

Spring 2021

# SIDE <sup>B</sup>Y <sub>Y</sub> SIDE

A Newsletter from The Institute of Biblical Leadership

**PAGE 4**

**At the Root: A  
testimonial of  
marriage counseling  
through IBL**

**PAGE 7**

**Stephen Polk and  
IBL's impact**



THE INSTITUTE  
OF BIBLICAL  
LEADERSHIP

because leaders who  
honor God don't just  
come out of nowhere

# Straight Ahead!

I Corinthians  
15:58

## Don't Be That Guy

The Urban Dictionary defines “don't be that guy” as what you say to someone who is acting stupidly or with a high degree of lameness or foolishness. When somebody is being dumb or annoying you say to them, “Dude, don't be that guy.”

“...Anyone (who) is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.” Don't be that guy!

In this passage, James describes a person behaving stupidly, lamely, and foolishly. They presumably value spiritual truth, taking time to understand what God's Word says vis-à-vis their own life experiences: their actual behavior,

character, and motivation. But then, having obtained that tremendous insight about themselves, they do nothing about it! They simply walk away from the understanding they gained. They are unwilling to embrace the spiritual insights God brought into focus for them. Consequently, they are unable to incorporate these truths into their life; they experience no growth or transformation; and languish in a cycle of stagnancy. Let's do everything we can to not be that guy.

What a tragedy! To come so close to experiencing the blessings and rest of God, but then ultimately miss it. Hebrews 3:16—4:12 describes the necessary three-step process of entering (experiencing) God's rest: 1) we hear the Word, understanding what it says about God, me, others, and life, 2) we believe the Word, embracing it as what is

true and real, and 3) we obey the Word, advancing in life and ministry as God transforms us into the image of his Son. This process is best described as “faithful obedience.” As we develop a practice of faithful obedience, we are transformed from who we were, having become a new man/woman, and are no longer “that guy.”

The obedience that God desires to see in our lives is not a ritualistic, legalistic conformance to a set of rules.

“As we develop a practice of faithful obedience, we are transformed from who we were”

Instead, it is the “natural” outgrowth of belief. I naturally align my life to what I believe is really real. God desires that we believe his Word, so that we will willingly, enthusiastically, effortlessly, align ourselves to it. Are you being that guy?

It starts with a hard look in the mirror, carefully examining our actions, words, relationships, character, call, design, and motivations. It requires a willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit in a life of disciplined

practice that reinforces God's truth in these essential areas. The Holy Spirit uses his Word, focusing us on the image of ourselves reflected in his Word, allowing us to discern our deepest thoughts and the desires of our heart through spiritual dissection (Hebrews 4:12), in order to grow us in life and leadership.

It is not an easy process, and it is best accomplished in relationship with others over an extended period of time... Individuals who love you, walk with you, desire God's best for you, and are able to strengthen, encourage and exhort you in your journey of hearing, believing, and obeying God's Word. IBL's counseling ministry is specifically structured to develop this kind of relationship and experience this kind of journey.

Don't be that old guy. Be the new guy God intends you to be.

Dr. David  
Phelan

President



# At the Root

A testimonial of marriage counseling through IBL



“We need counseling!” I said angrily as I rolled away from my husband in hurt and frustration. Although, for the most part, my husband Mike and I had a great twenty years of marriage, we kept coming up on this same issue, this clash of perspectives and hurtful words spoken that left me feeling unloved and scared. To my surprise Mike’s response was, “Sounds good! Let’s go!” With his response came a variety of emotions. I was relieved—that he wanted to work on our marriage, irritated—that we had to “resort to” outside help, that we couldn’t just

figure it out on our own, and embarrassed—that we had to admit we needed help. But, oh, am I glad we did reach out for help. Through a friend, Mike and I learned about IBL. We were both immediately drawn to the counseling model of IBL. IBL believes the answers to all of life’s challenges are found in God’s Word (II Peter 1:2-4). In addition, IBL believes mature believers, who know God’s Word accurately and are guided by the Holy Spirit, are qualified to counsel others. These truths resonated with us as both my husband and I had previously experienced “Christian counseling” and found it lacking.

When we arrived for our

week of counseling with David and Dawn, I knew I wasn’t perfect, but I was convinced the majority of our problems were Mike’s doing. After a couple days of David and Dawn asking us questions, they gave us feedback as to what they believed was “at the root” of the behaviors that had brought us to counseling. They explained “roots” are beliefs we hold deep in our hearts that we are often not even aware of. Like the roots of a tree, they are hidden underground. But these roots feed and produce the visible parts of the tree—the foliage, our behaviors.

I was not expecting what happened next. As David and Dawn gently explained to me that they believed one of my roots was “self on the throne” I felt I had been side-swiped by a Mack truck. What they described to me felt “way worse” than the roots they had just identified in Mike’s life. I felt betrayed by God. “What God?! How can this be? I’m the more ‘spiritual’ one, I’m the one who reads Your Word more and knows and understands it better. How could I feel so close

to You and yet have such a huge blind spot as ‘self on the throne’?” (Which is just a better visual picture for the ugly sin of pride.)

