

We Proclaim Grace Through Counselling

Various Scriptures

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 8, 2019

Before we get started in our sermon time this morning, I just want to mention that next Sunday, we're going to be having a guest speaker join us for the morning service. As we've mentioned before, Dr. Richard Caldwell, the pastor of Founders Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, will be preaching for us. And like I mentioned before, he is someone that many of you know. He preached for our church (before I came) up here on the screen. And in light of that relationship, we've invited him to come join us for Family Camp. I'm proud of myself for this, but I haven't told you any Texas jokes yet on his behalf. I've shown great personal strength in this. But Dr. Caldwell is from a state that has produced many jokes. One of them I want to share with you now. It's been said there are two great things that have come out of Texas. I-40 east and I-40 west. I would say there's three. One of them is Richard Caldwell. So I-40 east, I-40 west and Dr. Caldwell. You're going to really enjoy his preaching next weekend, he's a gifted man. So please come join us for that.

I also want to mention you can notice in your bulletins, you can see the schedule for Family Camp. So if you can't make it to everything next weekend, we understand. But try to come to one of these things if you're available. There'll be a session on Friday night at seven o'clock. There'll be another one Saturday morning, and then Saturday afternoon. And of course, the Sunday morning service will be out there at Hope at ten o'clock. So don't come here next week for the Sunday morning service because we're going to be there. If you come here, it will be just you and the Lord. The rest of us will be in Hope. So please come join us for that if you can.

And speaking of Family Camp and family stuff, this Sunday, I want us to look at some of that together. I want us to look at our Vision Statement as a church. We are in between sermon series right now. We just finished the book of Jonah and we're going to be studying the book of Ephesians soon. That's the next book we're going to be looking at – it's going to be the book of Ephesians. We'll study that together.

But while we're in the break between the two books, I thought it would be good to talk about our Vision Statement as a church. Some of you remember this, but when I was at the Grace Advance Academy several years ago, they asked us to write a Vision Statement for our church that talked about what we're trying to do and where we're trying to go as a congregation, where we're trying to take our people. And the opening paragraph of the Vision Statement says that,

It is our vision is to proclaim "grace upon grace" to Chilliwack, British Columbia and to the ends of the earth. John 1:16-17 says, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

And then the next paragraph says this - it says,

At Grace Fellowship Chilliwack, we believe that salvation is all of grace and not of works. We believe it is something that God alone accomplishes in our lives, and nothing we contribute to ourselves. We believe it is unmerited favour, where Jesus

earns the Father's approval and, in His mercy, gives us the benefits of that through His shed blood on the cross and victorious resurrection from the tomb. Since we have received all of this, it is our vision as a church to proclaim grace upon grace in several ways.

And these are all up here on the screen; some of the ways we proclaim grace upon grace as a church. We do that through the Bible. We proclaim grace upon grace through worship. We do it through evangelism and service, through counselling and leadership. And then finally, the last point up here is we proclaim grace upon grace through equipping the saints. And if you want to read about that, those points are all on our website – gracefellowshipchilliwack.com. You can read about them there or you can look at them in the pamphlet that we have in the lobby that looks like this. We've got it all spelled out for you there. But this is what we are trying to do as a church. This is our vision. We want to proclaim grace upon grace to people and tell them salvation is all of God and not of us.

Several years ago, I heard the story of a guy who was asked what he wanted to see in a church and he said, "Red brick." He wanted to go to a church in a red brick building. That was his vision for the church. That's all he wanted out of a church. Well, I would say we want more than that. We want to proclaim God's grace to people. We want to go to a church that tells people they can be saved through the work of Jesus Christ and nothing else. And one of the areas we're going to talk about that this morning is in the area of counselling.

The next paragraph is the section on counselling. We've looked at the first four points together, but the fifth point of our Vision Statement says, "We proclaim grace upon grace through counselling." And it says this, it says,

Because we are confident that God's grace is sufficient, it is our vision to help each other in the various challenges of life. Not only do we meet physical needs in the church, but we meet spiritual needs as well. Not only do we help people with their bodily needs, but we also help them with the needs of their souls. Romans 15:14 says, "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another." In other words, Christians can counsel each other in the church. The Bible gives us all we need "pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). And we believe that we can use it to help each other conquer sin and live a righteous, God-honoring life.

