

## About this book . . .

- What is 'Biblical Counselling'?
- Is there such a system which warrants the title 'Biblical Counselling'?
- How practical can such a system be when it seems to work apart from the materials gathered by other therapies?
- Must counselling always be 'in grace'?
- What do we mean by 'counselling in grace'?

These are some of the questions the title of this booklet raises. Geoffrey Bingham has long been at the business of counselling, always fortifying his ideas with the theology he has long known and practised. No reader will be the worse off for reading the material it contains. Pastorally and personally he—or she—could benefit even from a casual reading. More than just a taster, the booklet can lead on to even greater profit from reading the author's other works.

new creation publications inc.



# The Grace of Counselling

Geoffrey Bingham

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Angry Heart or Tranquil Mind?*  
*Beyond the Cross*  
*Christ's Cross Over Man's Abyss*  
*Christ's Living Church—Today*  
*Christ's People in Today's World*  
*The Cleaning of the Memories*  
*The Conscience—Conquering or Conquered?*  
*Discovering Your Identity*  
*The Everlasting Presence*  
*For Pastors and the People*  
*God's Glory: Man's Sexuality*  
*Great and Glorious Grace*  
*I Love the Father*  
*I, the Man!*  
*Man, Woman, and Sexuality*  
*The Meaning & Making of Man*  
*Oh, Father! Our Father!*  
*Practical Christian Counselling*  
*Shepherds of the Flock*  
*The Splendour of Holiness*  
*The Things We Firmly Believe*  
*Truth—the Golden Girdle*  
*Where I Love I Live*  
*The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*  
*The Wounding and the Healing*

# The Grace of Counselling

*Geoffrey Bingham*

Published by  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051  
2000

Published by  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC., AUSTRALIA

© Geoffrey C. Bingham, 1992

National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication data

Bingham, Geoffrey C.  
The grace of counselling  
ISBN 0 86408 150 2  
I. Pastoral counseling. I. Title.  
253.5

This book is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted  
under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be  
reproduced by any process without written permission.  
Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Wholly set and printed at  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
Coromandel East, South Australia

## SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vii
<b>ALL TRUE LIVING IS OF GRACE</b>	<b>1</b>
Human Investigation of Humanity	1
The Place of Grace in the Life of Man	2
The Counsellor and the Grace of God	3
<b>THE GRACE APPROACH TO COUNSELLING</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) Man in Innocence	4
(b) The Doctrine of Fallen Man: Under Guilt, and in Creation	5
(c) The Doctrine of Redeemed Man: Out of Guilt	6
(d) The Doctrine of Sanctified Man: The Battle for Holiness	7
(e) The Doctrine of Man Glorified: Man Teleological	8
<b>A WAY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELLING, CORPORATE AND PERSONAL</b>	<b>9</b>
Counselling in the New Testament Church	9
The Personal Modes of Counselling Today	9
<b>CONCLUSION TO 'THE GRACE OF COUNSELLING'</b>	<b>12</b>
APPENDIX: The Use of the Two Books <i>The Meaning &amp; Making of Man</i> and <i>The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man</i>	13

## Foreword

This booklet has evolved out of a number of circumstances. Every so often I am asked to give a lecture on biblical counselling, a potted version of what I present in comprehensive, larger volumes. On the occasion of an annual New Creation Teaching Ministry School of Pastors (1992) I thought it would be helpful to put the single lecture into this present format.

In one sense the booklet is inadequate in that it does not say enough. In another sense it is valuable in that it at least introduces the subject of biblical counselling, and may whet the appetite of a reader to go further and order other of my writings on this theme. The use of the word 'grace' is because counselling outside of God's grace and love cannot be sufficiently comprehensive. It cannot be wholly biblical.

I trust, then, that the present booklet may be useful not only in the practice of its brief contents, but as an appetiser for further reading, and wider application of the whole matter of biblical counselling.

## The Grace of Counselling

### ALL TRUE LIVING IS OF GRACE

#### Human Investigation of Humanity

The Scriptures give us insights regarding Man which are not just psychological. Whilst scientific anthropology in its various categories—psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, sociology, as well as the medical disciplines—is immensely valuable, yet in one sense the empirico-scientific application can only reach certain limits. Theology takes us into the realm of the nature of created Man with insights not available elsewhere, and since these are linked with the nature of God and the cosmos (creation), then a knowledge of theological anthropology, cosmology, and God are essential to getting to Man's deepest problems, e.g. the dynamics of human existence, guilt, death, the future life and eternity.<sup>1</sup> All these realities interact to give us knowledge of Man that cannot be obtained by empirico-scientific research, however extensive and valuable its results may be.

