

<b>Book</b>	Empathy and Sympathy
<b>Study</b>	Module 4
<b>Topic</b>	Breaking Destructive Cycles
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<b>Speaker</b>	Arnold Lim

Today we are going to look at breaking destructive cycles in our lives and I would like to thank Pastor Joshua Tan from Life Journey Centre. He was our ex-pastor. He is a trained therapist and he's going to be helping us further on in the Gamma sessions. The next Gamma session, he will be co-taking it with me as we look at the notion of spiritual formation and emotional health.

Let me begin with a very simple question to all. Let's just say, since we are looking at destructive cycles and let's just say somebody has a gaming addiction. You have a son or a young person who has a gaming addiction and he cannot break out of it. That's a destructive cycle right. My question to you now is whose responsibility is it primarily to break him out of the addiction. I'm going to give you two propositions.

- One, the expert meaning the therapist, those who have particular skills and experience in gaming addiction you go there and you learn the techniques to break it.
- The second, the church with all the support of church, the pastors, elders, the prayer, all of that.

My question to you, who has the primary responsibility and this is the dilemma. Gaming addiction is like gambling addiction, like anger management, is a universal issue. You don't need to be a Christian to learn how to break it. Now this is an important question on the role of the church and why we are teaching what we're doing in Gamma. Is this responsibility and I'm just using gaming as an example, is it the role of the expert, the therapist, the psychologist, psychiatrist, people who run this kind of things or is it primary the role of church?

Let's now talk about parents. Yes, the parent is stuck. He is going to seek help. Who is the first person he should talk to, the church or go to an external seminar? If you say counselling is the role of the church. Once you make a remark like that, it means you cannot say counselling is optional. You know there are some people who do not want to come to Gamma, they are my friends. They say, 'Arnold this counselling, I am not interested in it. I go for the Gamma class but counselling is not my job, not me, not my calling'. Once you make a remark like that, counselling is your mandate and we are going to look at what scripture tells us about this.

So, I want to give you a little bit of the controversy around counselling. Malaysia has a Lembaga Kaunselor. There is a Akta Kaunselor, if you do that you can charge money. People like Joshua is registered with Lembaga Kaunselor. These are two other groups which Lembaga Kaunselor does not recognize. Lembaga Kaunselor takes mortis, that means you are trained with a psychological degree, psychiatry degree, you have a therapy degree. In America you have what is known is Associate Certified Biblical Counsellor. Malaysia Equip Ministries allow this course to be taught.

In the Biblical counselling model, the church is the primary agent for counselling. And when they say the church, they are not saying one or two individuals, they are saying the entire body of Christ. They will never be recognised by Lembaga Kaunselor. The other group is called The Institute of Christian

Psychology and those of us who went through the National Associate Christian Counsellor Conference, the lead speaker was the person who pushed this, the leading proponent is a man known as Larry Krapp and the argument is within the Christian tradition a lot of the psychological tenants that say, a lot of neuroscience is found in the Christian tradition.

Today, I want to take you briefly through biblical counselling and then we are going to go through the topic at hand because I want to throw to you biblical counselling has a lot of tenants, which are quite important for us to look at and we as a church at one point must make a decision where we stand in this matter because counselling is controversial.

Let me just recap. There are four schools of thoughts. One is completely separated. You have got a gambling problem; you go see an expert. They call this levels of explanation. So, if I have a depression I go and see a therapist, I come to church for discipleship. You are separating the church from your mental issues, they call this levels of explanation. The church and your issues are separate. You are on the opposite extreme is what you call biblical counselling. Biblical counselling everything is under the mandate of the church. All scripture is useful for reproof.

So, whether you have basic anxiety, whether you have depression, you have suicidal thoughts, the church is the primary agent. In between there are two schools. One is Christian psychology and the other one which is the most common is called integration. Integration integrates secular psychology with the Bible. Now the problem with this approach is that it is a bit elastic and Tim Keller has a very useful article on the four schools. Today, I want to bring you through biblical counselling.

What is biblical counselling? Here is a proponent.

*Biblical counseling, in its best conception, gets at how the entirety of the church – not just trained professionals – can be mobilized to love others well. It's about ordinary people being used by God to help the lives of others. At one level, it's even as simple as learning enough about somebody to be able to pray for them. It's average-joe Christian beginning with the basic questions How are you doing? And How can we pray for you?*

**Ed Welch**

The moment you open your mouth and do this, you are a counsellor. Because counselling is a dirty word nowadays. We see, “oh doing counselling, not for me”. To biblical counselling everyone here is involved. Let me just briefly go through some of this. It is a bit dry but it is important.

