



**ASSOCIATION FOR BIBLICAL
COUNSELLING AND EDUCATION**

**BIBLE BASED
COUNSELLING**
Course 1
SEMESTER 1

WEEK 18

5. STUDY SCHEDULE FOR SEMESTER 1

The schedule provides guidelines for the maximum time to be spent on studying the material. Each student is unique, and this also applies to their circumstances. You may study in your own way and at your own pace. It is, however, in your own interest to study all the material and assignments thoroughly. The word, **Textbook** refers to Chapters 1 – 6 on this CD.

WEEK	UNIT	SUB-UNIT	FOCUS	SOURCE
18	Chapter 4		Creativity in counselling	Textbook

Week 18
Unit (Chapter) 4

Learning Outcome:

After studying the material you should understand how creativity is linked to an abundant life, the freedom of the Gospel and the fact that the earth and fulness belongs to God.

The main learning points are:

1. The relevance of creativity:
 - Creativity and the Bible – versus the "new-age" movement.
 - Creativity as creation principle and as principle for abundance life.
 - Creativity as foundation for the discovery and development of each person's uniqueness.
 - Black- white thinking as obstacle to creativity.
 - Creativity as way of life which breaks through boundaries.

2. Key concepts for developing creativity
 - 2.1 Developing new ideas
 - 2.2 Original thinking
 - 2.3 Extending and developing existing ideas
 - 2.4 Determining the core or essence of an issue
 - 2.5 Openness in thinking
 - 2.6 The difference between religion and gospel

In this section there are clear indications of assignments and applications.

The main purpose is to ensure that we should not get stuck in firm and rigid patterns in our counselling in particular but also in our lives. The cultural command in Genesis assumes that we should thoroughly explore and enjoy this world, which is God's world.

The only self-study requires you to work through the whole chapter. You should continually link this material to what is offered in the rest of the course.

CHAPTER 4

CREATIVITY

IN

BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

CHAPTER 4: CREATIVITY IN BIBLICAL COUNSELLING

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 ACTUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF CREATIVITY**
- 4.2 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING CREATIVITY**
 - 4.2.1 Generating new ideas**
 - 4.2.2 Original thinking**
 - 4.2.3 Elaborating on existing ideas**
 - 4.2.4 Identifying the essence of an issue**
 - 4.2.5 Open thinking**
 - 4.2.6 The difference between religion and the Gospel**

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter creativity refers to creative thinking. Every time the term is used it refers to original, innovative thinking or thinking processes.

The content offered here should be seen as a general introduction and appetizer. The conscious implementation of creativity principles is a relatively new development and much research is in progress on this topic.

Discussing creativity principles and their application on paper is difficult. In order to make it your own, it should be practised and experienced. It is also important to practise these principles in your everyday life in order for them to become part of your thinking and behaviour.

In this chapter we will first give a general introduction with an emphasis on the relevance of the topic. Five key principles of creativity will then be discussed. They will be linked to the practice of counselling and life, while simultaneously indicating their theological context. The fifth principle of creativity will first be discussed and then be put within the theological framework of religion and the Gospel.

The section on the differences between religion and the Gospel is valuable both in one's personal life and the practice of Biblical counselling. It will help you understand why so many believers are limited in their spiritual lives and caught in the slavery of self-created, limiting and destructive systems. Within these systems it is practically impossible to take part in the life and abundance of God through Jesus Christ. This may lead to intense dejection and even depression among Christians. On the other hand, the description of creativity principles may create the space for life-fulfilling abundance and form the foundation for discovering our potential in Christ.

4.1 THE RELEVANCE OF CREATIVITY

Creativity is as old as creation. In the first verse of the Bible we read:

"In the beginning God created heaven and earth " (Genesis 1:1).

The ability to create is part of the being of God. When the Omnipotent as active and acting God becomes involved in this world, He prefers to do it as the Creator God.

It is important to see the uniqueness in God's act of creation. He created from nothing (creatio ex nihilo). The more one immerses yourself in the creation history, and in the Bible as a whole, the more one realizes that God is purposefully involved with his creation. Within the space which He created He is just as purposefully busy with man. His deepest intention with man was clear to Him long before creation:

For he chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight . . . (Ephesians 1:4).

Man was continually included and presupposed by the Creator in his broad planning. It therefore seems reasonable to infer that God really wants man to be happy. With creation God, the Creator, purposefully created a space in which his creature, man, can share in the joyful life and abundance which the Creator ordained for him/her.

Within this created space the Creator chose to create man in his image. This is described in Genesis 1:26-28. Man was therefore created with the distinguished purpose of being the Creator God's visible representative on earth. As his Creator's visible representative man has, inter alia, the calling to be creatively involved in creation. Being busy with this task occurs within the context of the Creator's directive to him to rule. As crown of the Creator God's creation, man has the responsibility and calling to be actively doing, i.e. creatively involved with this world.