I just want to say a few words about this, but one mark of a healthy church is that the people help each other, right? We all get that? We all understand that? One mark of a healthy church, whether it has young people or old people in it, whether it meets in a city or in the countryside, one mark of a good church is its members help each other. Not only do they meet the physical needs, but they meet spiritual needs of one another. They help people with their bodies and their souls, whatever that looks like. It can look like encouragement, exhortation, rebuke, admonishment, hope. You can do this in the area of marriage, in the area of parenting, in the area of conflict, finances, relationships. But this is what the church does - we help people. We serve one another in Christian love.

And one of the main ways we can do this is through the ministry of counselling; when one Christian sits across the table from another Christian and listens to their problems, hears their

concerns, and then we open the Bible to show them what it says about that. We'll say a little more about this in a minute.

But the word “admonish” in Romans 15:14 is a very important word. It's the word *neutheteo* from which we get “nouthetic counselling.” Some of you have heard of nouthetic counselling before, but before ACBC, the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors started, it was called NANC or the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. My wife and I used to sometimes speak wisdom into each other's lives and say, “Now you've been ‘NANC-ed,’ now you may go.” You've been NANC-ed – NANC-tified, right? It means to encourage someone to obey Scripture. That's essentially what that word *neutheteo* means, to exhort and to do what it says. It's a compound word from *nous* – “mind”, and *ti theimi* – “to put”, and it literally means “to put the Bible into someone's mind.” It's not just a negative word, it can be positive as well. But it means to take the Scriptures and to the best of your ability, fill someone's heart and soul with them. You listen to their problems, you hear their concerns, and then you put the Bible into their marriage or their parenting or their conflict. It's not about your word, it's about the Word of God, and you put that into their heart.

A football coach in Georgia once tried to tell his players to stay away from drugs. So he came up with an interesting idea where he walked into a meeting and he threw a six foot rattlesnake onto the table and everyone ran away. And as they ran, he shouted out, “When you see a snake, you run from it, but you should do the same thing with drugs.” And that worked for maybe a week or two, but not very long. Eventually the players just went back to the drugs because a snake doesn't have the power to change someone's life. A snake, even a rattlesnake, doesn't have the power to make someone different. But the Bible does. The Word of God does. It can change everything, it can rearrange someone's life.

And one of the ways it does it, is through the ministry of counselling. You can do this in preaching, you can do this in teaching. You can do this when we sing the Word of God and read it out loud together. But another way is to apply the Word of God to people's problems.

And one passage that's really helpful for this is Romans 15:14. So if you would turn there with me, that's the passage we're in this morning. That's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to be NANC-tified as a congregation in Romans chapter 15. This passage says so much about counselling because it says (and Quinten mentioned this a moment ago) everyone can do it. That's the point of this passage. That's why I want us to turn there. It says counselling is something everyone can do in the church. This is not just for the pastors and elders, this is not just for the “specialists,” this is something every Christian can do.

Throughout the centuries, in church history, it was understood that Christians could help each other with their problems. The reformers believed that, the puritans believed that. It wasn't until recent years that this whole idea of sending them off to a specialist came into play. And when someone had a problem, the church didn't deal with it together, they sent them off to someone that nobody knew. And the reason for centuries the church believed that we could help each other with our problems, is because of this passage here.

And just to give you some background for this, I've told you before, the Book of Romans is about the power of God for salvation. That's why we've talked about it a lot on Sunday mornings. But Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” That is the theme of the book of Romans.

