

# **Counseling God's Way**

## **III. Counselors and Their Equipping**

### **Lesson 10 - Equipping for Counseling Ministry**

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

This is our next unit of study, the second unit of study under this matter of counselors and their equipping. We've looked at who is to do counseling. Now let's consider equipping for counseling ministry.

First, the general ministry of equipping found in Ephesians 4:11-12,

And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

We have seen who is to do counseling. It is every believer in general, particularly those gifted. And especially those being increasingly shaped and molded by their walk with the Lord in a proper path. That relates now to this issue of equipping for ministry. But let's expand on that a bit. How are those who are generally ministering one to another in counseling to get more equipped, more outfitted and prepared? What about those who have a gift in counseling? How are they to develop in that arena of service to God?

Equipping for counseling is a critical issue. And again, the Scriptures speak to that. The Lord has fully provided. It's not just, "Well, just do the best you can and you know maybe you'll get by." The Lord has a way to equip us. This is the general ministry of equipping for all the ministries that all the children of God are called to. Here's the general way that God wants to equip us. It has to do with living together in the church, in church life, with and under the ministries of those gifted ones listed here. It doesn't all hinge on them. There are other issues involved. And even then being used in our lives is all contingent upon them walking with the Lord and the Lord using them, and us walking with the Lord to receive from them. But this is a picture of living in church life and letting the gifted leaders in the church who God has given to the church, ordained by God, and appointed by the Lord, put there by the Lord, all the way from the apostles to prophets to evangelists and pastor-teachers.

And really in every given church there are some with these gifts of leadership. They're not necessarily staff members in a church, though many staff members in a given church with multiple staff would have gifts and calling like this. And sure, we don't have apostles today like in the first century, those who saw the risen Lord, those who sat down now, and then and wrote the Word of God. Sure, we don't have exactly that. However, we have many in the church with that kind of ministry, apostolic type of ministry. You know, visionary church planting, missionaries, those with a big view that goes out beyond just where we all live.

Pastor Chuck Smith in fact in many ways has had kind of an apostolic ministry that touches the world at large and much of the church world. It's just who God has made him in Christ and developed him to be and the impact that he has had and there are men like that. And praise God for that, we need those men. And there are many others like that in the body of Christ. Not just a few.

Even in a given church body you often find folks with kind of that vision far out beyond, you know. That missionary vision, we often call it. Well in many ways the apostles were the first missionaries. In fact there's a total linguistic bond between the two terms. An apostle has to do with one sent, on a mission. And obviously missionary, that's someone sent on a mission. So God has put such lives in the church as part of our equipping.

And then there are prophets. And again, we don't maybe have the Daniels and the Jeremiahs and Ezekiels who also were used of God to write the Word of God. And in their ministry they had a lot of foretelling, but all of them had a lot of forth telling. They were just proclaiming forth the big, wide-sweeping, broad scope of the truth of the kingdom of God. You look at the preaching of the prophets in the Old Testament and see the kind of calling that is. Not all just hinging on predicting things, but they were just proclaiming the big scope of what is of God and what isn't. And they were warning. And yet speaking reality, so we know where to put our faith. There are men like that in the church today. There are a lot of them really. Some are well known, some are hardly known at all, but they just have that kind of an impact or that kind of a gift.

I think back through the two churches that the Lord let me pastor for twenty-five years. We had folks with apostolic and prophetic type gifts and calling right in our church. And they led lives right in our church. You know, they had a leading impact with gifts of leadership. Some of them were right on our staff. God has men like that in the church today, and they are not infallible and all that, but they're important to the equipping of our lives.

And the Lord has the evangelists. Those have that passion to reach souls, the vision for it, the prayer for it, the gifts for it, and helping us to see the importance and even how to evangelize.

Then there are the pastor-teachers. And though I believe there are pastors and teachers, I believe this is one combined gift. One person who is a pastor-teacher. Shepherds who lead the sheep by feeding them the Word of God. The Lord has called us to live in the church with leaders who God has given the gifts of leadership, special callings is "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying [the building up] of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Leaders in the church are not to do all the ministry. Their ministry is to equip others for ministry. The equipping of the saints, the preparing, the developing, the outfitting, the training of the saints.