---

<sup>1</sup> We have to keep in mind Rom.1:21ff.: that Man at the Fall in denying God had to deny the ontological order of things, so that he has a bias against finding out that order, even though he is created of God and must have a thrust to know it. Not even scientists and others are devoid of such a conflict. Man leans towards humanism, for he would like to think all things are researchable and applicable without resort to the Divine.

### The Place of Grace in the Life of Man

Whilst Man and the universe were not created by grace<sup>1</sup>, the fall of man and the curse on creation required grace to restore and renew. Grace is always linked with restoration. Ephesians 1:3–14 and II Timothy 1:9–10 indicate God planned grace before time. The Old Testament uses the words *chen* (favour) and *chesed* (loving kindness, steadfast love), which together approximate to the content of the New Testament word for ‘grace’ (*charis*). Whilst grace was present in history and particularly in Israel in covenant (Exod. 34:6–7), yet in a unique way grace appeared at the birth of Christ. Hence John 1:14, 17 (‘full of grace and truth’, ‘grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’), and Titus 2:11 (‘The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation’). John 1:16 describes the apostles’ experience, and then that of the new community of believers: ‘And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace’.

When it comes to the events of Christ, we realise that the work of the Cross and the Resurrection are indeed the grace of God in action. Romans chapters 1–5 trace the grace of God *as a gift* in the work of Christ. Grace is the saving power and work of God (II Tim. 1:9–10; Eph. 1:7–8; 2:4–10; Titus 3:4–7). The Book of the Acts tells us how the early church lived under grace (4:33; 6:8), operated by grace (11:23; 13:43), and commended one another to the grace of God or to ‘the word of his grace’ (14:26; 15:40; 20:32).

Not only had grace been since creation—especially in covenant—and then had appeared in Jesus Christ, being taught as the gospel, but it was also a thing of

---

<sup>1</sup> Creation was the action of God as Creator. He determined what should be, according to His own wisdom (Jer.10:12; 51:15; Ps. 148:4–5).

eschatological hope (e.g. I Pet. 1:13), for there was the grace of God to come to believers at a revelation of Jesus Christ. Grace then brought hope: hope was of grace.

### The Counsellor and the Grace of God

It might be a truism to say that believers can do nothing of lasting effect except by grace, but what is perhaps most pertinent is that each counsellor must understand what we will call ‘the dynamics of grace’. That is, until he—or she—understands the power of justification and forgiveness, they would be best not even to attempt counselling—not anyway on the theological level. Counselling on the psychological level is a thing altogether other than that on the theological level, even though psychological insights may be quite useful.

The truth is that Man’s problems come from his alienation from God, his attempts—in the light of his conscience—to be righteous. He suffers from not accomplishing such righteousness, or from thinking he has. He suffers from the guilt of being apart from God as an existent in this world, and he suffers from the guilts of his sins. No one who is ignorant of the nature of God can understand the misery of fallen Man.

If a counsellor is of a legal mind, of a judgemental spirit, or an easy, tolerant attitude, and superficial regarding his understanding of the terrible state of man under the wrath of God, then he/she will be of little help to the counsellee. An understanding of grace can alone aid the counsellor to help heal the needy person.

Note the fact that counselling is the giving of advice from the wisdom we have, and our wisdom is primarily the wisdom of God. God’s wisdom is a reality which must be appropriated by the counsellor.

### The Grace Approach to Counselling

With an understanding of fallen Man in the sight of God and the creation, the counsellor will need to know the following: (i) Man in innocence, i.e. his pre-fall situation and condition; (ii) Man as fallen, i.e. his state in alienation from God, under guilt and divided in his human relationships; (iii) Man redeemed, i.e. out of guilt because of justification, forgiveness and purification; (iv) Man the believer is faced with the matter of personal holiness of living, in the face of his conflicts with evil powers; (v) Man moving towards history's *telos* (goal) as an anticipant of eternal life, glory, and partaking in the Divine nature.

The following categories are set out as a summary of the nature of Man, created, fallen, justified, living in the grace of sanctification, and so in hope of a glorious future.

