

## Intensive Discipleship (Biblical Counseling) Overview

"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD" (Matt 4:4, NASU)

### Purpose

At Faith Community Church, the ultimate purpose of discipleship is for believers to increasingly have the mind, attitude, love, spirit and purpose of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-2) so we: See, interpret and respond to the sovereignly ordained circumstances of life in a way which glorifies Christ and makes His gospel evident to those who are near (Matt. 5:16, Matt. 18, 2 Tim. 1-2). As a result, our lives will increasingly become a product of God's Word and God's Spirit within and less a product of past experiences, health / mental-health concerns, cultural norms, treatment by others etc...

The following are *not* goals of discipleship: The elimination of negative circumstances, the control of challenging people or the eradication of emotional pain. However, the Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control) will by necessity intermingle with and over-shadow pain and suffering.

### Process

This ministry is intentionally based on the teaching, application and understanding of the Bible as explained in the Faith Community Church Statement of Faith, which is based on the long standing tradition of the Reformation. It is recognized that the entire discipleship / counseling process is completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit. For discipleship to be effective the Spirit must give illumination, wisdom, insight and instill courageous love in all who are involved. Therefore, prayer is a vital part of this ministry.

Intensive Discipleship is not like taking a pill to get "fixed" or to "fix" someone else. Discipleship is not one-dimensional; it is multifaceted. At a minimum, it consists of: 1) Being in consistent fellowship as a part of a Bible-believing Church. Participation would include activities, such as worship services, Sunday school, small group fellowship, a close discipleship relationship and corporate prayer time. 2) Regular study, memorization, meditation and prayerful obedience to God's Word. 3) A life increasingly devoted to the spiritual disciplines.

### General Health and Well Being

The Bible understands health in a holistic manner and advocates the use of current medical health care, accompanied with repentance, confession and faithful obedience (James 5:14-16). There are several physical maladies that can have negative mental and emotional consequences. You are encouraged to undergo a comprehensive physical examination if you have not had one recently or are experiencing physical or emotional symptoms. You are further encouraged to begin (under the auspices of your physician) a consistent, long-term program of exercise, diet, appropriate rest, relaxation and additionally to engage in other dimensions of well being; see "The Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life" By Donald Whitney.<sup>i</sup>

### Distinctive of Biblical Counseling

A Biblical Counselor is not a Doctor, Psychiatrist or any kind of a Mental Health Professional. A *Biblical* Counselor is a fellow sinner, wholly dependent upon the grace and mercy made available through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 18: 1-4, 23:8-12, Rom. 3: 23-24, 7 14-25). A *Biblical* counselor believes that you are both a spiritual and physical being made in the image of God, and are therefore *worship-driven* (that is, you do what you do because of what you are worshipping –

brain chemistry and functionality autonomically respond, Gen. 4:7, Prov. 3:1-2, 13-18, 13:12). *The foundation of this ministry is the gospel of Christ and one's expected response to that gospel of repentance and faith.* Secular professionals generally see individuals as a mere physical being (having evolved from animals) and therefore a biological machine. These non-biblical presuppositions lead to resources other than the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16), or so distort the gospel, that responding to it (the distorted gospel) is worthless in terms of salvation or sanctification. While secularists cannot trace causes back beyond bio-chemical and bio-mechanical processes in the brain, Biblicists acknowledge the seamless link between the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional processes. Consequently while sanctification is the *objective*, discipleship is the *process* (1 Tim. 4:7-8). The human heart cannot be mapped and analyzed by the human mind (Jer. 17:9-10) but is made manifest with one's interaction with the circumstances of life (Ps. 1, Matt. 12:33-37, Rom. 1:21, 1 Cor. 10:13, Gal. 5:16-26, James 1:22-25, 2:26, 4:1 ff), the use of one's resources (Matt. 6:19-21), and the outflow of one's tongue (James 3:1-12). Discipleship, therefore, requires prayerful dependence on the Spirit in the immediate circumstances God's sovereignty ordains in utilizing the Word to establish the mind, attitude, love, spirit and the purpose of Christ in oneself. This establishes and defines the way we *are* in all circumstances from which we view, interpret and respond. As a result, we experience peace and joy while manifesting humble obedience to God's Word and a desire to glorify Christ.

## Confidentiality

To some extent, discipleship relationships are confidential, however the Elders of FCC share a joint responsibility to shepherd those who place themselves under their spiritual care (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:2). Occasionally, information may need to be communicated to (or within) the Elder Board for shepherding purposes. Also, God providentially ministers to man through levels of authority: Christ (Eph. 5:23-24) the Bible (1 John 5:2-3) civil government (Rom.13: 1-8), church leadership (Heb.13: 1-8), husbands (Eph. 5:22-24) parents (Eph. 6:1-3) and others in the church (Matt. 18:15-18, Eph. 5:21). Those involved need to understand that confidentiality in a discipleship relationship generally cannot be allowed to violate the submission patterns and restoration principles established by the Bible.

For example, children are to submit to their parents (Eph. 6:1-3) but parents are to submit to the Lord, the Bible, church leaders, other church members and civil authority as they carry out their responsibilities as parents (Eph. 6:4). Church leaders (and disciple-makers) are to submit to the Lord, the Bible and civil authority as they carry out their ministry. This chain of submission does not allow for one in a discipleship relationship to know of significant disobedience to parents on the part of children to be left unreported to parents. It does not allow for those in the relationship to know of sinful or criminal acts committed by one family member against another, to go unreported to the one offended, church leadership (and possibly eventually the church at large under Matt. 18) along with civil authorities (Rom. 13:1-7). To break this principle violates the very pattern of submission to God's Word upon which the discipleship process is predicated.

Further, Christians can appeal to the legitimate authorities God placed over them; this can include the criminal justice system and other civil professionals. While the outcomes of such actions are impossible to predict they can be left to God, if the appeal was made by faith in God through the authorities He has established (Matt. 8:10, Acts 25:11, Rom. 13:1-7).

---

<sup>i</sup> While there is ample evidence that *psychotropic drugs are extremely over-prescribed in our culture*, you are encouraged to always follow the medical and pharmaceutical advice of your doctor. If you already take them, you should consider asking your doctor about the advisability of establishing a plan for reducing and eliminating the drugs as your symptoms subside (some of which may actually be caused by the medication). Even a modest reduction of certain psychotropic drugs can have serious side affects and should only be done under the prudent care of your doctor.