

Are We There Yet?

Knowing When to Graduate Your Counselee
Grace Fellowship, Pastor Brad Bigney

Are they aimed in a new direction with some new insights about themselves and some new tools in their toolbox for processing and handling life in a way that is more pleasing to God?

I. When They Understand the Real Goal of the Christian Life

- Pleasing God or becoming God's kind of person in the trial
- Becoming more like Christ
- **2 Cor. 5:9** "So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it."
- No longer focused on trying to change circumstances or 'fix' people around them

II. When They're Focusing on Their Own Sin

- instead of focusing on everyone else
- **Matt. 7:5** "How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"
- See your own sin first, see it as worse, and see it as what you need to be working on most
- and starting to repent (A Change of mind that is strong enough that it changes the direction of your life)

III. When They're Seeing Their Own Heart and Recognizing What Rules Them

- Learning what their top root sins are instead of whacking away at fruit sins
- **Prov. 4:23** "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."
- **Psalms 139:23-24** "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
- **James 4:1-3** "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

IV. When They Understand the Biblical Process of Lasting Change

- Change requires God’s grace
- Change requires personal effort (Sweat, hard work)
- **I Cor. 15:10** “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace towards me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

V. When They’re Willing to Do Whatever It Takes to Please God

- Willing to radically amputate people, places, hobbies, habits, etc., that all make it easier for them to sin in the same way they did before
- **Matt. 5:29-30** “If your right eye causes you to sin... And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

VI. When They’ve Formed a New Habit, by God’s Spirit, of ‘Catching’ Themselves

- By God’s grace and God’s Spirit, catching themselves in real time just as they were about to think what they always think, say what they usually say or do what they always did
- **Galatians 5:16, 25** “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit [Grk. Literal ‘keep in step with the Spirit’]

VII. When They’re Formed a Habit of Spiritual Self-Feeding

- Spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, meditation, Scripture memory, prayer, etc., have become a more consistent and regular part of their daily schedule
- They are consistently living between spiritually rowing or sailing in their Christian life (See Tim Keller analogy: Sinking | Drifting | Rowing | Sailing)

VIII. When They've Learned How to Control Their Emotions by Understanding What Feeds Them

- Emotions are more regulated – not so many highs and lows
- Understanding how thinking feeds feelings
- Learning how to talk to themselves with the truth of God's Word instead of just listening to themselves
- Choosing what to allow their mind to dwell on, rehearse, stew over, etc.
- **2 Cor. 10:4-5** ⁴“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
- Thinking Chart: Stimuli | Thinking | Emotions | Actions | T.E.A. | Character

IX. When They're Connected with Other Believers at Close Range

- Consistently present for corporate worship
- Plugged into a smaller community group
- Spending time one-on-one with godly friends who don't just listen but will also exhort and speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)
- **Heb. 10:25** “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
- **I Peter 4:10** “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

X. When They're Able to Formulate Their Own Long-Term Plan for Moving Forward

- See ‘Assessment for When to End Counseling’

Additional Reading

The Pastor and Counseling – *The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need*, chapter 6 “The Final Meeting,” Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, Crossway Pub., 2015

Critical Stages of Biblical Counseling – *Finishing Well*, Book 3, ch. 1-13, p. 165-228, Timeless Texts, 2002