1. Biblical counselling reviews counselling presuppositions. Biblical counselors have exposed the dangerously unbiblical presuppositions behind much secular counseling today (and some Christian) and have re-built biblical counseling on biblical presuppositions resulting in more biblical aims and methods.

Let me give you an example, you are suffering from anxiety attack. You go and see a secular therapist. He will take you through what is known as the modality, family therapy modality. But where do you think is their source of your treatment. The source to your treatment is you. You are God in your life. Because in secular therapy, they cannot impose their worldview upon you. So, if they cannot impose a worldview, you decide your future. You get cured, what happens, you get cured by your own strength. This is what biblical counselling is very against.

There was a gathering of all major psychologist and psychiatrist in Germany and they invited Jay Adams who is the founder of biblical counselling and they say what is this biblical counselling, there is no logic, there is no science, there is no neuroscience, there is no research, how can you call it counselling. And he gave a very interesting point. He says, biblical counselling has a worldview. The worldview is this everything we do, this is 1-Corinthian 10, whether we eat or we drink or we counsel, is for the glory of God. Our worldview is to build disciples. Secular psychology is to build self. So if a Buddhist, Muslim or Hindu goes for counselling, whatever makes you happy works. So, they have boldly reclaimed pastoral care, so much of which has been asserted by secular counselling. The emphasis on the power and sustainability of gospel in addressing people's problem.

Today, today I am going to show you how God's word is used very much heavily in what is known as therapy. They have inspired many Christians to use the Bible to diagnose the roots of problems and to prescribe lasting solutions and there is one video you can get on YouTube and it is talk about a man who had a problem, you know, what he was a flesher. And the biblical counsellor opened the Bible and use scripture to diagnose him and to cure him of him being a flesher. Now can you say that is not possible but isn't that what scripture says. All scripture, 1-Timothy 3:16, is useful for reproach, the building of the man. So why should we be sending people out to the secular therapist when you have scripture, that is their proposition. Now, I am not saying they are right but just let's just thinker this through little bit.

They have restored the biblical vocabulary of personal sin and personal responsibility, giving huge hopes of forgiveness and change. You talk to someone, they say you have a problem, you need to go for counselling, you need to seek treatment. You talk to a biblical counsellor and he says you have a sin issue, I have a sin issue. You are living in a fallen world, I am in a fallen world. We will both now do discipleship. You notice the difference in the language. It doesn't put one guy on top of each other, it is journeying together and they've restored that vocabulary into psychology, which I think is very good and they have large quality of theological and practical resources. I've been reading some of them, it is quite amazing.

Stresses on the necessity of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the Christian community to effect long-term transformation. Emphasizes compassion for people to invest in repairing broken lives.

Let me give you some of the dangers of biblical counselling model.

1. It is mostly supported by pastors. Everyone from Paul Tripp, John Piper, Timothy Keller, every major evangelical pastor has thrown his weight behind this movement, but most from the scientific world has not.
2. They tend to be overtly judgmental to those who embraced secular counseling.
3. Can tend to give dangerously simplistic counseling advice based on scripture.
4. Accused of undermining progress in scientific research and data collection especially in field of neuroscience. Let me give you an example. If you have an addiction, the biblical counsellor will take you to scripture and says, 1-Corinthian 10, whenever you are tempted God will provide you a way out and they will teach you to repeat scripture. But the secular therapist has a point. Addiction has got to do with something in your brain called dopamine. It is a neurotransmitter and dopamine is a reward transmitter. The more an addict has it, he numbs his dopamine, he needs a bigger kick. It is the same with say, pornography addiction. The more you get into it,

you need to get a higher kick. You want to cure a guy of this, you show him the scientific facts. I tell you, let's just give you example. A guy has porn addiction, you tell a young man, you do this, you are going to get married, you are going to get erectile dysfunction. I guarantee you after that he is going to fight his porn addiction. You just show him the data, you show him neuroscience, you show him the brain pattern or the prefrontal cortex. You tell him, you are not going to be performing like a man. He will get concerned. So science has a point.

5. Accused of creating a false dichotomy between science and the bible. God is a God of science.
6. Is unable to use counseling as an evangelistic tool as it breeches Secular Counseling ethics of not imposing worldview on counselees.
7. Accused of undermining client confidentiality as it stresses accountability with the local church.