And don't be fooled by that word saints. You know, I'm no saint. Oh, you're not saved? Oh yeah, I'm saved but I'm no saint. Saint means you're saved. The word saint means set apart one. Holy one in the sense that it is not a part of the unholy world, but taken out of the world and set apart in Christ. That's all it means. It just means we're set apart from the world in Christ unto God. Saint is just another synonym for believer, disciple, Christian, or follower of the Lord, all these talking about the same people, the saints.

The leaders of the Church are to invest their lives in equipping every believer for what?—for the work of ministry.

Ministry is for every believer. In fact counseling ministry is for every believer. Again, not all counsel to the same degree and not all to the same extent of time. Not all with the same fruit of emphasis or ability. But it's for all of us. Counsel one another, the Scripture says.

How do we get equipped for that? Well how do we get equipped for any ministry in the church? "Well, you've got to go here and get this degree. And you've got to read this many books. And you've got to do that. And you've got to do the other." No, we live in the Lord, in the Word, in church life and let God grow us up and prepare us.

Often as I travel and teach, pastors ask me to teach on this subject. Probably because there's such a great need in this subject and too few have given attention to it over the last twenty or thirty years. And often at the seminars or even after church services, folks with a burden for or a gift and calling to counsel ask me, "I want to help people. I hear you teach on this and my heart just blazes. And what do you think?"

“Well, you know, I’m not a prophet and I don’t have the gift of the word of knowledge, but you’re probably gifted to counsel.”

And they say, “Well, I thought so but I didn’t even know that was a gifting from God.”

And then the question comes, “How am I going to get equipped?” Or they say, “You know what I’m doing right now? I’m in a university getting my degree in psychology cause I want to help people.”

And if I’ve taught one message they’re already going, “This isn’t the best path, is it?”

And I tell them, no, it isn’t. But God knows your heart and He can rescue you from that trail. And He has a better way.”

And they go, “How can I get equipped? And where can I go to get a degree in this stuff?”

And I turn to passages like this. God has built it into the church. That’s where we get equipped.

Now, getting an education somewhere doesn’t prevent God from using you. It may handicap you somewhat at times, depending on what the program is and it may take years of unlearning. You know, it doesn’t mean God can’t use you. But it doesn’t mean either the other end. “Hey, God’s going to use me because I got the degree.” I know about people. You know, I’ve got my masters in psychology and I’ve got certification and licensing for counseling.” All of heaven is going, “Wow. Sign him up.” There are people who have gone that route and they are greatly used of God now. You know why? It is because they’re putting their hope in none of that. They’re putting their hope in the Lord and His Word and God is using them mightily. And praise God for that!

But how do we get equipped for the counseling ministry? The same way we’re to get equipped for every ministry in the body of Christ. The same basic fundamentals are there for every ministry. The Word, prayer, the Holy Spirit, body life, church leaders gifted to lead us on in being prepared and developed. It’s so astoundingly simple that Christian after Christian with a heart to serve God just overlooks the whole thing. And they’re hunting and hunting out there how to get equipped. It’s built into the Word of God. It’s built into church life.

Now if it’s a field of study that is not forbidden, you know, you don’t study black magic to learn how to help people. If it’s a field of study that’s not forbidden in the Word, certainly there’s liberty to get into it if you want to. It’s not necessary. But there’s the liberty to. But that’s not where the power is. That’s not where the hope’s going to come from. And even if it’s a field say that—well, let me put it this way.

One of my heartaches about the contemporary American church is what’s happening in the Bible colleges and seminaries all over the country. The church is getting her counselors from there and almost all of the institutions now have departments of psychology to train church workers and pastors how to help people. Now again, I’m not Mr. Know-it-all. I don’t have all the answers. But I’m totally convinced that is Biblically unacceptable. One of the reasons the American church is so weak and self-centered and so carnal is that we’ve been equipping leaders to strengthen the flesh in people’s lives, instead of making disciples out of them by denying self, taking up the cross daily and following Jesus.

