Elder's Corner

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)

One of the attributes of the Bible is its perspicuity. One definition of that term says, "The **perspicuity of Scripture**—often called the *clarity of God's Word*—is the doctrine that God has spoken in His Word so that it is understandable, teachable, and sufficient for all who come to it with faith and humility. It affirms that the essential truths of salvation, creation, and godly living are clearly presented in Scripture, not hidden from the unlearned." It is true that the unsaved one can receive an adequate understanding of God's hand in creation from Genesis 1 & 2 and Romans 1. The unsaved one who is convicted of his **sin** and lost condition **(John 16:8, 9)** can easily understand what he must do to be saved through the words of Paul to the Philippian jailor in **Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Ephesians 2:8, 9** reveals salvation as a free **gift** completely apart from **works**, received **through faith in Jesus Christ.**

Having said that, if you have studied the Bible, you are aware that there are portions of God's word that can be difficult to understand, especially for an unbeliever, and **1 Cor 2:14** above explains why that is so. One biblical counselor explains the problem:

> For example, the unregenerate husband will not understand the biblical instruction, 'Husband, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church . . .'(Eph. 5:25). And the unconverted wife cannot comprehend the admonition: 'Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord' (Eph. 5:22). In fact, most of the imperatives of Scripture that command obedience to the high standards of God, are completely unattainable for anyone without intimate knowledge of Christ, submission to His Lordship, a growing and contextual grasp of the Word, and the instruction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.[1]

Jay Adams agrees, arguing that the Bible should be used to counsel only those who are saved. He writes:

> Actually, counseling becomes truly nouthetic when the counselee is a Christian . . . Unsaved counselees are neither capable of understanding God's revealed will (cf. 1 Corinthians 2) nor capable of doing it (Romans 8:7, 8). The Holy Spirit is the one who must motivate both counselor and client. Motivation not generated by the Spirit is humanistic and cannot honor God . . . To ignore this transforming change in counselling, to attempt to effect changes apart from God's power, is a colossal mistake.[2]

Although Abercrombie wrote of the challenge that biblical counseling presents when counseling unbelievers, he shares these thoughts:

> But I have also found biblical counseling to be rich in opportunity for evangelism, knowing that scriptural emphasis must be at the core of all evangelistic outreach. Biblical counseling then is completely appropriate for unbelievers, given the fact that God's Word is necessary for one to be saved. The Bible compels us to action! And since we view every counseling hour as a divine assignment, we must not neglect the overarching call of Scripture to share the gospel, without which, no one can be saved.[3]

Knowing this, our all-wise Savior **Jesus Christ,** the night before He died, promised to provide an answer to the problem being discussed here:

> **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26).**

I tend to agree with the second quote from Abercrombie. I have counseled some who were unbelievers but have made it plain that we will deal with the sin or issue that is being presented, but my primary focus with him or her will be their salvation. Without salvation, **the things of the Spirit of God** will be **foolishness** to them. They require **the Spirit of truth (John 15:26)** to gain spiritual discernment and to **guide** them **into all truth (John 16:13).**

Trust **Jesus Christ** to be your **Lord** and Savior today. He will **send** His **Spirit** who will open the Scriptures to you in a new, wonderful way. Maranatha.

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[1] Ab Abercrombie, *Why Biblical Counseling?: An Appeal for Scriptural Sufficiency* (Santa Rosa Beach, FL: Biblical Ministries, Inc., 2019), 45, 46.

[2] Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 68.

[3] Abercrombie, *Why Biblical Counseling,* 46.