Right, why we should all be involved with counselling? I just give you some verses but if you are a follower of Jesus, whether you are into biblical counselling or secular therapy, can I just make a simple point today, every single one of us here should be involved in it. It is mandatory for discipleship. Now, you can be sitting there and saying,

- I don't have the skills. You don't need it.
- I don't know the bible very well. It is okay.
- I don't know how to talk to people.

Everyone here is involved, I am going to tell you how to do it. So aim of today's talk and this is foundational in biblical counselling. You are not going to get that in integration counselling. Biblical counselling foundational thing, counsel yourself before you counsel others. Because in secular therapy they don't care, they are actually teaching you technique. If you read the papers last week, there was a therapist who was accused of actually sexually giving suggestions to his patient. The patient was a rape victim and he started to use therapy language to try to get her into bed with him, because there are no ethics in secular therapy, it is money. In biblical counselling personal sin comes in.

So today, we have one aim for all of you. How well do you think you know yourself? And I am going to suggest to you, you and I don't know ourselves as well as we think. Today, we are going to break that out open. So we got to go back a little bit on the loop I showed you, those of you around in the last talk, those who were not around, it is easy to catchup.

Sinful man starts off with a simple proposition, what must I do to be okay. It starts off by defining ourselves what my work is and normally that work is a bad work and then we go on a quest to add value to ourselves. That is a simple proposition.

So, for example, you are insecure. How do you come to that, because number one, your past, your parents never gave you much attention and you read into it. Number two, you have a crappy job, you read into it. This one is very important; I want you to remember the flow. Your feelings become the core. This is what scripture says. You start off by your feelings. The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart and what happens, because of your feelings, the feelings become reactive emotions and these reactive emotions becomes behaviour. This behaviour becomes your thinking and the thinking then sets you to certain personalities and you latch onto something that defines your identity.

So, you come to church and you are very good at children's ministry and everybody praises you, you are great at this. You convince yourself you are doing it for God, actually you are doing it for self, it is your self-actualisation. So when somebody comes and tells you, do you know what maybe your children

ministry should be done some other way you react because you're possessive of the ministry, because the ministry has defined you that you're idol.

Now this flow is important, let me tell you why this is so biblical, it starts off with your hurts. So, let me just make it very simple. You see here is the problem with the Reformed Church, why evangelical churches have a problem. Evangelical churches do this, they come on the pulpit and they say, you have a problem, you are a sinner, change. The guy sitting says, I don't know how to change. So, the guy feels guilty, every day you hammer him with that. He leaves the church and he feels guilty. Then he develops a dual personality, because he can't fight the sin. He still likes to go to the church and that tears him inside. So, the Reformed Church made a very-very fundamental mistake. It starts off with the mind, the renewal of the mind. It starts off with Romans 12, but forgets the journey from Romans 7, 8 and then to 10.

So, let me give you simple example. If I had a bad life, I am not happy, I am hurt. Those emotions begin to form me, what they do, they form the things I say in my behaviour and then my behaviour forms my thinking, my thinking forms my identity. It is a very simple flow. Now let me apply this to scripture. So that's the way it goes. This is the loop, which is called the emotional loop and I give you a person and you tell me who this person is. This person is in scripture. Number one, he thinks he is a mature Christian. So, he is one of those guys that says, this Gamma class doesn't apply to me. Don't talk to me Arnold. Talk to me about my daughter or my son or my friend, I am okay. He thinks he is mature. Past not very significant society was a nobody. His inner society now with many pagans beliefs. Core feeling, nothing much. He loves but his love is very secular. The reactive emotions shows his head. He is divisive. He likes to go into team A and team B. He is confrontational. You step out at him, he will sue you and he is very full of himself. So he has got very selective friends. He likes to hang around with rich people. He likes to brag about what he can do. He doesn't care what people think. He likes to show off his gifts of speaking in tongues, but his real problem is that he is proud of his Bible knowledge. Do you know who this person is? He is the average person in the Corinthian church.

You take this model and we are going to apply this today to 1-Corinthians chapter 10-14. You will find it fits Romans 7-10. It fits Ephesians 3-5. I mean taking this and putting it to scripture, the flow is consistent. So may be Tim Keller is on to something. He starts off with your hurts. So I am going to try to break this cycle today.

