

# **Resolving Conflicts Through Discipleship Counseling**

## *Resolving Emotional Problems Biblically*

*Session Four*

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# Behavioral Issues

**Behavioral problems can be spiritual, emotional, and physical in orientation.**

- A. Use good discernment to know where the problem exists.
- B. Always evaluate spiritual issues in a person's life first.
  1. Salvation
  2. Spiritual and emotional maturity and relationship with Christ
  3. Root Issues—bitterness, unresolved hurt, pride, guilt, lack of faith, etc...
  4. Desire to change their behavior
  5. Performance based acceptance vs. Identity built on who they are in Christ

**Emotional problems come primarily from an inability to self-regulate negative emotions.**

## Type B Traumas

### Characteristics

- Come from bad things happening to me.
- Are fractures of the mind.
- Can be automatically forgotten if events are particularly bad. This amnesia protects the person from remembering them.
- Inability to return to joy. The person will experience unresolved feelings or thought.
- Events can be remembered at a later time, recovered and healed.
- Some type B traumas are more easily remembered, including the feeling and thoughts that are part of the event.
- Certain types of “B” traumas when touched, can produce intense feelings that can spill over into other relationships.

### Examples of Type “B” Traumas

- Physical abuse, including face slapping, hair pulling, shaking, punching, and tickling a child into hysteria
- Spanking in rage or anger that becomes violent, leaving marks or bruises, or emotional scars
- Sexual abuse
- Verbal abuse or name-calling
- Abandonment by a parent
- Torture of ritual abuse
- Witnessing someone else abused in the following ways

### Healing of Type “B” Traumas

- In order to resolve feelings that come from Type B traumas, the memory that contains the feelings must be uncovered. A general prayer for healing everything in the person's past does not typically help. The specific wound needs to “be opened up” in the presence of caring persons, along with a prayer for healing.

## Effects of A and B Trauma

- Negative emotions to self-regulate, bringing you joy
  - Shame**—I am not... (shame causes a person to want to hide or react in anger.)
  - Disgust**—YUK ! I do not want anything to do with that!!! (Not life-giving.)
  - Fear**—I have got to get away. (fear controls me.)
  - Anger**—I just want to make it stop!!! (Typically shame or sadness)
  - Sadness**— I feel a loss of life and relationship.
  - Hopeless Despair**— I do not have the resources to make it happen!!!
- Two Kinds of Emotional Regulation (Galatians 6:2-5)
  - Self-regulation of emotion- God and me (Galatians 6:5)
  - Mutual regulation of emotion- -me, God and someone else (2 Corinthians 7:5-7, Romans 12:15)

## Ways A and B Trauma Can Affect Behavior

- A. Borderline Personality Issues
- B. Fear Disorders (PTSD, OCD, Anxiety)
- C. Depression
- D. Addictions
- E. Dissociation

## Self-regulation of Emotion

### Understand the emotions you experience

- A. Identify the emotions you are experiencing
  - Shame**—humiliation, guilt
  - Disgust**
  - Fear**—terror, worry
  - Anger**—irritation, frustration, rage
  - Sadness**—hurt, sense of loss
  - Hopeless Despair**—depression, discouragement
- B. Rate the emotional level from 1—10 in relation to the event that caused it. People will often transfer unresolved emotional issues onto others unknowingly.
- C. Ask these questions:
  - Is it healthy for me to feel this emotion at this level of intensity?
  - Am I willing to look to the Lord as I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_?

### Reduce Emotional Vulnerability

*“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”*

- A. Important: Look at the event from God’s perspective (faith). On a scale of one to ten, what level would the Lord put on the event?

- B. Pray. Ask God to bring to your mind any negative thoughts or lies of Satan that are a part of the emotional intensity.
- C. Read God’s Word. What truth brings encouragement to your heart and exposes the lies that you feel? (Philippians 4:8)
- D. Read Proverbs and Psalms on a regular basis.
- E. Journal your thoughts and feelings to God.
- F. Seek mutual regulation if needed.

