reading, do five minutes more a day, five days a week, for five weeks.

See if you can do that. Five minutes more. So if you're doing nothing, five minutes. But try to do it five days. And if you can do it five days, try to do it for five weeks.

[112:18] I've never had somebody come back to me who has actually tried to do that and not said, I think for the first time I'm finally starting to get some sense of what it means to have a devotional life.

I'm giving them five days. They have two days to blow. And I'm giving five minutes, which means they can do it on their phone at some traffic lights.

I don't necessarily recommend, but they could. And I'm okay with that. That level of intentionality to me is good habit for me. And then five weeks, I feel like if you give it five weeks, you're going to develop something in five weeks.

It's going to become something. And what I found, frankly, is most people are no longer satisfied with five minutes. They're cheating. They're going up to like seven or eight minutes. And I'm like, whoa, back down, man.

That's too much. But it's a way to sort of help people do manageable change. Speak truthfully.

[113:27] Here's a concern I have for folks, is we take a shot with the gospel, and then when you get a blank stare, you just revert to practical advice.

I think what we want to do is treat the gospel, and first of all, we want to contextualize it for people, not just say, you know, remember Jesus died for your sins. One of the things I encourage people to do who do ministry is explore the avenues of the gospel through things like, what is reconciliation? I wrote two books, partly because I have a burden that the gospel isn't necessarily always applied helpfully, so I wrote a book called Real Peace, which is if we just take the aspect of the gospel that's reconciliation with Christ, and we applied it to complex problems, what would that look like?

How could that work? And then I did one called Trapped, where if we took a complex problems and we applied the gospel of redemption, we are set free to serve Jesus.

How does that affect those things? The whole point was just exercises and how can we particularize the gospel into people's problems? We want to do that. We want to continually, if you ever read, if you ever want to get good at this, read John Newton's letters.

[114:43] He's a master at it. If you've never read his letters, they're very readable. One of the things Newton does so beautifully is he weaves in and out of gospel language. He'll drop something in in these letters because he's writing to people who have common problems, and then he'll go back into practical and maybe consider this, and he'll talk about his own weakness, his own confession, and then he'll make a statement about Christ.

It's better rather than kind of have an ultimate, now let me give you the gospel. Just pepper the gospel into your conversation. This friend who may be an unbeliever, if all they know is eventually you're going to be talking about Jesus in a very natural way, they'll decide whether they want to continue to talk to you or not based on Jesus.

So be truthful. Don't abandon the truth when it doesn't seem to work. No, it's just let's pray. I don't know what else to say let's pray. Speak graciously.

When in doubt, look to encourage. Again, this is what we want to be good at. If we're doing personal ministry, I want to always, it doesn't matter how dire the situation, I want to find something I can encourage, which doesn't mean flatter and it doesn't mean a platitude.

Encouragement, coming alongside somebody with the word in season, means I identify where they are vulnerable and I speak faith into that vulnerability.

[116:11] So if I've got somebody there and they have really been struggling with anger and they've been lashing out at people in various ways, I'm going to say, okay, how can I pray for you?

And they're going to say, well, I really struggle with this. And the next time you meet with them, you know what I noticed? I noticed this. I see that you're really battling there. It's very meaningful for people who feel like they're constantly failing to have you speak into areas where they're failing and show them there's grace there.

That's encouragement. It's grace for the battle. And then number three, the third way we do this is we point people to the ultimate burden bearer in Christ.

I want to show you something. This is a third sort of little diagram thing. This was, again, I got this from David Pallison and I just thought it was tremendously helpful for me.

It has always been. But let's suppose, I'm going to draw a circle here. Let's suppose all of reality, this is sort of an existential exercise, all of reality is contained in this circle, right?

[117:25] This is everything. Now, within everything is a domain of me. In other words, this is what I control.

This is my life. And so there are aspects of my experience that are under my control and there are aspects of my experience that are outside of my control.

Right? What we tend to do as people, I'm going to show those in a couple of ways. What we tend to do as people is push out my sense of control into God's area of control.

And what do we call that? Anxiety. You want to know where anxiety is?

This is anxiety. I am worrying my way out to God's area of control, trying to do what only He can do. Or, we pull back and we don't do things that we are responsible for.

[118:46] And what does that tend to look like? depression. Depression. Depression is pulling back from that which I know is important for me to live my life.