This theological background forms the framework and foundation for our discussion of creativity and creative thinking.

There is, however, a vital difference between God and man which we should not ignore. God always remains God, and man always man. When God creates, He creates from nothing – but when man creates, he creates from something. This distinguishes our theology clearly from the “New Age” movement. According to their view God and man are one and the same. In a way man is equal to God in their view. This is contrary to Scripture. Although man was created in the image of God (as his representative), man always remains representative and never becomes Creator God.

The moment man tries to take over the role of God, problems arise as explained clearly in the other chapters of this course. Man actually discovers freedom and living space as well as the deepest meaning to existence when he understand who God really is, and who he really is to God, and who is really God.

Applying the principles of creativity generates new living space and helps a person to activate his/her potential. It provides courage to use this outside the safety of familiar environments and structures.

Creativity principles fit into the wonderful, safe and non-restricting framework of a particular Scriptural principle. This principle is found in Psalm 24:1:

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

Reflect for a moment and consider what this really means. It is incredible that we can already experience a foretaste of eternity in this life by actively implementing these principles of creation. We already have a sense of eternal glory in the present, when we are creatively active as God's representatives in his creation. As royal children we have unlimited space and unlimited potential, because "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it".

We are now going to discuss "creative thinking" in general. When we refer to creativity the focus is that one should think wider than what is normal. One should be willing to risk, in other words, to break through one's self-imposed boundaries and to increasingly become the person God wanted one to be in Christ Jesus.

We have previously discussed the fact that this does not imply that we have to become something specific. There is no set of rules which we should adhere to before we will be acceptable to God. For the very reason that we are totally accepted and acceptable in Christ we know that God created a space for us in which we can discover our unlimited potential in Christ. The person who thinks and acts creatively is in the process busy to respond obediently to God's command in Genesis 1: to subdue or reign as God's visible representative.

This "subdue" is not passive in the sense of simply maintaining. It is rather an active reign in which man as obedient child of God is actively involved in a process of renewal with everything assigned to him/her. In this process man daily experiences, in an unlimited and increasing way, all the various and new facts of the dynamic life and abundance which the Creator God ordained for him/her in Christ Jesus.

Creative thinking means to dare to stretch your thinking to reach to spaces not normally entered. The idea is therefore to investigate all possibilities.

This aspect is related to the fact that we live in a broken reality where we frequently do not know the answers. The devil has provided man with false and unbiblical thinking structures. One of these is black-white thinking. There is nothing which stifles creativity more than black-white thinking. According to this thinking there is only one of two possibilities: you are either right or wrong; either pretty or ugly; either clever or dumb; etc.

In class this may mean that when I provide the correct answer, it indicates that I am clever and therefore acceptable. If my answer is not absolutely correct, it implies that I am stupid and therefore unacceptable. Satan enjoys this kind of black-white thinking because it limits us and forms the breeding ground for a “spirit of slavery” as it’s called in Romans 8:15.

As discussed in a previous chapter God’s models are never closed. They are always open. God’s models are not “either ... or ...”. They are always “both ... and ...” There is always space – especially living space.

It is therefore important to grasp that within the realm of creativity one is always involved in exploratory thinking. Satan does not like the idea of ‘exploratory thinking’ because it provides room for creating new ways in which God can be glorified. God is also glorified when his children discover new ways to enjoy and share the life and abundance He had in mind for them.

Black-white thinking is evident when individuals who struggle with their self-image are examined. These people frequently have a battle between their ideal self and their real self. They set particular standards for themselves and when they do not meet these in an absolute sense, they believe that they are totally unacceptable to God and other people.

An example of this thinking is the young woman who convinced herself that she will only be happy if she reached a particular weight. If she reaches that weight she believes that she has arrived and for a moment it feels like “heaven on earth” to her. However, if she weighs one or two kilograms more, then her whole world falls to pieces. Then it is more like “hell on earth”.

This kind of thinking prevents us from understanding that we live in a broken world. In this world there are simply few clear black or white areas. A person who really wants to live, should learn to live in the grey area between white and black.

A black-white kind of person does not allow him/herself to make mistakes. If such a person receives well-meaning and valid criticism, it is taken personally. Within this “either ... or ...” scheme it means that he/she fails totally as a human being.

A person who lives in the grey area understands what it means that we live in a broken world. He/she understands that he/she isn't God and understands quite clearly who God really is. Criticism may always hurt, but a person living in this grey area learns how to deal with criticism as a learning experience and an opportunity for growth.

Many people battle with serious issues and just cannot make peace with themselves. The reason for this is frequently black-white thinking. There is the example of the boy whose class laughed at him when he couldn't answer a question. Such behaviour by classmates in grade 9 caused this man who is a successful lawyer today, to struggle with fears and even a bed-wetting problem.