## Mutual Regulation of Emotion

*Ephesians 5:15-32; 1 John 4:7-21; 1 Peter 3:1-17; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Corinthians 13*

- **Returning to Joy**—meeting people in their unhappy feelings (empathy), sharing the feeling (sympathy), and letting them know you are still glad to be with them, returns people to joy. Six emotions to return to joy from are shame; disgust, anger, fear, sadness, and hopeless-despair.
  - Remember bonds form best during difficult times.
  - Admit failures and forgive each other, but do not break bonds (Matthew 18).
  - Learn to re-synchronize with someone who is out of tune with me.
  - Return to Joy at the end of every day (Ephesians 4).
  - Be glad to be with them in their distress, even if they caused it.
  - Share their distress and help them calm down.
- **Building Joy**—Joy comes from attachment and produces love bonds when people are genuinely glad to be together. The main sources of joy are nonverbal—a face that lights up to see us, and a warm tone of voice. Touch is third but may have opposite results with sexually abused people (they can initiate).

## How to Deal With Depression

Depression is usually defined as a low period of one’s life or an emotional state marked by sadness, inactivity, or difficulty in thinking clearly. It often results in feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, a sense of rejection, and pessimistic or negative thoughts.

There are basically two types of depression. The first type is “normal depression” which is often caused by everyday problems and stress. This can result in a feeling of sadness, discouragement, and a hollow feeling. The second type of depression is called “clinical depression.” This is when depression is severe in intensity or frequency and lasts for a longer period of time. It usually hinders a person’s normal functioning in life such as sleep patterns, appetite, or relationships. If this occurs, treatment is vital.

### False Beliefs about Depression

1. Depression is a result of personal sin every time—Job 22:5

2. Depression is caused by a lack of faith in God—I Kings 19:3-4
3. Depression is always a spiritual problem and not physical in origin.
4. Everyone who is depressed can be healed by the power of God!
  - If everyone was healed of all disease and sickness then Adam and Eve would still be alive!
  - God uses sickness for many different reasons from chastening his children to increasing our faith! (Hebrews 12:5-6).

### **Characteristics of Depression**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal from people        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of self-esteem           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Despair                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughts of death             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in physical activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimism                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of perspective           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of guilt              | <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to cope with stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependence on others           | <input type="checkbox"/> Idleness                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance behavior             |  |

### **Feelings and Thoughts of Depression**

Most people who get depressed devalue or deny the worth of themselves, their daily life, or their future. They may often say the following:

- I feel overwhelmed! There is no way out!
- Things are hopeless. They will never get better.
- There is no hope! Help is not on the way.
- I can't take it any more!
- What's the use? I feel worthless!
- I'm no good. I am a total failure. I can't do anything right.
- My life is ruined!

### **Spiritual or Emotional Causes for Depression**

- Bitterness vs. Forgiveness
- Unresolved Guilt vs. Clear Conscience
- Performance Issues vs. Living by Grace
- Stuck in the "Grief Cycle" vs. Acceptance of the Loss
- Unresolved Trauma vs. Healing

- Stress vs. Joy/Rest
- Trusting in yourself (PRIDE) vs. Faith in God

*Remember...*

- **Help the person have a biblical perception of themselves and circumstances!**
- **Worthlessness is not a feeling—it is a value judgment** (*Psalm 8:4-5; Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:28*)

# Grief Cycle

## **Shock**

*This is not happening to me!*

## **Denial**

*This did not happen to me!*

## **Anger**

*Why did this happen to me?*

## **Bargaining**

*How could I have changed what happened to me?*

## **Depression**

*I can't change what happened to me.*

## **Acceptance**

*I will allow myself to grieve the loss and feel the pain from what happened to me.*

## **Rebuilding Life**

*I will put my hope and trust in God for whatever will happen to me*

## **New Wholeness**

*God will use what happened to me.*

# How to Deal With Fear

## Anxiety States

- Includes primary panic disorders, generalized anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- On the other hand, there are ‘anxiety states’ in which the main problem is the free floating anxiety mentioned above, often to the point of a sense of overwhelming panic and a sense of impending doom. These may be accompanied by a wide range of physical symptoms including: lightheadedness, pounding heart, sweating, chest pain, breathing symptoms, etc.. Most people will recognize some of these symptoms normally during very stressful moments. Free-floating anxiety is also a major symptom of depressive states, hysterical reactions, and some psychotic illnesses.

## Post-traumatic Stress Disorders

- Characterized by abnormal psychological reactions to stressful events (i.e. war experiences, physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc.)