And redefining myself in a way that doesn't allow me to have true life. That's what we tend to do. Now, I'm going to redo this and show you how it functions in counseling.

We have the same universe, but now we're the counselor and we're trying to help other people. We do the same thing.

We push out in people's lives into the things only God can do. And what does that produce? Burnout? Anxiety? Manipulation? Or, we retreat back in self-protection and only deal with the things that we feel comfortable dealing with.

[120:18] And what does that look like? It's, well, unbelief, for one. Unloving. It's not loving to do that, to withdraw from people.

And so, the fight for counseling is a fight to make sure we are as close as we can be to what our responsibility is without going into God's responsibility.

That's how you know you're helping someone. And so, you're always asking the question, Lord, am I trying to do things that only you can do? Or, Lord, am I shrinking back from things that you want me to do, but for some reason I don't want to do?

If we're doing this, we're confident. And this isn't a fixed line that we'll always know we're on, but this is our battle. This is what we're doing. This is the heart work of counseling is to battle for this.

Knowing our weaknesses. Some of you here might be control freaks, and you're going to go out here a lot. And you're going to need help from your brothers and sisters who are going to say, listen, I know you like to get involved and help people solve their problems.

[121:27] Is that what you're doing right now? Is that really your job? Other people here may be in that I'm a contemplative like me, and I just soon let God work it all out and get out of the way.

And the good question to ask is, well, maybe you're supposed to do something. Maybe you're supposed to reach out. So that's a way to understand how to do counseling, how to maintain that careful sense that I'm part of what God's doing for people.

Because what it does, if this is happening, then I leave room for Jesus to act. I leave room. I'm not taking the place in someone's mind or in my own mind that Jesus needs to act.

And the greatest burden, it acknowledges that the greatest burden that we will ever carry has been carried by Christ. In John 19, 17, we read, carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the skull called Golgotha.

That word carrying there, translated carrying, is the word *bastaza*. So there's this awful language in John where Jesus is being described as carrying his own cross, bearing his own burden.

[122:49] But we know it isn't his burden that he's carrying. It's our burden. Jesus carried the cross not for himself but for us.

And for us to be able to have confidence that we're being used by God, we have to have confidence that there is a burden bearer who is always at work, who has done the hard work already, and who can say, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

take up my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light and the point is this, we want that savior to be what radiates from our involvement with other people.

Fixing problems, changing people, never the agenda. The agenda is that the one who bears the burdens and the one who gives the light burden because he takes the heavy burden is the one who helps us all.

So that's it. Any questions, applications before we close up? Yeah.

[124:21] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, you know, I think it's, you're kind of assuming, I'm assuming you know them a little bit. And one of things I'll do is, okay, that's a great question.

What do you think? You know, what do you think gives someone a chance to articulate why they want to know that question?

It may be, well, I'm really struggling with this issue, and what they're trying to do is unhelpfully attach some basic theological concept to a complex problem as if it's going to fix it.

And they're actually trying to use theology rather than use Christ. It's a guy thing a lot of times, not everybody, it can be an engineer thing.

[125:21] If someone's an engineer, you'll see them, they want to take that concept, they want to apply it to this, and they want to fix this. So there are theological questions that a lot of times are engineering approach, or facts approach.

And so what we're trying to do is unpack it in various ways of what they're looking for in that question. And the answer ultimately in all theological questions is Jesus Christ. And so one of the things, give me an example, people are struggling, I don't understand how God can be sovereign when he let this happen in my life, someone who's lost a loved one.

It's not good care to wax on sovereignty. That's the wrong time for sovereignty. It's not going to help them. It never does.

Sovereignty isn't relevant, but like Ed said, it's not relevant for that moment. So if we just respond, well, God is sovereign, and he means this, and it's not going to help them.

So we want to help them. And that's okay to say, listen, the best I can do is give you my sense of what I think, or let's look at the Bible together, or let's study this, if they're really intent.

[126:34] I think there are things you can do. We want to be careful just not throwing books at people, too. If we're going to use a book, we want to say, listen, let's talk about it. So just keeping away from theological answers, which are always more simple than the real answer, and they also tend to depersonalize Christ in the equation to fix a problem, and that doesn't usually work.

So I try to get under the question and figure out what's really going on. So, good. Any other questions? Maybe one or two more, and then we'll close. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Most people who do this, work with this, they are dependent on the person who's in the abusive scenario, in the oppressed position, I'll say, to come to their own realization that this is an oppressive relationship.