A person who understands creative thinking within God's framework of grace is even willing to risk – in the sense of giving a wrong answer or even half an answer. By doing this he/she may stimulate a group member who normally does not participate, to give an answer. At the same time he/she creates a space for this person to learn, because he/she grasps another key principle: "Everybody is your superior in the sense that you can learn something from him/her".

Creative thinking and action is only possible if the person's deepest security and worth rest on the fact that he/she knows that there is a God who loves him/her for the sake of Jesus. He/she does not need to achieve to be acceptable. He/she has already been accepted based on the achievement of Jesus Christ.

We are now going to discuss principles that can be used to realize and promote creativity. The idea is that you will make these your own and actively practise them in your life and counselling practice. This will open up new dimensions in your counselling and this may even be wonderful fun.

4.2 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING CREATIVITY

4.2.1 Generating new ideas

This principle is described as brain-storming (as well as think-tank). Brainstorming provides an opportunity where the brain is stimulated to put as many ideas on the table, whether known or unknown, new or old, absurd or logical.

A business may, for example, look for ideas to improve or change its products. The idea is then to get a group of people together and to encourage them to express any thoughts which they may have. It is not about right or wrong. One can really be funny as well. You may even touch on the absurd – as long as you participate. Sometimes it is the funniest and seemingly most irrelevant comments that are the most fruitful. Each idea is written on a flipchart and stuck to the wall for discussion.

It is enjoyable and stimulating to play with ideas in an environment where there is no right or wrong answer. It is incredible to see where such ideas given on the spur of the moment may lead to.

You are invited to do the following to give you some practice in this:

- 1. Write down as many uses for a fountain pen as possible.*
- 2. Write down as many uses for a hairpin as possible.*

This type of exercise should be done within a time limit and the ideal is to generate thirty uses within three minutes. With practice any person can acquire the ability to reach this ideal or even better.

Do not write long sentences. Just write codes. You are the person who should be able to decipher what you wrote. Our creativity is frequently impeded because we write long sentences – as if a teacher is looking over our shoulders.

Let's move closer to our focus. Give yourself three minutes to complete the following tasks:

- *Imagine yourself to be the father of a family. You feel guilty because you've recently neglected your family. You now have the need to be a better father. Write down as many things as possible that you can do to be a better father to your children.*
- *Now choose any aspect of your life where an improvement is required. Within three minutes generate as many things as possible that can be done to improve or change this situation.*

This technique enables us to be very original, especially in terms of possibilities for practical application. First try to apply this brainstorm technique. You will be amazed to see what the Holy Spirit has filed away for you. Just put everything on the table, because there will be enough time to sort them out. God is a God of order. But perhaps He welcomes it if the road to order is a little "disorderly". In the middle of the apparent disorderliness the key to the solution may be hidden. Perhaps God needs that key to enter the heart of a person who has never heard the deep meaning of the Gospel.

This is applicable in the counselling situation. Therefore, ensure that you do not become stuck in set patterns. Refine and continually adapt your techniques. Do not always give the same homework assignments for the same type of problem. Remember that every individual was uniquely created in the image of God. God meets every unique human being in a unique way at the unique place where he/she is now.

4.2.2 Original thinking

Genuine original thinking does not occur very often, but originality can be stimulated a lot by the technique of brainstorming. One can also develop more originality by using the next facet of creativity: elaboration.

4.2.3 Elaborating on existing ideas

Elaboration is an aspect of creativity which is sadly missed and misinterpreted by many people. Elaboration indicates the creative ability to take existing ideas and products and to build on or improve them further. The Japanese are masters at improving and perfecting the ideas of others. Apparently their slogan is: "Not invented by ourselves, but swiped from the very best with pride".

Why should one try to re-invent the wheel? Creative thinking means to put as many new uses of the wheel on the table – and then to get it running on the ground!

It is amazing to see how many pastors, lecturers and counsellors limit themselves because they refuse to use the ideas of others. We need to continually remind ourselves that everybody else on this earth can be regarded as a teacher who we can learn from. Furthermore, it is very creative to take the unique ideas of other unique creatures of the Creative God and to use these in your own creative context. The reasons why people don't want to use the ideas of others, are frequently not as virtuous and innocent as they may seem on the surface.

It is important that a counsellor should be studying all the time and should read as widely as possible. This is true of subject literature as well as Bible study. A counsellor regularly needs the wisdom of others to develop a unique product which suits the unique person in front of him/her. He/she is frequently required to design a technique or product in a unique way from the existing knowledge and insights which the Creator God wants to be custom-made for the needs of one or two of his unique creatures.

4.2.4 Identifying the essence of an issue

This facet of creativity has unlimited and indispensable value for life in general but also for counselling in particular. It focuses on the ability to grasp the essence / true nature / core of an issue.