In the Corinth church, the average Corinthian thinks he is very smart, that's why he says knowledge puffs up but love builds. And he eats food offered to idols, he doesn't care what people thinks, because he thinks he is very smart. But that's the surface idol. The real underlying idol is arrogance. He thinks he knows more than everyone else. That's what Paul says in 1-Corinthians chapter 8, 9 and 10, chapter 8 particularly. Now that's psychology you know, because what Paul is doing, Paul is separating fruit from root. So you never say the Bible doesn't talk about psychology.

Now let's go through this a little bit and see whether we can apply this to ourselves. Now, this loop is critical. Let me give example of myself, because the moment you sort of put this to memory, you can apply in many ways. I give you a simple thing that affected me and later on when you break it to your small groups, your facilitators will open up with themselves.

Many-many years ago FBC had a fight, this is going back 10 years. We were at Pantai, the older members here knew. We fought with our brothers. The fight was so bad, lawsuits were happening in church. Government officers were called in to check our accounts. Chinese congregation was fighting, English

congregation, it split the church right in the middle and I saw people whom I thought were my Christian leaders and I will tell you one thing when Christmas fight, they fight worse than non-Christians. I tell you they fight worse. And I saw with my eyes man I respected, you know, men and women I respected and their behaviour was so pagan, guess what they did to man like me. It burned me, it hurt me, it scarred me, that was my past. So I have been using this loop. The feeling I had was I became very jittery on church matters. My reactive emotion was this, when I came here and over the 10 years, any time anything happens to FBC here, which I felt was threatening the unity of church, I will react. Because when we came here 10 years ago we had 150 people. I never expected the church to grow 600.

So whenever anything happen I react, so I have been using this chart on myself. My behaviour reaction is that I will go to that person and I will hammer that person. Do you know what was my idol? My idol as a leader of the church was, I am trying to build my own church. I'm not trying to build God's church. I'm trying to build my church, so I can go to Pantai and say, see we are very big, you kicked us out we are bigger than you. It takes me 10 years to do this by using this. So never deny your idols and Lord is teaching me now, this is God's church. You teach the word of God faithfully without fear or favour, you don't get into gimmicks, you don't try to make the music louder or softer and do all these things to grow people. That takes sometimes a lot to go through, so this was very helpful to me.

We are now going to move to three key areas to help us. Number one, the power prayer. If you have your Bibles you can open up to it, I just gonna go through you. Let's go through 1-Corinthians chapter 10 verse 1-13. Let me give you the background of this chapter, which is quite interesting. You notice that in the beginning he starts off, I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact brothers and sisters. Now the context of 8-9-10 is food offered to idols and the rights of an apostle. And for some strange reason Paul pulls a very last picture. When you read this you ask yourself, what has it got to do food offered to idols, it is actually everything because root and fruit. Now look at that, verses 1-5. He first talks about their Christianity

*1For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3They all ate the same spiritual food 4and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.*

Now what is the verse trying to tell you. They all came to church, they were all baptised in FBC, they all served in FBC, they were all in Gamma together, they were all in the live groups together,

*5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*

You see where we are going. Now Paul is saying, the first thing you pray about you pray against assumptions. If you are sitting here tonight and saying that tonight's talk is not about you, you are wrong. I need to hear this and you need to hear this. First thing, what do you pray about, you pray against assuming too much. This is the Corinthian problem, they were over confidence in their Salvation.

*6Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." a*

The loop is about the idolatry, self-redemption. Here is the second prayer,

*“The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” 8We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.*

The first prayer was assumption, the second prayer, the prayer against the sin of indulgence. Do you know why people drink or do things that keep them in a bondage, do you know why they game, do you know why they do porn and I am not going to judge anyone here. Why do you think they get angry? Why do you think they always like to talk bad about their husband and wives? Why do you think they are in relationships which are toxic and can't get themselves out of? Because they are trying to medicate, they're medicating. People who go into indulgence medicate to numb their pain. So the second prayer is this prayer of indulgence because you're medicating.

