**Gospel of Grace in Counseling**

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1. The **Importance** of the Gospel of Grace in the Counseling Room
2. Establish confidence that the counselee is a **true** follower of Christ(Matt.7:21-23; 1 John 2:3-4; 4:7-8; 5:1) – The Cross of Christ provides the ultimate lens on life. The cross tells us what is wrong with people and how their spiritual heart issues can be fixed. The cross tells us what the individual’s role is in the work of change. The cross reminds us and our counselees who are struggling with fear, anxiety, depression, isolation, addiction, or other sin or suffering issues, how the Gospel of Grace provides the power, resources, and means to overcome various light momentary afflictions (2 Cor 4:17-18)) and to grow more and more into the image of Christ.
3. However, due to **personal** sin, our counselees’ often shrink back into a tight ball sitting in the corner, focused on self and man-centered desires.
4. Remember, the Gospel not only **diagnoses** man’s personal life dominating sin issues, but it is also the **curative** to sin and suffering - People are unable to escape their words, thoughts, or deeds. This is why the promise and fulfillment of a new spiritual heart, in Ezekiel 36:26, through the perfect final sacrifice of Christ in the gospels is so key to not only salvation but present sanctification and future glorification! At the same time, the cross tells us that we are absolutely powerless in ourselves to change the thoughts, words, and deeds of other people we are discipling and counseling. However, we have the Spirit-giving and Scripture-instructing means to help people know the Lord Jesus Christ and to access the unlimited tools for living a life that is pleasing and glorifying to God (2 Pet 1:3) in all that we do (Isa 43:7; John 15;11; 2 Cor 5:9; 2 Pet 1:3).
5. Biblical sufficiency-based counseling does not offer individuals a **system** or **steps** to change their current situation - Rather it introduces individuals, through the Gospel, to a Lord and Savior who is able to accomplish far more in our lives than the world was ever able to accomplish!
6. At the outset of any counseling, questions need to be asked regardingthecounselee’s professions of **faith** until there is a solid understanding of their **position** in Christ - Have they responded and are they continuing to respond to the truths of the Gospel and the Word of God in the both the narrow & broad sense?
7. Ultimately, the **key** to our discipling and counseling is the question: *“Are people trusting in the truths of the Gospel and the God of the Gospel?”*- As counselors, we are all dependent upon the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to see people experience spiritual heart attitude and lifestyle change - The Spirit and Word are essential from beginning to end; we are totally dependent on them to produce regeneration and lasting spiritual heart attitude change through the process of sanctification.
8. The Gospel of Grace can be summarized from **1 Peter 3:18**, “*Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”*

* **The following is a quick summary of the Gospel to clarify our counselees’ understanding of the help and hope found in the multifaceted wonders of the gospel of GRACE!**
  1. God created us for his **glory**!:In Isaiah 43:7 God, *“created [us for His] glory.”* God created every man and woman as an image-bearer so that we would project God’s image out into the rest of His creation, to our families, friends, and communities, to reflect His character and moral beauty. Because we are predominately spiritual beings who share in God’s communicable attributes, we are capable of reason, emotion, will, and experiencing relationship and expressing love.
  2. The manifestation of **daily** living for God’s glory**:** The Apostle Paul also reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that *“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”* The way to live for the glory of God is to love him (Matt 22:37), trust him (Rom 4:20), thank him (Psa 50:23), and obey him (Matt 5:16). When we do these things, we project God’s glory to a watching world! The heart of every true follower of Christ should desire to reflect God in every little detail of the life as an act of worship!

Beloved, we reveal God’s glory in our lives when we live with peace and joy based on the help and hope found only in the Almighty Sovereign God, who is in charge of all the circumstances of life. Do people see us trusting Him in blessings and trials of life? Or do they see us grumbling or depressed and overcome by work and family?