#### (a) Man in Innocence

What we know is that (i) man was created in the image of God, i.e. everything that God is, man is like that, but anything that God is, man is none of that. Thus man reflects God; (ii) man was created to be useful and purposeful, hence the mandate of Genesis 1:28 (cf. Gen. 9:1–7; Ps. 8:3–8; I Cor. 11:7), linked with Genesis 2:15, 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it'. Man has his identity (we will call it here 'creational identity'). He is a son (child) of the Father (Luke 3:38, Acts 17:28, cf. Jer. 2:26–27), a creature of the Creator, and a servant of the King of the universe. These three things are 'dependence' categories, i.e. man cannot live in them apart from God. When he lives them fully he finds emotional and re

lational fullness and satisfaction, i.e. he is fulfilled in his affinity with God as 'deep calls unto deep'.

Man not only had (has) vertical relationship with God, but horizontal relationship with his fellow humanity. The male and female constitute one humanity, i.e. human unity. There are not two races—one male, one female. The two constitute 'one flesh', i.e. 'one humanity'. Humanity is this a male–female entity, and not a male-and-female thing. Man as created must be understood in the husband–wife, father–mother, parents–children, brother–brother, sister complex. Any break in any of this will constitute a fractured situation. Man is a moral-spiritual social creature, finding his fullness in family. Man is always moving towards God's given goal. Man is not fully man until he is glorified. Thus he lives in genuine hope. The future is one of promise, whatever the present may be.

#### (b) The Doctrine of Fallen Man: Under Guilt, and in Creation

The temptation set before the woman was, 'You shall be as God, knowing good and evil'. This meant (i) that Man would (could) become autonomous, having high authority, and (ii) that he would know—of himself—the difference between good and evil, i.e. that his evaluations would be authentic. Fallen humanity is sure it is able to discern good and evil correctly. This is the source of much strife. Genesis 3:1–6 and Romans 1:18–32 show the results of Man's bid for independence. Man lost his integrity and has attacked God's. His chief evil lies in his idolatry.

Since everything is created, sustained and maintained in Him, it holds that to alienate oneself from God brings tragic consequences. We cannot realise what

these are until we see that creation is functional. When God made all things, He saw they were ‘very good’, i.e. functionally good and harmonious, each having its own purpose (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 3:11; Prov. 16:4).

By the Fall, Man became awry, disoriented, dislocated, dysfunctional, at odds with God, creation and himself. He suffered not only depravity but ‘deprivity’, i.e. he has deprived himself of joy and peace, because he, via his will, is at variance with the true order of things. He is thus the victim of his own conscience. Hence his emotional starvation, his vocational awryness, and his inability to enjoy sonship, creaturehood and servanthood in relation to God the Father, Creator and King.

In understanding fallen man, we must also see him in thrall to Satan and evil powers. The ‘whole world lies in the power of the evil one’ (I John 5:19), and is under his bondage (Eph. 2:1–3; Heb. 2:14–15). Man, by reason of his guilt, is never free. His imagined autonomy is a delusive lie. Man cannot be freestanding, but he seeks to be so. All of this tells us the state of man, his anguish and his suffering. Lest we pity him we must realise that he hates God, and is hostile towards Him (see Rom. 1:30; 5:10; Col. 1:21). He also hates his fellow man (Titus 3:3). If we do not see man’s depravity, and at the same time the fact that he was made in the image of God, we cannot help him or ourselves.

### **(c) The Doctrine of Redeemed Man: Out of Guilt**

Fallen man is saved and justified by grace, and not, primarily, by faith (Rom. 3:24; 5:17; Eph. 2:8–10). He is given the gifts of repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18), faith (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29), forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 13:38–39), justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:17), cleansing (Heb. 9:14), son

ship (Gal. 4:4–6; Rom. 8:15), love (Rom. 5:5), eternal life (John 3:15, 16, 36; II Tim. 1:10), holiness (I Cor. 6:11), and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Acts 2:18). This redemption is based on the complete work of Christ in his earthly obedience, death, resurrection and ascension. It is communicated and applied by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–15; Rom. 8:2; II Cor. 3:17), in what is called ‘the washing of regeneration and the renewal in the Holy Spirit’ (Titus 3:5). This makes fallen man a ‘new creation’, so that ‘old things have passed away, behold *they* have become new’ (II Cor. 5:17). Man is ‘washed, sanctified and justified’ and this ‘in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God’ (I Cor. 6:11).