That night I couldn’t sleep. Finally, around 2:00AM, I asked God to show me the truth and what His answer was. He led me to Scriptures and gently, kindly, lovingly confirmed what David and Dawn had suspected. I wanted to be right with God. I confessed to God and asked Him to forgive me and help me repent.

As our week of counseling progressed I began to see my “root” everywhere. It was evident in my habit of interrupting people (I felt I knew better, what needed to be said at that time.) It was evident in my attitude toward my role as a mother (I felt I knew better than God what I was “most suited” for). It was evident in my role as a wife (I felt I knew better than my husband how to spiritually lead our family). It was a difficult week but such a GOOD week. The verse that comes to mind when I think back on it is, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful;

nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

**"I wish every marriage could receive the counsel and practical tools they give."**

David and Dawn have helped us through ALL the problems in our marriage to date. Since that first week, we spent another week with them in person and have had sessions via Skype. Mike and I are closer than we have ever been and continue to grow closer to God. We are so thankful for David and Dawn and the ministry of IBL. It has been truly life changing. I wish every marriage could receive the counsel and practical tools they give for understanding each other, for communicating with each other in a biblical way, for identifying our thoughts and for rejecting lies in our thoughts and replacing them with truth so that we can actually be "transformed by

the renewing of our minds." Romans 12:2

I would encourage any couple who has the opportunity to attend IBL counseling to do so. You cannot put a price on a happy marriage and, speaking of price, the monetary price for IBL counseling is - whatever you can afford!

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!



**To get updates from IBL scan the code below**



# IBL

## Testimonial

*From Steven Polk*

**M**y first engagement with IBL was during a church leadership summit. IBL was brought in to help guide our church through a new leadership structure. Little did I know a few months later, I would be needing them to guide me through the most difficult season in my life.

My name is Steven Polk and I serve as the Pastor of Worship and Pastoral Care at FiveStone Community Church in Garland, TX. I have served as a pastor for over thirty years. Never did I think I would need the services that David and Dawn provided in my time of need.

In January of 2020 I found myself in the loneliest, darkest season of my life. My wife of thirty years walked out on me, saying she was not sure she would ever come back and was not interested in being the wife of a pastor any longer. For those of you in ministry, can you imagine what would happen to your world should you find

yourself in that moment? I could not. I never imagined I would be facing these unbelievable circumstances. At this point, since you are reading a newsletter from a ministry concerning its counseling services, you are probably expecting to hear a miraculous, happily-ever-after story where the wife comes home, and reconciliation takes place, and the marriage is put back together and is stronger than ever before. Unfortunately, that is not my story.

My marriage ended in divorce. That's my story. However, that's not the end of my story. God is still writing His story in my life; and because I am a child of God, I believe my story will end in a happily-ever-after because I know God is working everything to my good because I love Him and am called to His purposes (Romans 8:28)! Following my wife's departure in January, the leadership of my church encouraged me to enter into counseling with David and Dawn. At that time, I thought I had been

through enough counseling to last a lifetime. My wife and I had been going to counseling but it didn't seem to be helping—at least not in our marriage and I sure wasn't excited about hearing someone else's version of what we needed to do to save our marriage. But nothing else seemed to be working, so I suggested we give it a try. Unfortunately, my wife would not agree to go. So, I thought to myself, "I need to see the work God wants to do in me because I know this isn't all on my wife. I need to take responsibility for my part in the place we find ourselves."

**"I am not the author of my story. God is writing my story and he is developing my character as He does so."**

In May of 2020 I traveled to North Carolina (yes, in the heart of the pandemic) to walk through a five-day counseling intensive with David and Dawn. It would be misleading to only tell you the results of the week—which have been a great blessing in my life. The truth is, it was a gut-wrenching week of soul-searching, honesty, anger, and deep sorrow. I learned that lying underneath the fruit of my life were deep roots that needed to be identified, brought

to the surface and addressed. Without identifying and dealing with these roots I would simply repeat the past, and that was not something I was interested in. David and Dawn patiently, lovingly, yet firmly helped me walk through the week. Again, it was a painful path to walk but I knew I had two friends, a brother and sister in Christ to guide me. They had my best interest at heart. By the end of the week, I had a plan in place for working through the issues we had identified. It is now a new year—2021, and I can honestly say God has used David and Dawn to help me see hope in the future, to see that God is not through with me yet. To see that I can overcome the enemy and have victory over the traps he has set for me. No, I wouldn't have written my life's story this way. But I am not the author of my story. God is writing my story and he is developing my character as He does so. Because of David and Dawn's help and God's mercy and grace, I am changed. There will be more challenges ahead, but I am confident God's plan is good, and the ending of the story is perfect!

**Steven Polk**  
IBL client



# Faithfully Advancing

Ephesians 4:14-16

## A Strong Core

In the center of your body, known as the torso, resides a series of muscles that function together to provide stability for your body. These muscles collectively are referred to as your core. Without these muscles working together, you would lose your capacity to effectively maneuver, lift, shift stress from the spine, and accomplish the myriad daily activities we take for granted. Therefore, fitness trainers are very concerned with strengthening your physical core, to ensure your body is functioning as designed.