I’m not against having psychology departments in Bibles colleges if they’re totally apologetic, where you only have them to study just like you would study Mormonism or the Jehovah’s Witness. We are not to make Mormons out of people, but to show what’s wrong and to show the danger that’s there. I think it would be great if every Bible College had a psychology department, if it was part of the apologetic ministry. Examining it to see why it is not Biblical, why it is intervening, interfering and displacing the Word of God. That’s fine. That would just be more equipping to communicate and—that’s fine. If you had a heart for that, go for it. I don’t believe you need it though, but it wouldn’t be forbidden to study in that way. Because the Word of God

sheds light on why the darkness isn't right. And it's fine to take the Word and examine things like that.

How do we get equipped? It's right here in the Bible. God has given to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. For what?—"for the equipping of the saints." For what?—"for the work of ministry," including the ministry of counseling. But, it's not just the leaders of the church. They're important, but they're only usable and useful and productive as they're rightly walking with the Lord, in the Word, by the Spirit, in prayer. But it's beyond that because it is not just the leaders. We're to be equipping one another.

Ephesians 4:12, before you leave this verse check one thing, it is "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Where the edifying of the body of Christ appears: Romans 14:19, "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another [or build up] another."

It is not just the leaders of the church carrying out the ministry that shapes us, though we're all impacted by their ministry. I think right now of so many church leaders that God has used to impact my life through the years. And it's happening right now. I can think right now of many church leaders. Some right here in this church where I hang out a lot. But church leaders in other churches I get to visit a lot also. Or those whose books I read, or tapes I listen to. It still goes on and I praise God for that. But it's bigger than that. It is also a part of "one another" ministry. As we're ministering to one another we are being used to build each other up, equip, prepare, and develop each other's lives.

The things by which one may edify another is also in Romans 15:2,

Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification [edifying each other].

One another ministry is for all. It's a mutual ministry and this is the setting in which we can all be more equipped, increasingly for all ministry, including the counseling ministry. It's not just leaders ministering to us. It's all of us ministering to each other, building each other up. The more we build each other up, the more we are being equipped to serve the Lord.

How do you get equipped for family life? Well, God intended for us to do that living in a family. Sure it's needy and it looks like it's so vulnerable. And there are so many mistakes there. And of course, we've got the classic problem now of the ages. We're into dysfunctional families. So how can you ever learn to live in a family? And yet God designed to learn family life by living in a family. And in the Word of God He tells us all about family life so we can live in families. It's not that we have to go off and get a great degree in being a family expert.

How do we minister in the church? How do we get equipped? Live in the church the way God designed the church to be lived in. And let the church function the way God intended it to function, and the people will be equipped for ministry. It's just built in. And it's not slipshod either. At least as far as how God has ordained, provided, and supplied what is needed. It can be profound.

I know a number of you really well. And I've watched God equip you. And I've watched God use you or begin to use you. And through the years I've ministered with those I've seen equipped right in the church until it blows your mind!

The pastor at Calvary Chapel in Irvine, who is pastoring there, He was my buddy and partner and associate for five years. He was saved at Costa Mesa, disciplined some there, He spent time just hanging out at Irvine. It was a blessed fellowship. God did wonderful things through the years. But there was no one writing books on, how can we make our church like Calvary Chapel Irvine? But God touched lives there and when I think of John, most of his Christian life was lived out in that church. Now he's been pastoring there since I left to travel and teach. And I marvel at how equipped he is. And he keeps getting more equipped. And his life is developing, maturing, more outfitted, more prepared. And those he is touching, same thing is happening to them. I did a seminar with them last year some time and I can see the equipping process goes on.

It's just the very nature of the entity. It's built into the church, if we walk God's way in the church. I've told many a person, they want to be equipped to counsel, get into church life. If you're in a church that knows nothing of church life, pray and exhort and reach out to the leaders. And if they have no interest or they think you're weird, ask God to put you in a church that knows what Biblical church life is all about. And just plunge in! Your gift will start getting developed. Your life will mature. You'll be reaching out to help people and God will use you and others will see you are being used of God and others will come to you. And before you know it, you'll have so much ministry that you'll be pleading mercy! Lord, I can't take it! Because God opened the windows of heaven and poured out a blessing you can't contain. It's so simple. It's just right there under our nose. It's just waiting to happen. Every day of our lives we can be in the equipping process and be used to help others get equipped.