## Definition of Anxiety

- Anxiety is a sense of being out of control, instead of letting God, Who is sovereign, be in control.
- Anxiety is a fear of the unknown, instead of trusting in God Who knows everything.
- Anxiety is a dread of bad things that might happen, instead of preparing for the worst and hoping for the best.
- Anxiety is an assumption that bad things could occur, instead of living by faith through prayer.
- Anxiety is a sense of uncertainty, tension, or uneasiness about a future event, but not certain of what the specific event or thing feared.
- Anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling of dread characterized by nervousness, tension, and apprehension.
- Anxiety is a defense mechanism to cope with stress or uncomfortable circumstances.
- Anxiety occurs when a person becomes afraid to look at a negative emotion inside.
- Anxiety is an adaptive feeling experienced by all humans to

### The Process of Fear

*Belief*

*("I believe that I have a reason to fear!")*

*Thought*

*Fearful anticipation*

*Feelings*

*Tense bodily sensations*

*Action*

*Panic/fearful response*

*Habit*

*Phobia*

something unpleasant and generally leads to some action to relieve the feeling.

- Anxiety that is free-floating is a term used to describe a lack of focus on a specific target unlike a fear that develops in reaction to a specific, real, or imagined danger that has no obvious cause of which the person is aware.
- An exaggerated state of anxiety resulting in a profound disturbance in one's ability to function is called panic.

## **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**

An obsession is a recurrent and often persistent idea or thought. It is often senseless, absurd, intrusive, bothersome and embarrassing. They are never acted upon, but create intense anxiety. A compulsion is a repetitive, intentional behavior that is done to relieve the anxiety produced by the obsessive thought. It often involved checking, counting, or washing. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder that is characterized by the presence of obsessions or compulsions (or both). Obsession and compulsions are distressing and time-consuming, or interfere with the person's normal routine, daily functioning, and relationships with others.

Obsessions are recurrent and persistent ideas, thoughts, impulses, or images that intrude into an individual's thinking. Obsessions are capable of producing tremendous anxiety or feelings of discomfort such as disgust and guilt, even though the individual experiencing them is usually aware of their senseless, irrational, nature. Common obsessions reported by individuals with OCD include fear of contamination, harm, illness, or death. Compulsions are repetitive, purposeful behaviors performed in response to an obsession. Individuals perform these actions or rituals to relieve anxiety, avoid some dreaded event, or to prevent or undo discomfort. Common compulsions include washing, cleaning, checking, repeating, touching, and counting rituals.

The old person will struggle with nagging questions:

- What if...
- What about...?

They will usually question their salvation. They might be fearful of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

### **The Goal of the Enemy**

To use the obsessive compulsive tendencies to make your life miserable and make you question the soundness of your mind to the point where you cannot do the simplest things and your life falls apart.

### **Spiritual Problems that Promote Obsessive Compulsive Tendencies**

- Fear
- Confusion
- Perfectionism
- False Beliefs concerning how certain things must be done

## Ways the Enemy Feeds Obsessive Compulsive Tendencies

1. Questions in the mind. “What about \_\_\_\_\_?” These questions prey on the fears, perfectionism, confusion, etc.
2. Deception—“If you \_\_\_\_\_ again, there will be peace.” Any peace is short in duration.
3. Increasing the *downward spiral*. The more the thought or behavior pattern is followed, the harder it is to end it.
4. Increasing fear and loss of self-confidence. As obsessive compulsive tendencies control more of your life, the less confidence you have until fear and uncertainty are in control.

## What to Do

1. Take action at the critical point in the process. When something has been done and the temptation comes to “check it”—at the point when the fear, confusion, or thought to do or think it “just one more time” comes, this is the point when you must say, “No” and move on. Then peace comes.
  - God says, “Move on and you will experience peace.”
  - Satan says, “Check it again and you will experience peace.”
  - To say “No” and move on at the critical point is not easy, but it can be done.
2. Claim the truth. You do have a sound mind because that is what the Scriptures say God has given you.

## Conclusion

We are in a battle, and Satan has many ways to destroy us. Getting us involved in obsessive, compulsive problems is just one way. We need to know how Satan works in this area, but it is not enough to just know his tactics. We must resist him to experience the victory and peace which those who are spiritually oppressed desire so much.