And that word “power” is a wonderful word because it's the word *dunamis* in Greek, from which we get the word “dynamite.” The Gospel or the good news that Jesus Christ has died for sinners, Paul says, is the dynamite of God. It will blow up everything in your life. Just like you don't walk into a room and throw dynamite in there and expect nothing to change, there's no big deal – well, you don't throw the Gospel into the room and think the same thing. You expect the Gospel to change things in someone's life, which applies to counselling because you need God's power to change. I can't tell you how many times I hear someone tell me their problems and I think, “What am I going to do? I don't know what to say to this. I don't know how to help this person. Yes, I do, I have dynamite. All I have to do is light it up and hand it to them.”

And the Book of Romans says that you can have this full and free, and Paul says this in the first 14 chapters. And then he ties this into the subject of counselling in chapter 15. And we just read this a moment ago. I won't read this all to you because we've already read it. But I do want to point out a few things in here in Romans 15. Paul gives us several commands here in this chapter. They're all personal, they relate to all of us. You see the word “we” and “you” in here, which means this is not just for leadership, this is for everyone in the church. But if you look in verse 1, he says, “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength.” In other words, we should help each other like we've been talking about. That's the job of a church. We should meet each other's needs. Paul says, you do this by bearing each other's weakness. That means you bear the weight of them. The weak can't carry their burdens. They're too heavy, they're crushing them. And so the job of the strong is to come in and help them bear up under it. That doesn't mean you do that by yelling at them or condemning them or that kind of thing. You walk with them through their problem.

Verse 7 says this way, “Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.” That means accept their problems, accept their struggles, accept everyone in the church. There's no exceptions to the Gospel. The Gospel saves everyone and so it's the same way with our help, it's offered to everyone. Our counselling is offered to everyone.

And then Paul lays it out this way in verse 14. This is where he gets very specific, and he says, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” There you see that word, *nutheteo*. You're able to encourage each other to obey Scripture. This is the greatest way you can help someone, this is the greatest way you can bless someone in the church, is by exhorting them to do what the Word of God says and reminding them God has given them the power to do it. God has given you dynamite, you hand it to them and you watch it go to work in their lives.

And that leads us to our passage for today, because in this passage, Romans 15:14, Paul gives us three reasons why you can counsel one another in the church. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. This is what we're talking about; three reasons why you can counsel one another in the church. And they all revolve around this idea. They revolve around the fact that God has given you all you need to do this. You have the power, you have the resources to counsel each other.

One of the greatest objections I hear from people ... let me say it this way before I get there. Oftentimes, somebody will come up to me in a church and they'll say, “Hey, Pastor Jeremy, I'm helping this person with their problem, is that okay?” “No, I want to deal with every problem - No, absolutely, that's okay. Please, please do that. Absolutely!” The Scripture says

you can, and I am so blessed when you say that. I don't have to deal with every problem, you can. We can do it together. One of the greatest objections I hear from people when I talk to them about counselling in the church, is that they don't feel like they're ready. They don't feel like they're prepared. They say, "I haven't been to seminary, I haven't been to Bible College. I haven't gone to all the conferences." Paul says, "Well, maybe so, but have you gone to Jesus? That's enough. Have you been to the cross? Then you're ready. Go out and help someone." They say, "I've sinned too much, I've messed up too much." Paul says, "Too much for what? Too much for the Gospel?" Give your sin to Jesus, give your problems to Him and go out and get ready to counsel. You want to be careful when you do this. You want to make sure to get the Bible right, but there should be nothing holding you back from speaking truth into one another's life. And to explain this, Paul gives you three reasons why you can counsel one another in the church.

And the first one is this, you can do this because you're family. The first reason why you can counsel one another in the church is because you are a family. You have an immediate connection to one another in this congregation. God has seen fit to that. He's given you that as a gift. You guys know this, but no one can speak truth in your life like family, right? Sometimes they're a little too willing to speak truth into your life. No one can be as blunt as them, but they can do that. Family can do that because they love you, and you know that. It's the same way here.