Just a couple of words about this next section, being built up in all aspects of counseling God's way. In the general equipping ministry of the church, what we're learning there can be applied to all aspects of counseling God's way. And basically I've put five points there, just reminding us of the five major sections of our study. While we're being equipped, if we have a burden for counseling ministry, ask the Lord in the general equipping process of the church to just keep building us up more in these aspects of counseling God's way, learning what they are, thinking rightly, walking in them, giving and receiving in these dimensions, these five things.

One: "What Counseling Is"

*Lord, as you're equipping me, I've got a burden to counsel, let me see with more and more depth and breadth what counseling is from Your perspective. And we've spent a major portion of our course on that.*

Two: "God's Way in Counseling"

*Lord, I want to counsel, I feel drawn to. At least I want my general ministry of counseling to increase or to be more fruitful. I need to know Your way more. Be more committed to Your Word, Your Spirit, prayer, and church life.*

Three: "Counselors and Their Equipping"

Do you want to be used to counsel? Ask God to convince you of these truths, like—every believer can be competent to counsel. Ask God to convince us of that. And that God has built into church life an equipping process. Ask God to build us up in these things.

Four: "Foundational Truths for Counseling"

Pretty soon we will shift to that direction and spend thirty, forty percent of the course or more on that. There are issues of being in Adam or in Christ and united with Christ. And the difference between walking according to the flesh or walking according to the Spirit. It includes finding out in the Word who we are in Christ, having our minds renewed and knowing of spiritual warfare. We'll look at learning how to walk in victory in spiritual warfare and boy, just right there, get built up in those arenas. Oh my goodness, how much more effective we can be in our counseling.

Five: "The Major Threats to Counseling God's Way" This basically boils down to two thoughts, forsaking our Wonderful Counseling and thinking that He is not enough. And then that will always lead to the other threat, which is turning to worldly counsel.

Just ask God in our general edification process and equipping to get built up in those five arenas. Oh, the impact on our counseling ministry will be enormous.

But in all of this there are a couple of areas we should spend our remaining time on. They deserve special attention in the process of being equipped for ministry and equipped for counseling God's way. And one of them is equipping through God's Word.

One of the reasons the equipping process of church life is so effective is because it includes the Word of God. Remember Colossians 3:16. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell among you."

I was eating lunch in a Texas town one day with my dad and a friend of his who was all excited about a new church he found. Oh, he just went on and on about this new church and how he loved this new church.

"What do you like the best?"

"Oh, what I like the best is the sermons. They're so concise. They're so compact. This man says everything that needs to be said in about twelve minutes."

My dad said, "Oh, kind of like a sermonette?"

He goes, "Yes! That's it! That's it." My dad used to say that classic old, "Remember sermonettes make Christianettes."

That's not Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." Not see how convenient we can make it and how we can avoid, at all costs, making the flesh uncomfortable. But now, let's go the other way. How much space can we stretch out together and make room for the Word of God?

One of the questions I always ask when I travel and teach—which is all, you know, regularly—is how much time should I teach this morning? And often it's, "There are multiple services and that becomes kind of a strategic question. You know with kids and cars and parking lots and all. And it's a real insightful thing. Let the word of Christ richly dwell among them. Other churches do this too, but characteristically not in the American church. "Hey, twelve minutes, man, pushing it aren't you? Twenty minutes? The man is a preaching fanatic!"

