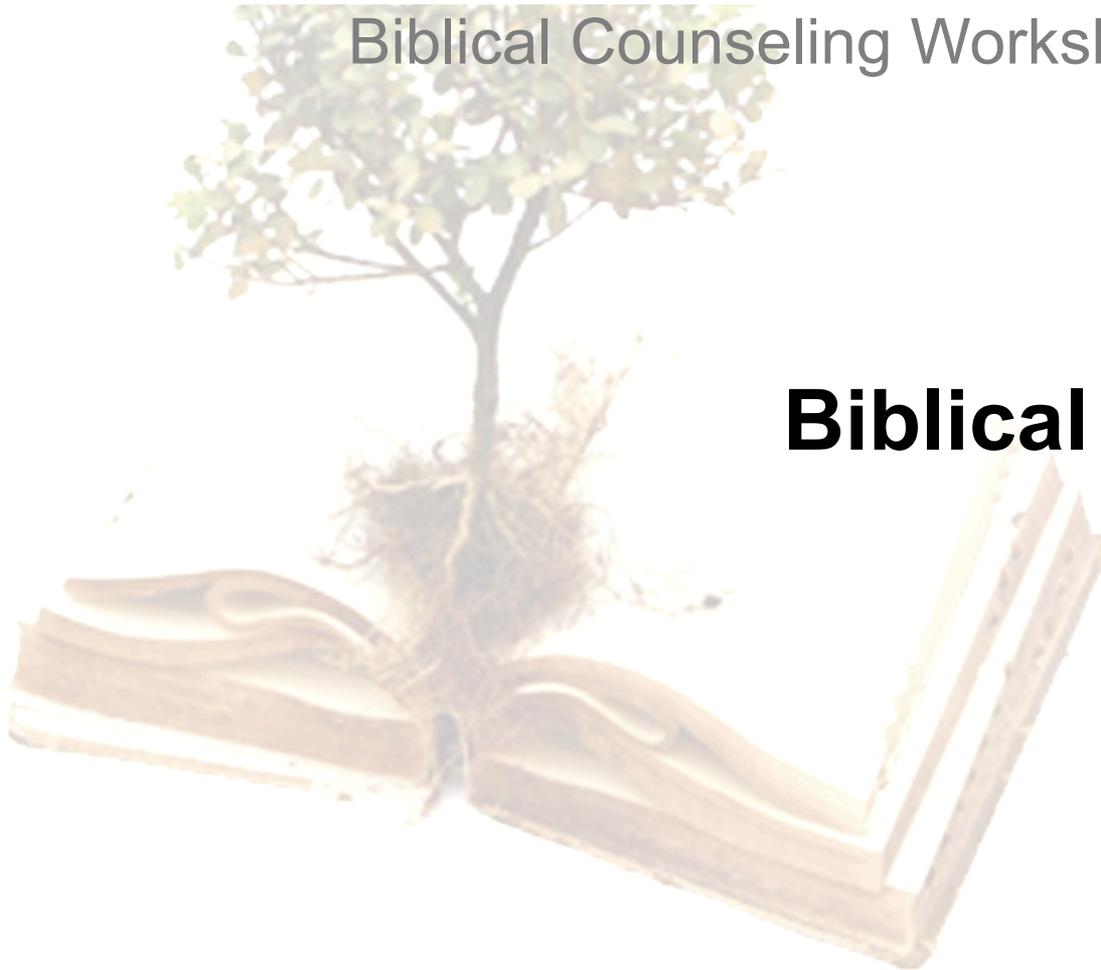




BETHANY COMMUNITY CHURCH

# BRINGING THE BIBLE TO LIFE

Biblical Counseling Workshops



## **Biblical Discernment**

Track II.4

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BCC Elder



# Biblical Discernment

*but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* 1 Thes. 5:21-22

In its simplest definition, discernment is nothing more than the ability to decide between truth and error, right and wrong. Discernment is the process of making careful distinctions in our thinking about truth. In other words, the ability to think with discernment is synonymous with an ability to think biblically.