So Paul begins in the first few words of verse 14, and he says, "And concerning you, my brethren." Just to talk about those first few words here in the verse, the phrase "concerning you" is a little hard to translate into English because it doesn't come at the front of the sentence in Greek like it does here. So some of your translations may leave it out. But the idea is that Paul is now relating this to the Romans. He's now connecting all this stuff about the Gospel and the good news to them. He's been speaking generally so far, now he speaks specifically and he says, "Concerning you, my brethren." The word brethren here is *adelphos* in Greek, which means "brothers" or "siblings." It doesn't just refer to men, it can refer to women as well. But this is anyone who shares the same parent. Paul says, "This is what the Gospel does for you. This is how it blesses your life. This is where we're starting the passage, by reminding you that the Gospel has put you all into one family. It's made you brothers and sisters in Christ." First Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free." Which ties into the subject of counselling several ways. This idea of a family, it ties into the topic we're talking about in a couple of ways.

For one thing, it's this: we're all on the same playing field. Right? Do you guys get that? We all see eye to eye. We're saved by the same Gospel, saved by the same power of God, and it makes us peers. Everyone in a family is equal. I don't go to family reunions and my relatives say, "I'm more of a Cagle than you are." No, you're either a Cagle or you're not. And you're either a Christian or you're not. You're family. Same playing field. You don't have some people up here and some people down here. You're all dead even at the cross, which is why you can speak truth into each other's lives. I think it was Jonathan Edwards who said when people came to him with a problem in counselling ... Jonathan Edwards would stay in his desk 11 hours a day. A lot of it was studying, but a lot of it was hearing people's concerns in the church and counselling them and helping them ... And he said when people would come to him with their problems, he would always say in his heart of hearts, "If you just knew how bad my life was, my heart was." This is Jonathan Edwards, like the greatest theologian ever. The Gospel does that. We're family, we're brothers.

It also unites us. This is another thing a family does for us. It makes us peers, but it also unites us closer together so that we're all on the same page now, we're all working from the same book. When we sit down and deal with each other's problems, it's not like some of you bring in the Quran and some of you bring in the books of Hindu. No, we're all reading from the Bible. They say that blood is thicker than water, family ties are deepest. And when you get saved, you experience that. There's a tie that's closer than anything in this world. You guys have told me this, some of you have told me that the people in this church are closer to you than anyone in this world. They're closer to you than your friends, they are closer to you than your earthly family, and that's because God has done that for you.

Which ties into this topic of counselling because counselling can be difficult at times, right? Just like a family, it can be very uncomfortable because you have to say things that are hard, you have to say things that are difficult to hear. And when you do, people need to know you love them. When you say hard things to people, they need to know you care and you're family. If not, they're going to shut you out. If you go into the counselling room saying, "Wrong, wrong, wrong," or "Guilty, guilty, guilty," you're done. One of the things they teach you in Biblical counselling training is, if you can in the first session, just listen. Just ask questions to show them you care about them – they're family.

I remember counselling a young man in Indiana several years ago who was struggling with sin, and he was really giving into a particular sin to the point that one day he didn't show up for counselling. And we called his wife to see where he was, and she didn't know where he was. He'd been gone for I think a day or two. She later found out he had gone to another city to kill himself. But right before he died, he called her on the phone, right before he shot himself, he brought his gun with him and everything. He reached out one more time for help, which made her call the police and they broke into his hotel room with a SWAT team and put him in a psych ward for a week for suicide prevention.

And when he got out, they came to see me. The husband and wife sat down across from the desk, and I remember looking at them thinking, "What am I going to say? I can't tell you 'good job' because you didn't do a good job. And I can't tell you this is all going to work out well because if you go back and do that again, this is not going to work out well. You have to change." So I didn't know where to start.

So I opened up the Bible with them, I shared the Gospel with them, the good news. I gave them some hope and then they came back next week, and they came back the next week, and they came back the next week. I met with this guy for two and a half years. And over time, they began to change. Over the next several years, the young man became different and I asked him why? I said, "Why did you listen to me on that first day, and why do you keep coming back?" And he said, "Because I knew that you loved me. I knew this church cared about me."