For years I taught an hour Sunday morning and an hour, maybe a little more Wednesday night. I'm not saying you have to do that. But boy, when I hear, well you know, we usually do about twenty, twenty-five minutes maybe, I just kind of cringe.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell among you—personally, privately, but also corporately. One of the reasons lives can get equipped so well in the church is the church is to be the place where the Word of God is just pouring out. It is just pouring out and drenching people. It is feeding them, strengthening them, impacting them, shaping and changing them.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17,

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

That is to be taking place as a reality in the life of the church all the time. It is by the inspired Word of God, every word breathed out by God. Therefore it is profitable and able to bring a spiritual benefit to profit us in doctrine, which is teaching. It is teaching us the ways of the Lord. But able to reprove us, let us know when we're off the ways of the Lord. More than that to correct us, getting us back on the ways of the Lord. And even instruction in righteousness, moving us on down the path of the Lord. Oh, what the Word is able to do!

If we just use the Word of God for these four purposes in our own lives and pass it on in counseling ministry, what a ministry we'd have! Teaching, reproof, correcting, and instructing in righteousness. Wow, what a counseling ministry that would be. Just using the Word of God, letting it do those four things in people's lives and that is what happens as we're letting God do this in our lives. And then we are just passing on that ministry to others.

Oh how that is equipping us. How thoroughly is that equipping us? That the man of God may be complete thoroughly equipped for every good work. Too many Christians still think if they don't have some special kind of recognized degree, accredited, licensed, certified, then they just aren't ready. There's not even a hint at that in the Word of God.

Now again, if you have...I was going to say if you have a license in counseling, you can still serve God. That's really hard these days, because the licensing agencies deny everything you believe in! So it's hard. You'll always be fighting the government looking over your shoulder, checking up on you, saying, "You can't say that." Or "You told what to that troubled person?" "You talked to them about Jesus? We didn't license you for that. I mean, come on. Tell them about the Id or the Superego or something. Or at least explain dysfunctionality to them or help them grasp the profound dimensions of co-dependency. You talked to them about Jesus? Man, you're in danger of losing your license, being decertified."

Look at this. "That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Whatever spiritual work of service God has called us to, the essentials of the kingdom, salvation and discipleship and growth and fruit and transformation to Christ-likeness progressively, and being set free, being made whole, all the ministries that contribute to all those things, the Word of God, because it's God's Word, can make us complete. Whole life in Christ to share and grow in, thoroughly equipped and completely prepared for every area of spiritual service and ministry.

We have so tragically understated what God has provided to equip the saints, and we under use it. We are sending kids off to learn man's wisdom to help them man's way. And often those poor kids are Biblically illiterate. They know Freud better than they know Paul. How sad. No wonder they aren't equipped for spiritual ministry. Sure, they're equipped to get a job in the world system. Maybe even in the so-called Christian counseling clinic. But what are they drawing on, the Word of God or the wisdom of man?

Boy, I have a passion on this subject. There is equipping for the saints built into church life.

One of the reasons I love to teach in a Bible college setting like this is there's no accreditation, so the government cannot be saying you can't give a degree with that content. Okay, we'll just call it a piece of paper then. It is just something to thank God that we had a couple of years to study the Word together. Fine. Who cares what you call it. That's one reason I love it. The other is that it's tightly tied into the local church. That's God's way. Outside of that I wouldn't have any interest. It just really wouldn't fit, as far as my heart, where the real equipping takes place. And it is not that someone going through a university somewhere that God can't use them. Oh, yes He can. But you know how He'll use them? It is to the extent that they get equipped in here [pointing to the Bible], whether or not they get that other degree. It will depend on getting equipped in here.

I thank God for the five years that He gave me at Dallas Seminary, where I just dug into the Word a lot. Four of those five years I was pastoring. And God showed me, taking care of this flock, feeding them, seeking Him, and being in the Word, that's your number one priority. Even if you fail every class, that's your number one priority, along with your family and your kids. And boy, that put things in perspective. And I'll tell you, no one has ever asked me to see that Master of Theology degree once, not once, since I left there in 1973. In fact, I only looked at it once that day. I put it in a drawer. I have not taken it out since. And nobody ever asked me to see it. The first church I pastored started before I had it, so it didn't matter there. The second church I pastored, the Lord put me there in spite of the fact I had that degree. It was totally immaterial and any good along the way came from the equipping that's right here, by the Spirit, in church life. I believe that's what the Word says and I think we should exhort people in that direction.