Here is the third prayer, which is very fascinating because you find this in Hebrews, you find this in the Book of Jude. From rivalry and sexual immorality, Paul swings to

*8We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9We should not test Christ, b as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.*

The third prayer is the prayer of negativity. You need to pray to know the extent of sin that keeps you and I in a repetitive cycle. You see, once you do the loop, you realise there is a pattern in your life. Once you realize that pattern, the problem is that how you break that pattern. Anyone can see, yeah I realise I got anger issue Arnold. Yeah, I realise I'm like this, I'm always feeling lousy but myself, I have insecurity, I have bitterness, I have this and that. Yeah thank you very much, I use the loop I know, what can I do. You take three prayers. The first is the sin of presumption, the sin of presumption mainly means, you are okay. You do not realise the gravity of your sin because you think you go to church and you are okay. The second thing you see, how this sin indulges actually has changed you and Romans 7 is critical, because Romans 7 tells you, things I do not do I do, things I do I do not do, woe upon me.

Now there is some argument in Roman 7, whether he is talking about Christian or non-Christians, the scholars are divided. I think it is a Christian because it ties to Romans 8. So let's go a little bit into scripture. You need to now look at how that sin is basically tearing you and the last one is the sin of constant negativity because negativity basically is a self-fulfilling prophecy. So you keep telling yourself that I'm hopeless, yeah you'll be hopeless. I'll never get out of this, yeah you'll never get out of it. No, I don't have a problem, yeah you don't have a problem because as scripture says your heart has hardened. I don't have that problem, everyone else can see you got a problem.

So these are three things you pray against because one thing great about biblical counselling, first you start off with yourself and you always start by humbling yourself and you start to see your sins for what it is and you got to say, woe is me because that is the beatitude. You start off by acknowledging your bankruptcy. Then God lifts you up to a higher plane, but you do not start off with that you are named self-sufficient. So I think what is good, go back, pause, look at your sins. Here is one way of doing it. If you all take out your handphones, I want you to look at it, let's just say you've been doing WhatsApp a lot of it for a long time, you look at it. What do you see in there? You see a reflection but it is black. They call this the Black Mirror Effect.

You see when you are gaming for a long time you only see a game, after a while when you switch it off, you see your face you know but it is black. What the image is telling you, that's what you are. This is James, for a short moment you sin your sin and then you put your headphone away and then you forget.

We are all the man in the mirror in James. That means in a certain moment we are quite, we see ourselves for all our addictions and our cycles. Then we walk away and we forget. So what we got to do is we got to pull ourselves back to this.

Number 2 addictions. Famous story:

Man: Why do you drink?

Prince: So that I may forget.

Man: Forget what.

Prince: Forget that I am ashamed.

Man: Ashamed of what

Prince: Ashamed of drinking.

And this is your cycle of indulgence. Now, here is a little bit of science to help you, why people are negative. They call this the availability heuristic and this is contribution from my Pastor Joshua. He is trying to say something, the way we look at the world is people can tell you a lot of things and what's really real is the grey colour but we only look at a yellow or we look at the other area, we only look at the red, everything else whatever people tell you, you cut off. We had this ability to just take what we want and listen to it. Bible calls this Romans 1; you harden your heart. Here are few areas, they call this cognitively that basically screws your decision, Bandwagon Effect. That's why who you hang around with are important. Blind spot bias, you cannot see certain things and you refuse to see it. Confirmation bias, you just hang around people who just tell you what you want to hear. Conservatism bias, what your theology, you cut off the rest of the theology, the only theology you want. But here is what scripture is telling us. We all are unable to see our true selves and one of the biggest contributing issue is negativism.

Now in the Corinthian text, the Jews were grumbling, we all know the story. They told Moses, here is the degree of self-delusion. Why do you take us out of this place to die in a desert, when we were in Egypt, we had all these food we could eat, we wish we were back in Egypt. That's crazy. They were slaves in Egypt, they couldn't wait to get out of Egypt. Once they get out of Egypt, they complain, is delusional. So here is the thing when you're in pain or you have a problem your pain so covers you, you cannot see things clearly. You see what you want to see, you think what you want to think, because the negativity has drowned you. So there's the first thing you pray against these three things.