That's why Darby Strickland, her book on abuse, is really helpful, because he uses the word oppression, which I think is a biblically rich word, and the other thing it gives you is it expands it beyond just violence.

There's all kinds of oppression that can happen that never reaches violence, but it's still oppressive, financial, sexual, and control with pulling away from relationships, those kind of things, hyper control.

[128:44] A lot of different ways people can oppress one another. Oppression has to do with the fact that I've removed your ability to be an agent responsible to God alone, and I've made you responsible to me.

And God didn't let that happen with Egypt forever, and he doesn't let it happen with people forever, but they need to recognize, I need to, and so that's what you're doing a lot of times.

Now, one of the mistakes we can make is we counsel couples, make it about marriage, and it's not about marriage. So it's a very difficult thing to be if you know the person who is controlling, I will say, in various ways, it may be subtle ways, and you have access to them, and they're, and they're, most people who are in that position are not going to really be open, and they're going to manipulate you as well, because that's their tendency, that's their, that's their methodology is manipulation and control.

So I find that, without knowing any details about your situation, I think, what do you think the Lord wants you to do? Well, my husband says this, well, that's good, I think he has a good perspective, he can, he can be right sometimes, but what do you think, is there a time where you think he might not be right, and what would you do then?

You know, get them to think as, as individuals responsible to God first, which is what we are in marriage. Our marriage does not overcome our responsibility ultimately to God, and so we try to help people understand that, grasp that.

[130:20] One of the things you're doing if you're helping someone who's, who's in that place where they have, they're still embroiled in it, I think the average is people will leave a marriage, an abuse of marriage, an abuse of marriage seven times before they ultimately stay out, which means seven times they go back and get hurt.

So we want to be careful not forcing them out. When they leave, we want them to have their own courage to take the response, because there are going to be a lot of things that want to push them back, including the kids.

The kids become an issue. So it's very complex, very difficult. The people who've done it well, that I've observed, have been patient listeners, have been safe people.

Are you a safe person? Which means if she looks around and she sees all these people who want to help her, and you're the one who isn't giving your opinions unless they're asked for, you're a safe person.

And that's a good place to be. You'll be most helpful in the long run. Any other questions?

[ 131 : 33 ] Let's end on a heavy one. question. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, it can be. I mean, recognize your pastors are always having to triage what they're getting involved in. All pastors do.

If you have one guy with 30 people, or 10 guys, with 300 or 500 or 600, everybody's still triaging. So I think promising a pastor is a dangerous thing.

So what I tend to do is I like the idea that if you're interacting with someone, that you have another brother involved. You have, you go horizontal as long as you can. And then say, well, listen, let's get, you know, let's get one of the pastors involved.

When there's two guys already involved. Because that makes sure that you don't have a situation where this gets the pastor's role. becomes the primary role. Then he's coming alongside you two together as you're helping this guy.

[ 132 : 41 ] So where you can, it's much healthier for a church to, as long as we can do ministry one to another, let's work on that, even if we do several people.

And then involve pastors to help us all in the process. Not just help the guy. But we're trying to work through this. So Ed and I have been meeting with Jim. And he's just, he's struggling.

He's, you know, he's feeling like he doesn't have any perspective. And, you know, Sean, can you meet with us and just help us talk through where we can go from here? And Sean's able to step in and sort of say, well, that sounds good.

You guys don't really care. Do you feel like they're caring for you? Yeah, I feel like they're loving me. Do you feel like they're doing anything that's making it hard for you? Well, yeah, I think sometimes they both start talking. They talk too much.

Okay, guys, let's be careful. We're not both speaking at the same time. Let's be conscious of that. Is anybody following up at the end? Well, nobody's really following up, so I feel vulnerable after the fact.

[ 133 : 38 ] Well, then maybe when you can do it, you can take turns, you know. And so then what is he doing? He's helping you strategize for better care as opposed to dealing with the problem. So that's what I recommend, and I think women as well, try to get other sisters involved.

That's going to be more resilient in the long run. More resilient care, because the pastor may, at any point, have to be pulled out because of another crisis. So, yeah, that's good.

Well, thank you guys. I've been very patient, very attentive, so thank you so much. applause Larry Reed Jr.'s