In 2 Timothy 2:15,

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Be diligent, or as the King James translates it, study. It's great to study the Word. To be diligent in the Word. Why?—because we want to present ourselves to God, approved to God, not impressing man. “Oh look how many hours I studied. Oh look how many things I learned.” No, to be approved to God, so that God would look upon our walk and ministry and say, “Yes. That's what I intend. That's what I want. Go for it. Stay at it.” Like He looked down on Jesus saying, “...This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). May He see us walking in Christ, abiding in Christ. Christ alive in us by the Spirit and the Word of Christ richly dwelling in us. And He looks upon us and goes, “Oh yes. This is more of My beloved Son. I am well pleased with that.” Approved unto God.

It is a workman, a worker laboring in the Word of God, laboring with the Word of God. It's a great thing to get in the Word of God and wrestle with God. “Lord, what does this mean? Lord, I don't get this one. Lord, I get this one.” And the one I get troubles me more than the one I don't get, you know. Just wrestling with God in the Word and really laboring in there.

We are “rightly dividing it,” or “handling it accurately,” it could be translated. Explaining it and applying it properly. Rightly dividing it is cutting a straight line through it. It is knowing the difference between law and grace and self and Christ and flesh and the Spirit. Is it man's wisdom, or God's wisdom, self-striving or overflowing with the Spirit of God. It is knowing the differences between these things. That one won't cut it, the other always will. That is just rightly dividing the Word of God. The word of truth. The truth that sets people free, sanctifies their lives and makes them whole. Lord, there's the way to be equipped, just be diligent in the Word of God.

Hebrews 5 has more on being equipped through the Word of God. Hebrews 5:13-14,

For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food [meat] belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, [or mature] those who by reason of use [or practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We're talking about equipping here. We're talking about experts being raised up in the church here. If we're only into the milk, we'll stay babes. Praise God for repentance and forgiveness through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. But it's just milk. Oh, it's glorious milk! It's eternal life-giving, life-changing milk. But still we've got to go on beyond that. Praise God Christ died for my sins. But that's milk. That doesn't mean it's bad, it just means it's the beginning point. It's great. It's glorious. But it's milk. Christ died for me, that's milk. What's solid food? Christ lives in me. Chew on that for a while! Boy, there's something to get nourished on. Praise God He died for me. It's a life-giving glass of milk, you know. For babes, for birth, for getting started, oh, it's glorious! But the message doesn't stop there. He died for us that He might come to live in us. Boy, there's something to chew on. You can chew on that every day and the more you grow in the understanding and the walking in it, the more it just stretches your mind. My word, it's the truth, isn't it? Jesus Christ lives in me. I'm looking at you. Amazing, Jesus lives in you. And you're going the same thing. Yeah, but He lives in you. It's astounding. It's so easy to forget. But it's the difference between spiritual vitality and progress. It's victory, growing, meat.

Solid food is for maturing. Those who, because of practice, that is use, they become doers of the Word not just hearers. They hear the Word and they want to live it just like they hear it. Senses are trained. Spiritual discernment is developed. They learn to discern between good and evil, between God's ways and man's ways, between the spiritual things and carnal things, heavenly things and earthly things. Living by the Word and using the Word in ministry. It is by counseling others that way, this is where the experts come from.

You take Christians in general, or those gifted, and they grow in these things, get equipped in the Word, and all these other things we've looked at in the previous study, they become more and more the experts that we all turn to when we're kind of stretched out at the end of what we've shared. And people are still saying, "Help. More please." And we, in this process become those that others say, "Hey, I've shared this, that and the other with this person. Could you spend some time with this person?" We help each other help others on.

These are where the experts come from in the body of Christ. And every church, moving in this path, will have experts. Some might be grandmas. Some might be pastors. Some might be Sunday school teachers. Some might be businessmen. But they're the experts we want to turn to. I'd rather turn to an expert that God has equipped this day, and spend a half an hour or an hour with them, than spend all day with one of the experts of the world, trained in man's wisdom. It's not just that the price is better either. It's what you're getting for free is what God wants you to have.