All man’s sins are forgiven; he is wholly justified; he is placed amongst God’s true people (sanctified); his sins or ‘dead works’ are completely cleansed (Heb. 9:14; cf. 1:3; 10:22). God, in forgiving him, remembers his sins no more (Jer. 31:31–34; cf. Heb. 10:11–22, esp. vv. 17–18). This person has become a son of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6; John 1:12–13), a member of the family of God, a member of Christ’s Body, i.e. the church. He has been born anew by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, walks and lives in the Spirit, knowing true prayer, worship, fellowship, service and the ministry of proclaiming the gospel. He thus has true identity. His social being is fulfilled in the context of the true family, body, and Christian community. Ideally speaking, he is now without personal inner problems and the sicknesses and disturbances which once derived from guilt and an accusing conscience.

### **(d) The Doctrine of Sanctified Man: The Battle for Holiness**

The redeemed man lives in sanctification (I Cor. 6:11; Rom. 6:15–23; Eph. 5:1–14; Gal. 5:16–18, 22–26; I Pet.

1:14ff.). He is not—of himself—perfect. See Romans 1:18–25. He is in a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:10–18). He faces the powers of darkness. Hence the Christian life is one of persecution and suffering (see II Cor. 10:3; 4:7–15; II Thess. 1:5; etc.). The redeemed man has a sensitive conscience and is open to accusation (Rev. 12:10f.). He ‘feels’ things, and can come under heaviness of spirit. His failure may depress him. And so on. We need to understand his holiness conflicts, especially where grace is not fully understood, and the new man seeks to accomplish things in his own power (cf. I Cor. 15:10; II Cor. 12:1–10).

**(e) The Doctrine of Man Glorified:  
Man Teleological**

I Corinthians 2:6–10 tells of God’s wisdom which was ordained for our glorification. Man is a creature destined by God to reach full sonship, and that glorification of his being which he does not have in this world and creation. ‘Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God’ must mean that this physical being must be transformed. In Philippians 3:21 Paul tells us that he ‘shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be made like his body of glory’. This means that man moves towards his ultimate fullness of being. In this sense he is always ‘becoming’. This fact is of great importance and affects him deeply. Fallen and unredeemed man is in misery because he cannot sense vocational fullness. Man redeemed and in holiness, is enriched by his progress towards final maturity, but can be troubled when he seems not to achieve fullness in his vocation. If the counsellor does not understand man-in-becoming, he may make many errors in judgement, advice and direction.

**A Way of Biblical Counselling,  
Corporate and Personal**

**Counselling in the New Testament Church**

The community of Christ that began at Pentecost was, indeed, a community. Very soon it had elders<sup>1</sup>, and deacons, and all members served one another (Eph. 4:11–12), so that the idea of personal counselling as we know it today would not be very evident. Rather, the community cared for all members of the community, and in this context believers could be helped, encouraged and grow to maturity. The fact that ‘great grace was upon them all’ meant they would live in the context of a healing community. They were served by ‘the word of grace’. The elders would not only teach that which was helpful in the life of the family, community and the person, but they would also serve the members of the church. In this sense the use of wisdom and the means of counselling would differ vastly from today, although the same means could easily be used today.

**The Personal Modes of Counselling Today**

There are many systems of personal counselling which are recommended by their creators. There are those called ‘Biblical Counselling’, those called ‘Christian Counselling’, and those who are non-biblical. Often Christian counsellors try to incorporate non-biblical insights and methods. Over the years I have developed a way in which I seek to counsel a person. The student of my way of counselling must keep in mind (i) that I have a

---

<sup>1</sup> For the matter of elders and church fellowship see my *Shepherds of the Flock* (NCPI, 1985), *Christ’s People in Today’s World* (NCPI, 1985) and *Christ’s Living Church—Today* (NCPI, 1992).

considerable knowledge of the Scriptures and human nature, (ii) that I seek never to counsel a person if possible unless (a) he, or she, is at the end of his/her tether and know they cannot help themselves, (b) that one trusts me to be able to help him/her.