Similar to your physical body, you also possess a "spiritual core" which must function as God intended. This core consists of interdependent

elements that operate harmoniously to stabilize our spiritual walk and service, enabling us to function successfully in life and ministry. These four elements are: our purpose, evident in a heart motivated to glorify God; our being, evident in Christ-like character; our impact, evident as we influence other people to embrace God's objectives; and our practice, evident through a faithful commitment to Spirit-led leadership disciplines. Similar to our physical core, these four spiritual components are essential to help God's leaders function and serve the way He intended.

In each of IBL's ministry services, our teams focus on strengthening these four elements as we train, advise, guide, and mentor.

It is common for our coaching clients to see these elements strengthened as we assist them one-on-one with leadership decisions and challenges. These components are regularly emphasized in our U.S. and International Training as we help leaders exercise and develop their purpose, being, impact, and practice. In IBL's consulting efforts, as we serve a leadership team through ministry assessments, role clarification, organizational leadership structure, long-range planning, conflict resolution, crisis response, and other areas of team leadership, the focus on the team's spiritual core is evident. But of all our services, it is in IBL's counseling ministry that a leader undergoes the most intense development work on their spiritual core.

Our counseling ministry is often not as visible or openly discussed as our other services.

**“In each of IBL's ministry services, our teams focus on strengthening these four elements as we train, advise, guide, and mentor.”**

Even in 2021, too many people associate a negative stigma with “counseling.” Too often there is an incorrect and harmful attitude of “something must be profoundly broken and beyond repair” if a leader needs counseling. Nothing could be further from the truth! When counseling is structured properly, with the right focus and the right goals, it is a wonderful time of significant spiritual advancement and strengthening of the leader's spiritual core. Unfortunately, what is often referred to as “Christian” or even “biblical” counseling is far removed from the spiritual development process found in God's Word.

Counseling at IBL is designed for an in-depth examination of a leader's “core.” We use the biblical metaphor of a tree (Isaiah 61:3b), describing a leader as an Oak of Righteousness, mapping each element of our spiritual core to a distinct part of the tree. The foliage of a leader's tree corresponds to the “presentation issues” that need to be addressed: the problematic patterns of behavior in the client's life and ministry that prompted them to seek counseling. These harmful patterns limit the influence of the client in others' lives, hindering the leader's ability to

help other people embrace God's objectives. The limbs of the tree are also examined by the counseling team, with a thorough exploration of harmful character qualities, and identifying any misalignment of the leader's chosen vocation with their divine design. At the deepest level in the tree, the roots, IBL's counselors examine active, idolistic heart motivations that have led to the harmful behavioral patterns in the foliage of the leader's tree. While we all know the Sunday school answer, that our heart is motivated to bring God glory, the actual, active motivations of our hearts are sometimes much more self-focused. Finally, the sap of a leader's tree corresponds to spiritual disciplines that help a leader develop their roots, strengthen their limbs, and enrich their foliage. The action plans developed in the counseling room identify the disciplines that need to be embraced by the counselees.

As seen in the two testimonials in this issue of Side-by-Side, our counseling ministry is simply an extension of the entire philosophy of IBL's ministry. It is designed to take a deep dive into the individual leader's life. It is very holistic, with a goal of strengthening the entire spiritual core of a leader.

There are many situations that prompt couples to seek counseling with IBL: disconnects or miscommunication in their marriage relationship; traumatic situations that need to be processed and understood from God's perspective; uncertainty about next steps in ministry; and patterns of conflict with colleagues or congregants are just a few examples. In all cases, there is an overriding sense of something not being right, that they have some type of pattern of not functioning as God desires.

At IBL, we are burdened to see God's leaders grow and flourish. We come alongside them and help them develop their purpose, being, impact, and practice, so they become all that God desires. We encourage you to reach out to us if you feel you could benefit from a conversation regarding IBL's counseling ministry, and how it could help you as a leader. It would be our joy to help you strengthen your spiritual core as God's leader.

**Dr. Dave Deets**

Vice President





P.O. Box 338,  
Fairview, NC 28730

Here are some easy ways you can get involved and support IBL online



1. "Like" and follow our Facebook pages. Visit "[facebook.com/iblministry](https://facebook.com/iblministry)" and click the "like" button. This is the easiest way to help us.



2. Use the "share" button on our Facebook posts you enjoy. This will make more people aware of our ministry with God's leaders.



3. Leave a comment or send us a message. Giving us feedback encourages us and helps us refine our postings



4. Sign up for our newsletters. Scan the QR code on page 6 to sign up and receive updates from IBL.

Support us on Amazon. You can financially support IBL with every Amazon purchase you make through a program called Amazon Smile. Visit [www.iblministry.org/blog/amazonmile](http://www.iblministry.org/blog/amazonmile) to start supporting us