It just baffles me that the church is out there paying to be told the wrong message! Have we been hoodwinked? I mean, someone has tricked us. Here's the true message and it's free. And we can receive it and share it with each other for free. Yet there are Christians out there paying, \$80, \$90, \$100 an hour to be told lies. Or the truth mixed in and watered down with Freud and Jung and Abraham Maslow, and Eric Fromm and all the rest with their theories that we'll look at later on toward the end, just for some warning's sake because it is not God's way.

Last, how to be equipped. Nothing equips us more than growing in knowing the Lord.

In 2 Peter 3:18, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” This is the theme verse for the other class, “Growing in the Grace of God.” We’re to grow in and by the grace of God and in the knowing of the Lord. That is, grow, by God’s grace in a living acquaintanceship with God. Nothing will change our lives more than getting to know the Lord.

Can you imagine the disciples, especially when they were filled with the Spirit and all that they had seen in Christ was made real to them, the impact? How’d you like to walk with Jesus, full of the Spirit for a year or two or three or five? Wow! Well, that’s what we’re called to do. Just do it by faith and not by sight. That’s what changes lives.

Then last, 1 Peter 2:4-5,

Coming to Him [coming to Jesus] as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is all about being equipped by knowing the Lord. Getting built-up to serve God by coming to the Lord. Look at how it’s built. “Coming to Him,” verse 4, He who is a living stone. He is solid, stable, strong, but alive, tender, compassionate. It is coming to Christ the living stone in verse 5. “You also as living stones are being built up, a spiritual house, holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.” That is, to serve God, to minister.

What is the majesty and yet the simplicity of being equipped here? Coming to Him, you also are being built up. As we come to Christ the living stone, He builds us up as living stones to be like Him. Get in the Word. Get in there coming to Jesus. Not just getting the chapter read, but seeking the Lord in there. And prayer, not just saying our prayers, but worshipping, praising Him, praying in His name. Serving, not just, “Yeah, I witnessed to five people today. I told them they could miss hell and get heaven, you know.” Was Jesus involved in that? Did you pray? Did you lift up Jesus before them? Come to Him, that’s how we get equipped. Everyday in every way, whatever we do, just keep coming to Jesus Christ. Coming to Him, you also are being built up. We come to Him, He builds us up. It’s astoundingly simple! We come to Him, He builds us up to be like Him. He’s the Wonderful Counselor. Let’s keep coming to Him. You know what He’s going to make of us?—counselors who counsel more and more like He did and does. That’s how we get equipped.

In conclusion that verse I almost overlooked there at the end of Hebrews 13. Let’s read that then we’ll finish. Hebrews 13:20,-21.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete.

Let’s make that more concise. Verse 20. “Now may the God of peace [verse 21] make you complete.” This is God making us complete. In fact, some versions translate that, “equip you,” not make you complete, but equip you in every good work. It could be translated either way. In fact this word is translated both ways in most translations. This is God equipping us in every good work, to do His will. Working in us, that’s how God equips us. Not just working on us, He also works in us what is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ. Using the glorious attributes of His character, His work on our behalf to make us what He wants us to be.

This is a prayer that God Himself would equip us. Would you rather have the wisest men of the world equipping you or God Himself? Hands down. No contest. That's what this prayer is about. In fact, that's what this study is about. It is God equipping His people in His church as a good heavenly Father and as Jesus the wonderful Head of the body. This is God's equipping program. I believe we can rest in His processes and purposes and be fully equipped for whatever He wants to do with us.

There's a way to be equipped without having to beg and borrow and steal from the world. Or try to integrate it and cram it in for some extra high wisdom. Listen, God's equipping program is perfect. Any other program mixed in will complicate the process. Again, not saying God can't use anyone who's getting an education. But if they aren't filling their lives with this, that education will mess them up, instead of broaden there or maybe open doors of opportunity into certain lives.

Let's pray together.

*Lord, we thank You so much for the calling to serve You in all kinds of ways and even to be counselors. Thank You for the equipping that You provide in Your Church by Your Word, Your Spirit. May we walk this path, Lord, and just keep equipping us, thoroughly equipping us for every good work. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*