

# Counseling Without Love

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**A Word from Bob:** Welcome to my second post in a blog mini-series on *Half Biblical Ministry to the Suffering*. In my first post, I asked: When you were hurting, has someone tried to preach truth to your suffering heart without suffering with you? Read more about it at: [Half Biblical Ministry to the Suffering](#).

### Half Biblical Versus Fully Biblical Care

Half biblical ministry to the suffering occurs whenever we preach truth to the suffering without suffering with them. And half biblical ministry occurs when we suffer with a hurting person without pointing them to the Living Word (Jesus) and the written Word (Scripture).

In biblical ministry to those who are suffering, we suffer with another person *and* we point that person to their suffering Savior. From the overflow of Christ's comfort in our lives, we share Christ's comfort with one another, encouraging each other to cling to Christ's healing hope (2 Corinthians 1:3-11).

### Leading with Love

Our leadership team at Crossroads Bible College is studying Alexander Strauch's book, *Leading with Love*. His first chapter explores 1 Corinthians 13 as the foundation for loving leadership. At the end of the chapter, he paraphrases Paul:

"If I were the most gifted communicator to ever preach, so that millions of people were moved by my oratory, but didn't have love, I would be an annoying, empty wind-bag before God and people."

"If I had the most charismatic personality, so that everyone was drawn to me like a powerful magnet, but didn't have Christlike love, I would be a phony, a dud."

"If I were the greatest visionary leader the church has ever heard, but didn't have love, I would be misguided and lost."

"If I were the bestselling author on theology and church growth, but didn't have love, I would be an empty-headed failure."

"If I sacrificially gave all my waking hours to discipling future leaders, but did it without love, I would be a false guide and model."

## Counseling with Love

As I read Strauch's paraphrase, I reflected on Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 2. Throughout the chapter, Paul paints 5 portraits of the loving biblical counselor. He develops those portraits around the theme verse of 1 Thessalonians 2:8:

"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel, but our very own souls, because you were dear to us."

Paul then paints five portraits of loving people with:

- The love of a **brother**: "I've got your back!"
- The love of a **mother**: "I love you with gentle compassion and motherly care and concern."
- The love of a **father**: "I love you with deep comfort, strong encouragement, and biblical wisdom."
- The love of an **orphan/child**: "I love you with such longing that when I am torn from you, I make every effort to reconnect with you."
- The love of a **mentor**: "I love you with respect and pride—in Christ you are a spiritual champion in my eyes."

Based upon Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 2, here's how I would paraphrase counseling for the suffering that is done without loving compassion.

"If I preach to you that all things work together for good, but I don't love you like a brother who groans with you in your grief, joins with you in your pain, and stands strong with you in your suffering, then I am just like Job's miserable counselors."

"If I am the most gifted speaker of biblical counseling truth ever to step foot on God's green earth, but I don't love you like a mother with gentle compassion and motherly care and concern for your suffering, then I am nothing but an annoying, empty wind-bag who fails to embody gospel truth in gospel love."

"If I try to point you to Christ but do not enter your suffering like Christ and on behalf of Christ with a father's deep comfort, strong encouragement, and biblical wisdom, then I am a charlatan, a phony, a fake."

"If I attempt to direct you to Christ's purposes in suffering, but I don't relate to you with the longing love that makes me feel orphaned by your absence, then I am a misguided guide who is not guided by the loving Guide—Christ, the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief."

"If I speak truth and share Scripture, but I don't love you like a mentor who sees you through Christ's eyes of compassion, then I am not following the model of the Model Biblical Counselor—Christ."

## **The Rest of the Story**

So, just what does the Bible teach about “suffering with” one another? In our next post, we’ll explore that question looking at passages like 1 Corinthians 12:26, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with (*sympathos*—experiences the same pathos as, joins in the same suffering with, embraces the same pain as...) it.”

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