* 1. God is **pleased** when we live for His glory:Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:9, *“So whether we are at home [in our present bodies and life here on earth] or away [in heaven in the presence of the Lord], we make it our aim to please [God].”* Paul aimed to love what was honorable, striving for excellence, whether in his present life or future eternal life. Paul intentionally focused on living a life that pleased God!
     + **So how is God pleased?** - This is living in loving obedience to God’s Word. When we trust and abide in His plans and purposes, God is pleased and we will experience soul-satisfying joy in what His amazing grace provides!
  2. However, Romans 3:23 points out that all have **sinned** and fall short of God’s glory. Then in Romans 1:21-23, Paul also points out that, *“Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him . . . and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.”* None of us have loved, trusted, thanked, obeyed, pleased, or glorified God as we were originally created to do!
  3. As a consequence of sin, we all deserve eternal **punishment**:What we deserve: In Romans 6:23, *“The wages of sin is (eternal) death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* For those who fail to obey Christ in every aspect of their lives, Paul states in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, *“[They] shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”* In Matthew 25:46 Jesus reminds us of the destiny of those who reject His free gift of salvation, *“These will go away into eternal punishment…”*.
  4. However by God’s great **mercy**, He sent forth his only Son Jesus Christ to provide the way of eternal life for sinners: Jesus declared in John 3:16-17, *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life... FOR God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through [His Son].”* The Apostle Peter reiterates this point in 1 Peter 3:18, *“Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God”* (cf. Gal 3:13).

Remember beloved, the world’s concept of fairness changes with the standard of each new generation, “in accordance with the rules or standards.” However, God dispenses a perfect holy and righteous justice for those who sin against His word and will … EVEN THOUGH this fallen world does not describe the God of the Bible as fair. BUT PRAISE THE LORD, He is also gracious, loving, longsuffering, merciful, patient, and faithful and because of HIS MERCY, HE NEVER compromises like the world does.

* 1. The Result: Eternal **Life** as God’s free gift to all who by faith trust in Christ as Lord and Savior:
     + **Acts 16:31**, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”*
     + **Romans 10:9**, *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*
     + **Ephesians 2:8-9**, “*By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*
     + **Galatians 2:20**, *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

1. The Apostle Paul expressed his gratefulness and indebtedness for the unfathomable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Gospel of Grace – In Acts 20:24 Paul states*, “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, IF ONLY**I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”* Why was Paul so grateful and indebted for the unfathomable beauty and value of the Gospel? \*\*\*For many Christians, this is a question that we fail to consider and meditate on!
2. Many followers of Christ understand the importance of the Gospel for their salvation but fail to understand how it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to their present sanctification (becoming more and more like Christ) and their inevitable future glorification!
3. Despite the great gift of God’s grace revealed in the glorious Gospel, there is a greater gift than just salvation**…**it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Himself!
4. We can view the Gospel (*euanggelion*) as a glorious \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with ***14 Biblical Facets***that reflect the truths of the Gospel of Grace, not only critical for salvation and glorification, but for our counselee’s present sanctification[[1]](#footnote-1)

**A Project for Growth:** For each facet of the gospel that is presented, we can ask our counselees the “**So What Question?”** In other words, helping them to see how the various facets of the Gospel inform and encourage their hearts, as well as empower them in their *present process of sanctification and living a life that is pleasing and glorifying to God, which results in great joy!*

1. **Gospel Facet #1** – There is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God - The gospel includes the good news that there is a living God who created heaven and earth. When Paul and Barnabas came to a city of Asia Minor named Lystra, Paul began to preach the gospel. He started out like this in Acts 14:15, *“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.”* The “good news” includes the truth that there is a living God who created all these things.

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #2** – Jesus is exercising his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the King of kings to bring us help and hope - The gospel not only includes the truth that God is the LIVING Creator, but He is also the King of the universe. Jesus Christ is exerting his “Imperial Authority” over the world for the sake of those who believe by saving faith in the gospel! In Romans 10:15 the apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 to show that the gospel he is preaching was predicted by God, *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”*  The last three words point out another facet of the Gospel Diamond, **“Our God reigns over everything!”**

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #3** – Jesus: The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who is Christ, the Lord - When the angels announced Jesus’ arrival in Bethlehem, they were proclaiming the GOSPEL, which is the arrival of the Living Lord, the Sovereign King, and the promised Messiah (which is what “Christ” means), the Son of David. In Luke 2:10-11, *“The angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* The Good News is that the King of the universe (the Lord), the Messiah (Christ) has come to be THE SAVIOR of people spiritually dying due to “sin-sickness!”