~ John MacArthur





# Pillars of Discernment

1. Scriptures & Truth
2. The Gospel
3. God
4. Humanity
5. Christ
6. Salvation
7. Suffering





# Pillars of Discernment

1. Scriptures & Truth
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*Is That True?*



# ...about Scripture

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is used to support the resource's presuppositions and teachings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the foundation &amp; presupposition of the resource's teaching</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scripture is used outside its grammatical and historical context</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scripture is used in correlation with its immediate and broader grammatical and historical context</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes errors of legend and myth as it was written by fallible men</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scripture is inerrant as inspired by God in its original manuscripts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applications from Scripture are given before adequate observation, interpretation, and correlation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applications from Scripture arise out of contextual observations and a consistent use of interpretative principles.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The meaning of the Scripture is diverse and individual; and determined by the reader</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The meaning of the Scripture is single and exclusive; and determined by the author</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scripture is used to support man's intentions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scripture is taught to reveal God's intentions.</li></ul>



# ...about Truth

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General Revelation (creation, etc.) and Special Revelation (God's Word) are equal sources of truth</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Special Revelation (God's Word) is the primary and final source for all truth</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeals to logic, reason, tradition, experience, science, pragmatism, intuition, feelings, or cultural norms as the source(s) of truth</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeals to God's Word rightly interpreted as the primary and final source of truth</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whatever works is true</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God's Word is the final standard for all truth</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Values open-mindedness, tolerance, and diversity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God's authoritative truth, righteousness and the fear of the Lord as the foundation of wisdom</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeals to the fear of man</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeals to the fear of the Lord</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Truth can be relative, discoverable or even ultimately unknowable.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Truth is absolute, and ultimately knowable in the revelation of Jesus Christ through His Word.</li></ul>



# ...about the Gospel

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The gospel presentation is method-centered</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The gospel presentation is message-centered</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can we get the minimum amount of Truth to the maximum number of people?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can we get the maximum amount of Truth to the maximum number of people?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evangelistic starting point is shared activities, interests, music, (or sins, in the case of emergent church)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evangelistic starting point is the fact that we are all created and owned by God (Creator-Creature distinction)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Love obligates evangelistic starting point of contact</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Image of God obligates evangelistic starting point of contact</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the least you need to know in order to be saved?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What all has God revealed in His entire Gospel about our salvation?</li></ul>



# ...about salvation

...specifically about assurance of salvation

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comes through prayer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comes through obedience</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obedience is seen as a work (earned/effort)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obedience is seen as a fruit (result/natural)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance of salvation comes from someone using the promises of God and pronouncing the new believer saved.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance of salvation comes from the Holy Spirit applying biblical promises to the conscience and affecting a changed life.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance is discussed at salvation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assurance is discussed when doubting.</li></ul>



# ...about God

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is a powerless bystander on our troubles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is the Sovereign, Triune Lord</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Love is God's chief attribute</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Holiness and love are both emphasized in tandem with one another</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is our cosmic therapist who meets our emotional needs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is our Creator who commands us to repent and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is waiting for your choice.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God will empower your will.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is a friend who will help you.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is a king who will save you.</li></ul>



# ...about humanity

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is instinctual evolved animal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is created in the image of God as a personal, responsible, and volitional creature</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is complex diversity of three distinct aspects (soul, spirit, body), and thus authority for his help is found in both religion (spirit) and the sciences (soul &amp; body).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is a complex unity of inner and outer aspects (soul, spirit, mind, heart, will, bowels, flesh, body, hands, etc.), and thus authority for his help is found in the biblical revelation of Christ his Creator.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is a victim; his parents, birth-order, personality, past, society, culture, religion, environment is/ are responsible for his problems.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is culpable before God for his own sin and choices; his greatest problem is his own sinful heart that is committed to proud independence from God.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man's solution is within himself</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man's solution is in Christ alone</li></ul>