That's Paul's point here. It's kind of subtle in the way he starts out verse 14. But he starts off on a very important note, by reminding us that we are family, we're brethren. The first reason you counsel one another, the first reason you can do this is because you love each other. You are *adelphos* - siblings, relatives. And that bond allows you to speak into each other's life in a way that nothing else ever could. There are people in this church that can say things to me that my earthly family can't say, and I would hear it. The same way for you. God has given us that gift. Winston Smith, a Biblical counsellor in Philadelphia once said, "At the heart of Biblical counseling is not a set of skills but a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore,

counseling requires a personal touch. We need to counsel one another remembering that we're all part of the family of God. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Which leads us to the next point in the verse here, the next reason you can counsel one another. First is because you're a family. Second reason is this, is because you are full of goodness. That's what the passage says here. Second reason you can counsel one another in the church is because you are full of goodness. Which sounds kind of strange, but it doesn't mean full of sinless goodness. It just means full of good and sincere life. It's kind of a difficult thing to translate or to interpret here. But the idea is you're full of a good conscience. You counsel people out of love because you care about them. And if you read on in verse 14, Paul says this, it says, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness.”

Just to unpack that a little bit, if you notice, this is the second time Paul says you're full of something in this passage. The word “full” is *mestos* in Greek, and it means “You have more than enough of something. You have an abundant supply.” And if you look in verse 13, he says this, Paul writes, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

He kind of says it two ways there. This is a prayer, it's a request to God, and Paul asks the Lord to make the Romans full of joy and peace so that they will abound, which is another way of saying be full of hope. Paul prays here, that they will be full, full, full of these things. Their cup will runneth over, over, over, because counselling can be hard at times. It can make you feel empty. You feel like you just give your soul to someone and they walk off with it.

So, Paul prays ahead of time that the Lord will take care of that and fill them with these things: joy, peace, hope. Joy because it can be a sad thing to work with someone through their problems. Peace because it can be unsettling. I've talked to people that start counselling for the first time and one of their first thoughts they say is, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, that's too much information.” Well, what did you think they were going to talk about in here? But you need peace, settle down. You need hope so that you will not despair.

And then he says in verse 14, if that's not enough, he says in verse 14, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness.” That word in Greek, it's a little hard to translate, but it means the idea is a good spirit or a good heart. It doesn't mean good in a sinless sense, but full of good intentions. It's another way of saying, “I myself am convinced that the Lord will give you a good conscience.”

There are times in counselling when people get mad at you. It can be kind of hard. And the one thing that you fall back on is a good conscience. There's sleepless nights. There are times when you work through something with somebody. You get done at 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night and what do you think about the whole night? “Did I say the right thing? Did I mess up this person's life? Did I just blow it?” And Paul says, when you think like that, you can rest assured knowing that you're full of goodness. The Lord has given you a good conscience. Paul talks a lot about the conscience in his ministry. If you teach them the Bible, God is pleased with that. If you examine your motives and know you're doing this out of love, the Lord is pleased. But the point he's making in this passage, the greater point is this, you have all you need to counsel people. That's the idea here. You have more than enough. Paul says it three different ways in this passage so far; for you to get the point that God has taken care of everything, you abound in these things, you are full of these things.

Which blows away the objection that says, "I don't feel ready." It blows away the thought that says, "I don't feel prepared for this. I'm so inadequate, I'm so unworthy." Paul says, "You are inadequate, but God is not. You are unworthy, but Christ is not. You may not be prepared, but He is. He is all you need, you turn to Him." People say, "I can't do this because I've sinned too much," but the Gospel takes care of that as well. God has given you dynamite that can blow up anything.

Just before he died, John Wesley wrote a letter to William Wilberforce, the man responsible for ending slavery in England, because Wilberforce was discouraged and he wanted to quit. So John Wesley wrote to him saying,

Unless the divine power has raised you up, I see not how you can grow through your glorious enterprise in opposing that [the abominable practice of slavery]...But if God be for you, who can be against you. If God before you, who can tear you down for is anything stronger than God. Is anything better than Him? Go in the name of God and in the power of His might."

