

The Church as a Culture of Care – Sunday School (Fall 2024)

Class 4–Chs.4-5

Problem–Man-centeredness: [If] sin is not our basic problem, psychology can then offer a soteriology—a means of hope, change, and salvation—apart from a biblical Christology. . .

[Accordingly,] the. . .use of these theories of self-sufficiency have only further confused and deceived us into thinking we have some power within to overcome our deepest problems. (72-73)

Solution–Christ-centeredness: Conversely, when problems are explained through a biblical lens, individuals are dependent upon the mercies of Christ for help and hope—an uncomfortable position for proud, independent, wandering sheep. . .The points that follow [in this chapter] are an attempt to reclaim the supremacy of Christ as the one who leads and guides his church, and the one we must submit to in everything we do. Submitting to Jesus’s plan for his church as found in Scripture will then guide our practices of soul care within the church (92, 69)

Functions of the Church

1. Evangelism—2 Cor. 4:4-7; 1 Pet. 2:9-10

Our first experience of soul care is the power of the Spirit regenerating our hearts by faith, which then enables us to believe in the Word of God. . .[Consequently,] Evangelism is one way that we imitate Christ by learning to lay down our own life—putting aside our fears and concern for reputation—for the sake of others, so that they may have their heart of stone be turned into a heart of flesh. Evangelism is deep soul care that engages in spiritual warfare for the good of another so that they may have life abundant and eternal. (76)

2. Discipleship—Eph. 4:17-24

Our submission to Christ’s authority is demonstrated by our growing obedience to all that he commands as we walk by the Spirit. Discipleship is what we call the process of helping another walk with Christ and be conformed to his image. . .[This necessitates being aware that] I usually do not hear a truth and then immediately live it out. I need people in my life who can admonish, remind and encourage me to be faithful as I grow to maturity in the Lord. (77)

Counseling ministry is simply the overflow of the normal discipleship process of the church. As an individual encounters an intense problem in their life, intensive and focused discipleship becomes necessary. Devoted one-on-one, formal meetings are necessary for addressing an acute problem. The purpose of biblical counseling is to help individuals grow in maturity and sanctification as they learn to address their sin and suffering in a way that glorifies the Lord and is for their good. Thus, Jesus not only builds his church by adding to the number of those being saved; he also builds the church by adding to the depth and maturity of those he has saved. (78)

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3. Ordinances—Acts 2:38-41; 1 Cor. 11:23-34

First, baptism is an act of obedience whereby an individual publicly proclaims faith in Christ and identifies with the fellowship of believers. This public proclamation is the ground upon which a member enters into the intimate care and responsibility of the church...Baptism acts as a stake in the ground for believers to be held accountable and cared for by the body of Christ...[Secondly, the Lord's Supper] binds the self-examination of our hearts with the vital remembrance of the sacrificial death of Christ and his triumph over sin. Although our wickedness is deep, our guilt and shame have been removed by the work of Christ. (78-79)

4. Church Discipline—Matt. 18:15-20

Life in Christ begins with the idea that we are needy people. When we see ourselves as needy, we will also appreciate the method of care that God has provided in church discipline. The goal of church discipline is to produce righteousness and restoration in the lives of believers... Church discipline begins with one-another relationships. Brotherly entreaty, caution, and warning are key when thinking about church discipline as a means of soul care. (79, 80)

...an essential first part of the first step is self-examination (Matt. 7:3-5; Gal. 6:1)...

This self-examination does not dismiss an offense, but it does help us to see an offense through a clearer lens. When we examine ourselves before God, we are more likely to approach our brother or sister with humility, gentleness, and the desire to restore rather than the desire to accuse and respond out of any defensiveness or bitterness caused by the offense. (80)

Going to each other one-on-one to lovingly address sin should be a common occurrence since we are called to live as a family of God in close proximity with one another, and we are all still wrestling with indwelling sin. This type of discipline happens in [a Christian home] every day...No one in the church is above this discipline, and the truth is that we all need it from time to time. (80)

Functions of Christ

1. The Reigning Head of His Church—Eph. 1:19b-23

2. The Good Shepherd of His Sheep—John 10:11-29

The Good Shepherd is always at work in his sheep to conform us to his image. As the Word of God transforms our hearts, we are able to reflect the character of God. The Word of God works in our heart to restore the fullness of the *imago dei* in us. (94)

3. The Complete Perfector of His Bride—Eph. 5:25-30

In light of these functions of Christ, what problem might we incur, that has any spiritual component, which Christ cannot provide effective assistance?