For these reasons do not counsel just anyone; do not apply to people to help them: have them apply to you. There is, of course, a relationship to any and every one who is in need, but conclusive counselling rarely happens in these situations. It is to be presupposed that I favour the power that lies in the gospel itself, rather than the use of methods which seek to deal with crises by certain techniques. In other words, I see grace as the means by which folk can be helped. I also try to keep clear of what I called 'mediatorial ministry', preferring to bring the person to the Father and the Son via the work of the Holy Spirit. For what it is worth, I now describe the way I go about counselling persons. These principles are:

- (a) Never treat the person as a 'counselee' or 'client', but as a true person, a fellow-creature in his or her own right.
- (b) Never see yourself as a counsellor, a director, a person of brilliance, or exceptional and relevant wisdom.
- (c) Be relaxed together as two persons, seated similarly and talking together.
- (d) Listen well, seeing what is told as symptoms of the deeper cause/s of personal disturbance, and keep in mind the nature of human beings. It is not necessary to know everything about a person's past. There is a limit to the need to listen, which should be sensed.

(e) Know that your primary work is to change the view of God that the person has, to that of seeing that God is love. No change in the image of God that the person has can be easily effected, since this image exists probably from birth.

(f) This change in image can only be done through the revelation of the Cross. 'Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God' (I Cor. 1:24). The person must be captured by the word of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18) or nothing will happen. The Son must be seen to be showing the Father in His love: this love must be known through total forgiveness, complete cleansing, justification from guilt, becoming a son or child of God, transforming grace, and so on.

(g) When the person comes to see the full love of God, then all relationships will change with the love that floods the heart by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). It is then that forgiveness from God brings forgiveness and love to others. The 'change of mind' (repentance) comes with the new view of the Cross. Repentance and faith are both gifts of God.

(h) The change means the person should be directed to the kind of fellowship which holds with such views as we have indicated in these notes. It is good, also, to put certain books into the person's hands<sup>1</sup>, and to be available to the person for questions and needs.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, *The Cleansing of the Memories; Oh, Father! Our Father!; I Love the Father; Angry Heart or Tranquil Mind?; Where I Love I Live; The Wounding and the Healing; I, the Man!; God's Glory: Man's Sexuality*. These are all NCPI books.

### Conclusion To 'The Grace of Counselling'

We must conclude, then, that at the heart of all biblical theology is grace. Biblical theology is grace theology—covering every part of the need of Man in the light of his nature, the nature of God, and the nature of creation. A piecemeal theology will mean a piecemeal anthropology and cosmology.

That which heals Man in all his parts is the grace of God, which—in other terms—is the love of God in creation, covenant, redemption and glorification. Out of all this wisdom and understanding the counsellor can, and must, speak and act.

Counselling outside of grace—i.e. lacking grace—will be no final counselling, nor will the counsellor be truly apt in his vocation.

## Appendix

The Use of the Two Books *The Meaning & Making of Man* and *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*

These two books are most helpful in using the counselling of grace, in forming a biblical anthropology, a biblical soteriology (doctrine of salvation) and in applying these elements of the grace of God. The chapter headings alone are given in the case of the first book, ***The Meaning & Making of Man***. It can be seen that what we have written above is vastly expanded.

*Study One:* Man the Created

*Study Two:* Man in Fallenness & Guilt

*Study Three:* True Humanity & Its Dynamics

*Study Four:* Man Being Transformed

*Study Five:* Man in Present Living & Future Hope

*Study Six:* A Theological Way of Counselling

*Study Seven:* Human Identity in Divine Relationships

The index of the second book ***The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*** shows this material is more applicable than that of the book above. Together these two volumes should be very helpful to counsellors:

### Part One: A Biblical Way of Counselling

1. What, Then, is Biblical Counselling?
2. Coming to Know Man, Through God
3. How, Then, Shall We Relate?
4. Authority, and the Life of Love
5. Release and Fulfilment in His Fatherhood
6. Losing Anger and Finding Tranquillity—I:  
The Nature and Causes of Anger

7. Losing Anger and Finding Tranquillity—II:  
The Way of Tranquillity
8. How, Then, Shall We Heal?

**Part Two: Counselling For Our Comfort**

1. The Source and Sense of All Relationships
2. The Dynamics of Human Birth
3. Conscience in Crisis and Comfort
4. Goodbye to Anger!
5. Wisdom For Life
6. The Cleansing of the Memories
7. The Comfort of Continuing Covenant
8. The Dynamics of Sexuality—For Sinners Only
9. The Dynamics of Sexuality—For Saints Only
10. Helping the Troubled and Discomforted
11. The Dynamics of Deliverance
12. The Liberation of Grace
13. Living Hope—Life for the Listless
14. The Sons of God Are Servants of All
15. Richness of Relationships
16. The Profitable Pursuit of Pleasure
17. Saints and Sinners In Stress and Severity
18. Worship, and the Recovery of Wholeness