Let's look at a second thing. The verse itself says this

*13No temptation c has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted d beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, e he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

This is one verse that I don't like and I am very scared to pray. Because whenever I pray this verse, it reminds me I have no excuse to continue to indulge. Now the thing is the Greek rendering of the word 'temptation' is actually the same as trials, you find this in Hebrews when the author says, in your struggle against sin you have not resisted to the point of shedding your own blood. Your struggle against sin sounds like temptations, it is actually trials. Hebrews is about persecuted church, but here is the point. Paul is not giving you a magic bullet, when he says no temptation has overtaken you, it means you must have the will to fight it. When you have the will to fight it, God will provide a way. So there are two prayers. The first is the prayer to expose your sin. The second prayer is a prayer for faith that God is faithful. Now this is a very difficult prayer, because very often our negatively wants to say this God has



let me down, God is not fair to me, I look at everyone else I don't know why my life is so bad everybody else life is so good, God is not right. But this is a singular most powerful prayer and so let me take you to the second point, the power of scripture. The power of scripture is found in just that one verse. One of the most interesting podcast you all should listen to is 'ask pastor john' which is John Piper's podcast on desiring God. And it has got tremendous series of podcast on everything; anxiety, depression medication, you name it and is very careful to walk the careful line about not saying no to science but affirming scripture. One thing he said, scripture is medicine.

Say for example you are depressed then he will tell you this you were never created to live depressed, defeated, guilty, condemn, ashamed or unworthy, you were created to be victorious. Let's just say, you have low self-esteem and then Piper will tell you this, He created you to crush the serpent with your heel and then he gives you a memory verse, get thee behind me Satan, not today or tomorrow. So for example if I feel defeated, I feel small, I feel insignificant, I pray Ephesians 3:21, now to Him who is able to do exceedingly more than I imagine. So the scripture becomes alive to you.

Let's just say, I am feeling anxious, I pray Philippians 4:4-7,

*6Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Now what is interesting is verse 8

*8Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

So there is scripture about everything. Now what Piper says is that, the moment you are able to diagnose and recognise your sin, what Piper says is find a verse to fight that sin, put it on a piece of paper, put it in your pocket, put it on your handphone and recite it to yourself daily. It is your medicine you know. Now that is very hard to do but I will tell you that has a lot of power. So when you are going through a season of life and you just feel that, you know I can't get out of it, I can't get over it then you pray certain things, you pray 1-Corinthians 10, he will find a way. If I find that my mind is everywhere, I pray God guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus, guard it O Lord, guard it against outside powers, pray and speak scripture into your lives.

Now here is the problem, most of us wouldn't know where the scripture is. So you hang on to that because there is a way out of it, you don't know where the scripture is. This is where, if you can find the scripture, the power of scripture combine with prayer. Number one, what happens you become aware. By developing the habit of praying with scripture, we become aware of our idols and negative thoughts. So from awareness we arrest. Pray for God's strength to discipline us, to arrest our negative thoughts and way out of a destructive cycle. Aware, arrest and then you adjust, you look at your life and you adjust the environment that puts you in a destructive cycle, use specific scripture to speak into our issues. Now the adjust is the key issue. How do you adjust to environment? And here is the third thing, it is community. So let me just give you, how community works.

Now Acts 20:17 and this is Paul in Ephesus

*17From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19I served the Lord with great humility and with tears*

With tears means, it invested in their lives. He walked with them, he shared tears with them, he was with them when they were anxious, he was with them when they were depressed, he was with them when they were fearful, he was with them when they were persecuted, he walked with them

*and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. 20You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.*

So community has two aspects; the large church and the intimate church. You have intimacy within the large church, you scare people off. You have the large church without intimacy there is no accountability. For example, one thing the charismatics do very well is the altar call, because the altar call is anonymous. I do a bit of altar call, some people come up I never met them in their lives and then they tell me all their problems, you know why, because they don't know me, but if I see Arnold every week, I am not going to tell him my problems. There is a need for release. So there is a need for a big church where I have a problem I can come up to someone I don't know and share everything, all my dirty secrets because you may not see me ever again and that itself is very helpful.

So, Paul has two things. One is there is the large preaching, the public teaching of the word and then there is a small intimate house to house. Now how do we break this down. Sanctification is progressive and here is where Corinthians is interesting, because the next few chapters you do have time to go to it he talks about the community in three ways. One is the worshipping community, is a complementing community and is a loving community and the three are critical. Let me tell you something about worship. If FBC gets its worship right and we are trying to, you come to church you're struggling with depression or sin or issue, and the music plays and the Word of God speaks to you in song and you stand there and you let the worship go up and you sing to God you speak scripture to your problem. We get our scripture, our singing wrong, you come on Sunday, you put your hands in your pocket and you do nothing, but if the music and the word speak to you, that's the church at large. That's the worshipping community and the power of the Holy Spirit that comes in at worship.