## Practical Ideas for Coping with Emotional Problems

1. Get a complete physical checkup. Luke was a physician. Only take medicine when advised by a physician. Avoid the use of alcohol, drugs, etc. (1 Timothy 5:23).
2. Start an exercise program at least three times a week for twenty minutes. Jesus walked daily (I Corinthians 9:27).
3. Accept the fact that everyone has stress. Change your attitude about stressful or anxiety producing situations (Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 13:5; Hebrews 12:6-7).
4. Find a friend or counselor to talk with about your problems (James 5:16; Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).
5. Develop a constructive outlet for your stress (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Corinthians 9:27). Tension or stress repressed inwardly can result in sickness.
6. Have a specific procedure for dealing with problems that arise. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best (Proverbs 2:9-12).
7. Work at maintaining a balanced lifestyle and eat properly (2 Timothy 1:7).
8. Renew your mind with Scripture (Romans 12:1-2; Psalms 1:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5).
9. Have several hobbies or activities to participate in when anxiety or depression starts to set in. Paul made tents. Make a list of ten things that you will do whenever you start to get depressed.

10. Get adequate rest and sleep (Matthew 11:28-29).
11. Plan daily activities ahead of time and try to stick to your schedule even though you may not feel like it (Galatians 5:24; James 1:22; Proverbs 6:6-8).
12. Join a social group or plan activities involving other people. Participate in planned recreation activities (Galatians 6:2).
13. Set aside time daily for prayer, Bible study, and Scripture memory (2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 119:11).
14. Attend church every week unless physically ill (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians. 16:1-2).
15. Participate in some ministry where you can help others (Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 5:23-24).
16. Resolve anger in relationships before the sun goes down (Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 5:23-24).
17. Confront your fears in an appropriate manner with courage and strength (Proverbs 3:25; Psalm 27:1).
18. Set high enough standards for your habits and behavior. Set limits for your life and learn to be assertive (Psalm 119:105; 1 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 1:6-7; Ecclesiastes 12:12; Proverbs 4:14-15).
19. Set realistic expectations for yourself and those around you and look at the positive aspect of circumstances (Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 3:8-9).
20. Avoid any substances that you may be allergic to such as corn, wheat, eggs, tomatoes, citrus, or chocolate.
21. Establish specific priorities of things to do for the day by writing them down and placing a number of importance next to them with (1) being the most important and (10) being the least important. Delegate to others what others can do.
22. Try to limit major changes in your life to reduce stress.
23. Develop a sense of humor (Proverbs 15:13; Proverbs 17:22).
24. Learn to forgive (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).
25. Do not dwell on the past but set goals for the future and work towards them (Philippians 3:13-14; Romans 12:1-2).
26. Trust in the Lord to help you with problems that you cannot solve by yourself. Stop trying to control everyone and everything! (Proverbs 3:5-6).
27. Get up and do something constructive (James 1:22).
28. Stop assuming what others think and do, and simply ask (James 4:3). People often assume how the other person perceives of an event, what mood they are in, how they feel, the meaning of the words they use, their values (how important something is on a scale of 1 to 10), their motives, the meaning of their body language or tone of voice, how they think others will respond before given them a chance and giving them their personal preferences.

## How to Renew Your Mind

### Challenge Your Thoughts

- The thought can come from Satan so RESIST IT (James 4:7)
- The thought can come from the World so FLEE FROM IT (1 Timothy 6:11)
- The thought can come from the Flesh so CRUCIFY IT (Galatians 5:24)

- The thought can come from God so OBEY IT (Joshua 1:8)

### **Curb Your Thoughts**

- If the thought comes from God then it will always be consistent with Biblical truth. What does the Bible say about it? (2 Timothy 2:15)
- If the thought comes from God then it will always be consistent with absolute truth. What would happen if everyone in the world did this? (Matthew 7:17; 7:19)
- If the thought comes from God then it will always be consistent with theological truth. Is it consistent with the nature and character of God? (1 John 1:5; I John 2:11)

### **Change Your Thoughts**

- Recognize your false belief or perception. What belief or attitude is causing me to have this problem? (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- Replace it with a righteous belief or perception – what is the true belief that God wants me to have? (Psalm 119:11; John 8:3)
- Responsibly plan an appropriate righteous action. What response or action should I have next time this occurs? (Psalm 12-)
- Repeatedly practice the righteous behavior by faith (Philippians 4:9)