That's what Paul says here.

You can just imagine if you were saved in the first century out of the city of Rome, what kind of sins would you be bringing with you into the church? I mean, the list would be endless. I mean, if you did free counselling service, there would be a line out the door and down the street. Sexual sins, substance abuse, spouse abuse - I mean, just go on down the list, it would be endless. And Paul tells these people, "You can take care of this, you can do this because God has filled you to the top."

You can look at it this way, it's almost like there's two sides of a coin. There's two ways of looking at this. And on one side of the coin, you have your sin and your weakness and your frailty, you have all your limitations. And on the other side of the coin, you have God and He has no limitations. You have His power and His strength and His goodness. You have His peace and joy and hope, and the question is which side of the coin are you going to look at. And this is not just in counselling, this is in your Christian life in general, which side of the coin are you going to go to when you struggle with things?

I hear people all the time say, "I can't do this, I can't do this. I'm too much of a mess." And I say, "Well, no one's arguing that you're a mess, but there's a whole other side of the coin you're not looking at. And that is the power of God. That is where you find strength." John Calvin said, "Jesus is mightier to save than you are to sin. He is a greater Saviour than you are a sinner, and so you need to look to Him." Which leads to one more point that we're going to look at this morning. One more reason why you can counsel one another in the church.

Just to review, the first one is because you're family. You can counsel one another because the Gospel and the power of God has put you into one big family so that you can speak truth into one another's life. Second reason is because you're full of goodness. You're full of all kinds of things in here. But the Lord has given you a clear conscience to help you. And it leads us to one more point that builds off of that. One more reason why you can counsel one another in the church, and that is because you are full of knowledge. Not only are you full of goodness, but God has made you full of knowledge as well, which means you have the Word of God to give to people. As our Vision Statement says, the Bible gives us all we need pertaining to life and godliness. And if you read in verse 14 Paul says it this way, he says,

“And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

That is the third time Paul says, “You're full of something.” Just in case you didn't get it the first two times, he says it again here. And he says, “You are full of all knowledge.” Not just knowledge, but all knowledge. Not just some information, but all the information you would need to help people. God did not leave anything out. When doctors meet with a patient, they make it very clear that they don't know everything. They have limitations. When scientists study a problem, they say the same thing. They don't know everything. But God does know everything. There is no problem on this planet that God does not have an answer for. And He's told you all you need to know in His Word in order to help people. In thousands of years of human history, you are not dealing with something that has not been dealt with before.

The word “knowledge” here in Greek, it could mean several things - knowledge or information. It can mean “insight,” which is probably a good word here. Because the idea is God can give you insight into people's problems. You may not know what to do, you may be caught flat footed when they bring an issue to you, but the Word of God has an answer to it. You can help them with their marriage and their parenting and their conflict. You can help them with their finances and relationships or whatever they need, because the answers are talked about in the Bible.

When the Biblical counselling movement first started, a group of secular psychologists met with Jay Adams to talk to him about what this Biblical counselling stuff was. They didn't know what it was all about. And so they asked if he would sit down and meet with them and talk to them about it. And he did. He said, “The biggest difference between Biblical counselling and secular psychology is this, you don't know what you're trying to do with people.” He says, “You don't know where you're trying to take them.” I think he should have been more blunt, personally. I don't think that's blunt enough. But he says, “Some of you say one thing, some of you say another, some of you want to help them this way, some of you want to help them that way.” He says, “But we know what we're trying to do with people. We're trying to make them more like Jesus Christ. We know where we're taking them. We're taking them to be His disciple, and we do that with one book, one resource, the Word of God.” In his book, “The Christian Counselor's Manual” Jay Adams said it this way, he said,

Just as the Christian counselor knows that there is no unique problem that has not been plainly mentioned in the Scriptures, so we also know that there is no problem that does not have a Biblical solution. We know too that Jesus was tested in all things just as we are, yet He was without sin. And since Jesus faced and solved all of life's basic problems, we know He can help us to do the same. David even says this in the 23rd Psalm that, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack.”

