

Dealing with Pain and Difficulty: Connecting Our Beliefs to Our Lives

How is it that some Christians are able to live with the disappointments and sorrows that come to them, finding deeper, truer faith as they do? Rather than being defeated by their circumstances, they find themselves pressed to Christ and clinging with boldness to their integrity. In this workshop we will look for the patterns of intentionality that connect belief and behavior.

Ann Pritchard Blaser has led women through Bible Study Fellowship International for thirty years, teaching Scripture classes for women and training leadership groups. Her work now consists of mentoring and advising other women who are teaching and training leaders in Bible Study Fellowship. She is responsible for visiting classes and observing the training and teaching taking place and for giving encouragement and shepherding to the teachers. She is involved in her church through discipling, teaching, and writing training materials. Ann is married to Bill, and they have two children and two grandsons.

I. Introduction:

- A. Michael Hart's book, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*. Hint, Jesus Christ was not ranked first!

II. Convictions

- A. Our convictions come out of the content of our faith which forms our worldview.

“The Holy Spirit has a strange affinity for the trained mind.” (David Cook, *The Unheeded Christ*)

- B. The primary essential is learning to be faithful in studying the Bible.

“The private relationship of worshiping God is the great essential of fitness....Worship aright in your private relationship with God, then when God sets you free you will be ready, because in the unseen life which no one saw but God, you have become perfectly fit, and when the strain comes you can be relied upon by God.” (David Cook, *The Unheeded Christ*)

- C. Other reading material that supports and reaffirms Scripture

D. Having “patterns of intentionality”

“Crises always reveals character,” Oswald Chambers

E. **Principle:** Patterns of intentionality put in place the mind-set that endures when times are tough.

F. **Illustration:**

G. **Applications:**

- 1) What does God call you to in terms of the patterns of faithful intentionality?

- 2) When have you recognized that God has upheld you in a difficult circumstance because you have been nourished by His means of grace?

III. Character

A. Character defined

B. Authenticity...an important word today.

C. Remember – Psalm 77 – Alzheimer’s of the spirit.

D. Rely – I Peter 5:6-11

E. Rest – Romans 8:37-39

F. **Principle:** Developing the mind that rests in God’s perspective is real work, but results in freedom

G. **Illustration:**

H. **Applications:**

1) When did you learn, firsthand, the skills of heart and mind that avoid the compartmentalization of faith from life?

2) How have you lived what it is to “Remember, Rely, and Rest”?

IV. **Community**

A. Choices about who you choose to surround yourself with

B. A community that speaks truth to each other

C. “Theoretical” truth

D. **Principle:** God calls His own to imitate the life of integrity and then to live it for those who will follow us.

E. **Illustration:**

F. Applications:

- 1) Considering the premise from the beginning, what does it mean to live for Christ...to live out the truth?

- 2) How do we live persuasively so that others will see and emulate us?

- 3) When life is difficult, how do we keep the vision of a coherent life centered on our deepest convictions about what is real and true and right?