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #4** – Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for our sins according to the Scriptures - How did Jesus, the Messiah, the Lord of heaven become a Savior? Jesus tells us in Luke 22:20, *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* In other words, Jesus shed his blood for others, and obtained the long-promised “new covenant,” proclaimed in Jeremiah 31:34*,“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* In 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, the apostle Paul links two important words or phrases in these three verses: “gospel” and the “death” of Jesus for our sins - “*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you . . . For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”*

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #5** - Jesus, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the dead - If Jesus had stayed DEAD, there would be NO GOSPEL! Paul made this crystal-clear in 1 Corinthians 15:17, *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins”* (cf. 1 Cor 15:1, 3-4). If the King of kings is NOT currently ruling, then there is no gospel! Jesus made it clear that he would rise from the dead and Paul reminds us that this was an essential part of the Gospel: *“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel”* (2 Tim 2:8).

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #6** – The gospel is not good news without the promise of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. - When John the Baptist preached the gospel in the wilderness region of Judea near the Jordan River, he emphasized that the Mighty One, the Messiah would soon come. In Luke 3:15-16, 18 he states, *“As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, I [John] baptize you with water, but he [Jesus] who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire... So with many other exhortations [encouragements] he preached good news to the people.”* The point here is that Jesus did not baptize with water, but with the HOLY SPIRIT and FIRE, which demonstrated Jesus’ superiority over John the Baptist. These two supernatural acts, spiritually baptizing with the HOLY SPIRIT and FIRE, can only be performed by God Himself, who alone gifts us with His indwelling Spirit to those who repent and for those who do not repent but reject the Good News of the gospel they will receive the justice of the fires of judgment (Mal 4:1)

In addition, Jesus preached “many other exhortations” of the Good News of the gospel, which occurred after Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended back to heaven! Beloved, Jesus did not leave the disciples or our counselee without his presence, power, his fellowship and help! Jesus said to his disciples and to us in John 14:17-18, *“You know [the Spirit of truth] for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”* In other words, when the Spirit comes, the Spirit of Christ indwells each follower of Christ.

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #7** – The gospel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of salvation - One of the most encompassing words to describe the “good news” of what God does forus and inus is SALVATION. - Paul says in Romans 1:16, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”* (cf. Eph 1:13). What is the relationship of salvation to the gospel? Should we speak of salvation only as the result of the gospel or as part of the gospel?

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #8** – What the cross \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ makes the cross good news - When Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and helped the poor, He revealed to us what the cross purchased for the true believer and why the gospel of the kingdom is indeed Good News. The Gospels confirm this truth for God’s people in Matthew 4:23, *“[Jesus] went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.”* Then in Luke 4:18, when Jesus opened his ministry in Nazareth, Jesus said, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”*

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #9** – The good news of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with God and others - The Good News of the gospel is also the hope of peace with God. For example, in Acts 10:36, Peter described the gospel that God sent through Jesus as *“the word that [God] sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ”* (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18, Eph 6:15).

In addition, the Good News of the gospel is also the hope of peace between people, as seen in Ephesians 2:14-18, *“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.****18****For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”*

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #10** – The good news promises \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **-** The effect of this peace with God through the gospel is eternal life! This too is what makes the gospel of Christ truly Good News. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:10, *“[God’s divine plan and purpose] has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #11** – The gospel is good news for all the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ -Part of what makes the good news…GOOD is that Jesus rules as the King of kings over all people and nations! In Galatians 3:8 Paul says, *“The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’”* Preaching the gospel means announcing the good news that all the nations, not just Israel, will be blessed through Abraham— through the death and resurrection of Abraham’s seed, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16).

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #12** – The basis of the gospel is God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **-** This is why Paul calls his message “the gospel of the grace of God.” One of the most vivid testimonies of the gospel of grace is seen in Acts 20:24, *“I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” More than once the gospel is called “the word of his grace”* (cf. Acts 14:3; 20:32). The gospel is the GOOD NEWS of what God’s grace promises to sinners and how we access it through Christ.