Which is really the point of all this. This is what I'm trying to drive home with you this morning. You don't lack anything when you counsel people. The Lord is your Shepherd. There's no problem that you don't have an answer to in the Bible. God is not sending you out to fail, God is not sending you out as sheep to be slaughtered. He's sending you out to succeed, which is what we believe as a church. This is part of our Vision Statement. We want to proclaim grace upon grace through counselling. We want to see our people admonishing one another and filling each other's minds up with the Word of God, because they know that God is enough to do this.

And to put all this together this morning, to kind of tie this passage into our Vision Statement, I came up with a few ways you can prepare to do this (if you just want to write these down), a few ways you can get ready to counsel people in the church.

One is don't be surprised when people bring their problems to you. Don't be surprised when people bring their problems to you. Look, this is a church, this is a hospital for sinners. This is not a perfect place. Which means when someone brings a concern to you, don't get shocked and get all weird about it. This is family. This is what we do. It's what you signed up for. So be ready for that and be expectant. Some people fall to pieces when someone brings a problem to them, they go all crazy. But you don't want to be that way. You want to be ready.

A second way to prepare to counsel people is to read up on it. Maybe do some study on the topic of counselling. So then when someone does bring a problem to you, you know what to say. There's several ways you can do this. There are resources through ACBC or the Biblical Counselling Movement. There're books and conferences. Spring Creek Bible Church in Bellingham just did one this weekend. Some of you were able to go to that. And I think they're going to have that online here in a couple of months. You can listen to those.

Or here's just a simple thing you can do, is just be familiar with your Bible. I mean, just memorize three passages on anger, so that if an angry person talks to you, you have somewhere to take them. Memorize four passages on hope. Learn the Romans road where it walks you through salvation. And if someone comes to you, you can talk to them about the Gospel. But there's all kinds of things - just learn your Bible.

You also need to be humble about this. That's another way to prepare for this. Be humble when someone comes to you for help. Like we talked about in this series on Jonah, you need to see yourself down here and not up here. So that when someone comes to you for help, you don't say, "Finally, someone realized how great and wise I am. I've been here for years waiting for this moment." You don't do that. You need to say, "Finally, they realized how great God is" and you're going to take them to Him. You're just a messenger. By the way, if you get on a high horse and you counsel someone long enough, they'll knock you off of it. It's a humbling thing.

And one more thing to do, is you need to be hopeful in this. One more way to prepare to counsel people in the church is you need to be hopeful and positive about this. If you're not careful, counselling can make you cynical because you're dealing with people's problems. I mean, it's pretty rare I get a phone call, someone just telling me how wonderful they're doing. It happens and I love it, but it's pretty rare. But you got to remember that's what you're here for and be hopeful. God can do great things in people's life. He can give you all you need and fill you up. He can give you His power to do wonderful things. So be hopeful.

Do that and God will be glorified. Do that and His grace will be proclaimed in Chilliwack until the ends of the earth. We have a wonderful God, don't we? He's given us all we need for these things, and let's pray and thank Him for that this morning.

Father, we do thank you Lord for Your Word, just for the sufficiency of it, and not just the sufficiency of Your Word, but the sufficiency of our salvation in Christ. We read in here of all the things You've given us in Your Son, the Lord Jesus, and we thank you for that Lord, and we rejoice in that. And Father, I pray for our church this morning. I pray we would grow in this area of helping one another in counselling and admonishment. Thank you, Lord, for all

those who are already investing in each other's lives in this area. Thank you, Lord, that we have a teachable, humble congregation. Our people love to learn the Word of God, and we thank you and rejoice in that.

Thank you, Father, for the hope we do have in Christ. And we draw on that hope this morning. There may be some who are struggling with areas of life. Lord, I pray that You would let them know they can go to others for help. Thank you, Lord, that there are many who are doing that, would You bless them and grow us in Christ likeness this morning as we apply these things to our lives.

As we take the Lord's Supper, help us to remember the Wonderful Counselor, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray this in His name, amen.