What is a complementing community? A complementing community is matching, that's found in chapters 11 and 12, it is the ear and the nose. It is brothers finding brothers that can talk about their problems, it is accountability group. The key thing is the loving community that soaks it. So let me give you the few things that we need. We need a worshipping body, we need the live groups, we need accountability partner, we need the prayer meetings and we need a specialist.

This is how Larry Krapp breaks it down and there are three levels of it. The first is you need to be in a community that you can soak in that you feel encouraged. That's level 1. You know why, because the first thing that reads into your life is your pain. Your emotions are the first thing you read into your life. Then it goes to behaviour, behaviour leads to thinking. This flow is very critical and it is found in most psychological literature.

Let me repeat it, you are what you are because your emotions strangle you. Your emotions then become reactive, they lead to behaviour, the behaviour cements your thinking that leads to your idols, that forms your identity. So, scripture tackles the heart and what is the easiest way to deal with a heart that is in pain, you put them in a community where they feel loved, doesn't feel judged. He has grace, he feels

accepted. That is just level 1. Then the bad emotions are pushed out, grace comes in. That is so critical. Larry Krapp calls it soaking in and this is where everyone of you plays its part. So if I hurt, I come to FBC, whether it is on a Sunday morning, whether it is a life group, I am not going to share with you all my deep dark secrets, my fears, my struggles, you don't deal with the mind first, you don't lecture him with theology, you make him feel loved, you encourage him, you empathise with him. And then suddenly he is in an environment where he is less critical, less negative. He now has something else that fills his dopamine drive, not all the dark thing he needs, he has the community. That's level 1 and Larry Krapp calls this shifting from problem feelings, all these toxic feelings to biblical feelings.

Now at that point, you must make a commitment. The commitment is, I will walk with Jesus. Remember, today we are talking about counselling ourselves. It is not about you counselling someone else, it is you counselling yourself. You make a commitment, Lord I struggle with this, I make a commitment. So, Level 2, you shift from problem behaviour to biblical behaviour and you require community with knowledge of bible. You see Gamma can be, one if you are not careful, it can become a group of people just sitting down, just talking theology. When you only talk and talk you become very smart but your sin still stayed with you. That's not the purpose of scripture. By the moment you are in a small group and there is a way of doing it where you can find scripture that speaks into your behaviour you shift from problem behaviour to biblical behaviour. And that's why small groups are critical and here's one thing I want to encourage Gamma groups. Your purpose of Gamma group is to speak scripture into people's life, not fill people with wisdom, but to fill people with scripture that transforms.

Scripture is great because scripture is neutral, I don't need to come and tell you all my problems you know, I can veil it to a certain level and then I find yes, this scripture speaks to my problem. You never know my problems because I am too ashamed to tell you, but suddenly I find this scripture is helpful for me. Yes, this scripture says, you know, do not be anxious about anything, I don't need to tell everyone I got anxiety problem, I don't need to tell everyone that my anxiety is so bad, I take responsibility for issues that are not even my issues, I don't need to tell everyone I am so anxious I take it out on my husband every day, I don't need to tell you that because I am ashamed. I just need to come to Gamma and say, let's talk about anxiety and someone points out the scripture and I say, thank you brother. I take that home and I pray, but you don't know my problem.

You see where we are going with this. This is called progressive sanctification. So we move from large, we soak in love, we make a commitment and then we go to exaltation and we just need scripture to speak to us, and when we reach a point where we are willing to be vulnerable, we are willing to share with someone who won't judge us, we are willing to say, I have this issue, you go to personal counselling and let's not make that a dirty word, personal counselling doesn't mean mentor-mentee, it just could mean friends. It just could mean, one to one guy that you occasionally come to and say, you know what my husband beat me, let me pray for your brother. You know what, I don't have a job for two years, I feel like I'll never get a girlfriend and we pray for you and I walk with you and I be your friend and when you walk together you move from problem thinking to biblical thinking.

I hope that is helpful. Prayer, scripture and community. So, let me just close with this.

- Past, commit to break freed.
- Present, how does God view what I do, not the world
- Core feeling, move from heart feelings to biblical feelings
- Reactive emotions, move from negative emotions to God-centred positive emotions
- Behaviour reactions; move from reactive behaviour to biblical behaviour

- God centred strategies; you renew your mind.
- Progressively move to biblical thinking.
- Progressively being more filled with Christ
- You rooted in Christ.

Counselling is mandatory for everyone of us. Counsel ourselves before counselling others. Counselling is not the job of the expert; counselling is part of discipleship.