The grace of the gospel is the “free” blessing, resources, and power of God that flows from the heart of God to guilty and undeserving sinners. Therefore, salvation by grace is the opposite of man’s good works, good performance, good family, good looks, or good characteristics! This is what Paul means with his fundamental statement about the gospel of grace in Romans 11:6, *“It is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”*

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #13** – Jesus’ death makes God’s gospel grace \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_! - The decisive act of God’s grace is not only Jesus’ incarnation, life, and ministry, BUT also according to Hebrews 2:9, Jesus’ suffering and death on Calvary’s cross: *“[Jesus suffered and died] so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone [who will believe]”* (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).

In Genesis 3:21 God first revealed his grace to sinful Adam and Eve in the Garden when he performed the first blood sacrifice to temporarily cover their sins – *“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed or covered them.”* The death of Jesus in our place on Calvary’s cross was the greatest act of God’s grace, which makes all other acts of God’s grace righteous in His sight. HOW? – In Romans 3:25-26, the Apostle Paul shares that God is just, as well as gracious. He sent His Son to bear the just (perfect and right) punishment for our sins, so that Jesus might *“show God’s righteousness”* (Rom 3:25). It was to show God’s righteousness at the present time, so that God might be just and the justifier of the one who possess saving faith in Jesus. The wisdom of God’s gospel grace allowed God the Father to punish His Son on the cross, in the place of sinners, thereby justifying those who are guilty without compromising God’s justice! Therefore, God is just in being gracious in the gospel, which allowed the Great Exchange to take place – where sinners who express saving faith in Jesus receive His imputed righteousness and in return Jesus is imputed with their sinfulness for the sake of paying their sin-debt that they owed to a Holy God! *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

* **SO WHAT?**

1. **Gospel Facet #14** – The grace of the gospel is the basis of every \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ - From the Gospel of Grace flows a mighty river of countless gracious gospel promises and blessings for our counselee! The Apostle Paul reveals in 2 Timothy 1:9 that the calling of God wakened us from our *sin-soaked sleep of death* due to God’s amazing grace – *“who saved us and called us toa holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”*

**Because of the saving faith founded on the Gospel of Grace, our counselees can find help and hope in the promise that:**

* God ***justifies***us “by his grace” (Rom 3:24; Titus 3:7)
* God ***forgives***our trespasses “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7)
* God ***saves* us** “through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11)
* God “makes all grace abound” to us for “***every good work***” (2 Cor 9:8)
* God makes his grace sufficient ***for all our affliction***(2 Cor 12:9)
* God enables us “by the grace of God” to ***work harder***than we imagined we could (1 Cor 15:10)
* God grants “grace to ***help***in time of need” (Heb 4:16)
* God is our “**eternal *comfort* and good *hope*** through grace” (2 Thess 2:16)
* So that in the end“the name of our ***Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him***, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:12).
* **SO WHAT?**

1. The Transformative Takeaway: There is no good thing in the gospel without the final supreme… Good \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
2. **The Point:** Despite all the precious gospel blessings of redemption and restoration, these are not our final and greatest good [and would not prove to be good for us at all]! Rather, our ultimate and supreme GOOD is God HIMSELF, seen and savored in all His glory in every aspect of our present and eternal lives!

If we simply focus on the individual 14 Facets of the Gospel Diamond, without seeing the beauty of the whole diamond, then we have failed to see the brilliance of God’s Glorious Gospel-Diamond. If the hearers of the gospel do not see the glory of God revealed in the image of Christ, in all the events and gifts of the gospel, then we have not yet seen what finally makes the gospel truly Good News, which is God Himself. Beloved this is the ultimate source of our motivation and the motivation of those we counsel to live lives of loving obedience to God’s will and Word, for God’s glory and pleasure!

1. **The ultimate basis and motive for spiritual heart change:***God…is the ultimate motive for living in loving obedience to His will and Word in our daily lives!*
2. The Big Question for ALL of Us: What do we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ more? The gifts, promises, and blessings of the gospel? OR do we love the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the ALL the gifts of the Gospel of Grace?

1. Adopted from chapter 2 of *God is the Gospel* by John Piper. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)