# ...about humanity (cont.)

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is seeking truth, but lacks correct facts.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is an enemy of God, hating the truth</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man is Fallen yet has the ability (or potential) to choose the good and God.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fallen and unable to come to God by own willpower</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man needs love, help, friendship, and meaning.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needs new nature (mind, heart, will), regeneration</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man makes mistakes, is imperfect, needs forgiveness for specific sins</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rebels against God, has a sinful nature, needs reconciliation.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man's problem is inferiority and his need is for self-confidence, self-esteem, self-love, and/or self-actualization.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man's problem is sin and his need is for mercy, grace, and truth</li></ul>



# ...about humanity (cont.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man's sin leads to a bad life.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man's sin leads to hell.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Man needs salvation from the consequences of sin—unhappiness, hell.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needs salvation from guilt and the enslaving power of sin, hell.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Humanity is basically good, but sick and ignorant; the Gospel is medicine.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Humanity is fallen and sinful, spiritually dead and wholly lost; the Gospel is resurrection.</li></ul>



# ...about Christ

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Savior from failures, mistakes, and hell.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Savior from God's wrath, your sins, your sinful nature, and hell</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He exists for our benefit.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He exists to gather a kingdom and receive honor and glory.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christ's death shows us how valuable and important we are to God.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christ's death shows us how sinful is our sin, and how much Christ loved and valued God.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• His death was more important than his righteous, law-fulfilling life.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• His death and his life of fulfilling our obligation to God are equally important.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasizes his priestly office as Savior.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasizes his priestly, kingly, and prophetic roles in balance.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An attitude of submission to Christ's lordship is optional for salvation by faith alone.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An attitude of submission to Christ's lordship is necessary for salvation by faith alone.</li></ul>



# ...about salvation

...specifically about man's response to Christ

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invitation waiting to be accepted now.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loving command to be obeyed now.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our choice is the basis for salvation. God responds to our decision.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God's choice is the basis for salvation. We respond to God's initiative.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change your mind about Christ</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change your life and your worldview</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We give mental assent to truths of gospel—decision</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We respond with our whole person (mind, heart, will) – conversion</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeal is made to the desires of the sinner.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeal is made to the commands of God in the conscience of the sinner.</li></ul>



# ...about salvation

...specifically about man's response to Christ

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repentance emphasizes outward sorrow for sin and the outward change of behavior</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repentance emphasizes God's ability to transform and turn the heart away from sin and towards Christ</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guilt is an emotion.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guilt is a legal standing.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Saved by faith alone – true repentance omitted for it is thought of as “works”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Saved by faith alone – saving faith always accompanied by true repentance.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Salvation is accomplished by a decision; man controls his own fate.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Salvation is accomplished by an act of God; man's fate depends entirely on the mercy of God.</li></ul>



# ...about suffering

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relief, or the removal of pain, is the supreme goal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christ-likeness, or the transformation of the heart, is the supreme goal</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God doesn't purposely bring suffering into His children's lives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God purposely uses suffering to perfect His children in their pursuit of Christ.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The greatest problem of suffering is the pain</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The greatest problem of suffering is when my heart responds sinfully to it.</li></ul>



# ...about suffering

<b>Man-Centered</b>	<b>God-Centered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One of the chief causes of mental, emotional and existential suffering is people not being able to accept or allow themselves to fully experience all of who they are</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The chief cause of all suffering is sin – either personally or corporately on behalf of the entire human race.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpersonal conflict is primarily rooted in the differences of people</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpersonal conflict is primarily rooted in the sinful desires of our hearts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God allows suffering, but wants to end it at all costs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God ordains suffering; it is a gift for our good.</li></ul>



# Homework

- Summarize your main take-aways from this session, especially noting any areas that were either unclear to you or that you might disagree.
- Read article “Defining Discernment” by John MacArthur (on BCC website under Track II Documents)
- Chapter 5 – “Counseling and the Sinfulness of Humanity”  
from the book, *Counseling; How to Counsel Biblically* by John MacArthur



# Going Deeper

- Memorize Ps. 29:2
- Book: *Think Biblically* by John MacArthur
- Appendix – “Why Discernment is Out of Fashion”  
from the book: *Truth Wars* by John MacArthur



# Next Classes

- Track II.5, *Handling God's Word*
- Track.II.6, *Who is God and Why it Matters in counseling?*
- Track.II.7, *Role of the Church in Counseling*