If you attend a service / lecture / presentation you should not try to remember everything. You should be able to summarize in a nutshell what the essence of the event was for you. Again we should remember that there are no right or wrong answers here. The emphasis is again on what you, as a unique individual, experienced in a unique way within your unique life context.

In order to counsel effectively it is crucial to develop this facet. If a person is able to grasp the essence of an issue, it simplifies and facilitates the counselling process and creates a space in which hope can be ministered to the person within a Biblical framework.

The opposite occurs when the counsellor gets lost in so many side issues that no meaningful agenda is put on the table. In this way the counsellee is guided in such a way that he/she gets even more lost in the maze of confusion.

This technique of creativity can be practised and we encourage you to make it a part of your lifestyle. The next exercise can help you to start in a purposeful manner:

In the next two weeks make an effort to purposefully grasp and summarize the essence of issues and events. You could apply this to the following: church services, meetings, conversations in which you participate or in which you are a spectator. It is, however, vital that you write down the essences that you identified for every day.

4.2.5 Open thinking

To a large extent this concept is self-explanatory. Essentially it means that I should learn how to think wider than my own small world. This is an indispensable principle within the context of the changing world in which we live.

Unfortunately we as Christians frequently adopt the unhealthy and uncreative habit to label anything that is strange, unknown or different as: "Do not touch". For example, there are some groups who would label any person who uses the term "positive thinking" as humanistic or "New Age".

Positive thinking is not the brain child of the New Age movement. It was born in the heart of God. The Old Testament is full of it. In Romans 12:2 we read the following:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Also compare Philippians 4:8-9:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

As Christians we need to be careful not to give Satan more credit or space than he deserves to have. Looking at a sheet of white paper with a small black dot, we frequently notice only the small dot – and overlook the huge area of white. Similarly we may tend to focus on the small

black dot of Satan. And then we overlook or forget the fact that the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, is still shining.

We should, however, be careful of being so creative with Satan that we totally overlook or underestimate the creativity of our Creator God in Christ through the involvement of the Holy Spirit. Humankind has always been impressed and convinced very easily by Satan. When there is a lecture on satanism or the New Age people stream to it.

We should not be so impressed and concerned with Satan. We should rather be overwhelmed by the creative potential at our disposal through the blood of the Lamb. I would rather have as my main focus to look for 777 reasons to glorify Christ.

There is a direct link between the spiritual problems and despair of many people who believe that they are serving God and humankind by being busy with Satan full-time. They therefore miss the point of the Gospel: that the Sun of Righteousness is shining brilliantly.

It is essential that we discuss another important issue which may weaken us spiritually if we do not have a true, Biblical understanding of it: the difference between religion and the Gospel.

4.2.6 The difference between religion and Gospel

"Religion may be dangerous " is the title of an evangelising booklet. This may be a word of truth especially if applied to the concept "religion" as we will discuss it in this section.

The concept "religion" for our purpose refers to a legalistic, ritualised dealing with the Word of God and with the God of the Word. It refers to a spiritual life without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

During his life on earth Jesus had a major issue with this approach. We read about how He dealt with this problem in the book of Matthew. Matthew is the Immanuel Gospel. Jesus was called "Immanuel" (1:23). In this context it is the fulfilment of a prophecy. The God who was with his people in the Old Testament times, in the deepest sense made his presence tangible and visible by sending his Son to this earth. This is why He is called "Immanuel": God with us.

In Matthew 28:20 the Immanuel theme is completed off:

... I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

However, when we read the rest of Matthew's account we see that Jesus had a huge problem with the religious leaders of the time. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were devoted people. They adhered to all the instructions of the law. They studied Scriptures, attended meetings and prayed at fixed times every day.

Jesus had a problem with their commitment. He was serious about this (Matthew 5:20):

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The core of our Lord's problem is that they meticulously followed all the instructions. They did the right things at the right times, but there was little evidence that they had a personal relationship with the father. Theirs was therefore religion without God.

Jesus' invitation to the religious people of his time and to religious people of all times is clear and understandable:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (11:28-30)

This is the most beautiful, incredible invitation ever and it resounds through all ages. And it is so relevant today, because so many of us are driven by the thought: "The more confused I get, the faster I go!"

This is the background for our discussion of the four major differences between religion and the Gospel.

- The first difference is related to man's deepest motivation. Religion is aimed at getting people to do the right thing in order for them to be acceptable based on their performance. The Gospel, however, has a different message. The focus is not primarily on our performance, but on the performance of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus performed with his life and death, God loves us unconditionally. We are therefore completely accepted and acceptable in Christ. The religious person therefore do things in order to be acceptable

based on his/her performance. The person living under the Gospel does the same things, but he/she does them because he/she is already completely accepted.

- Secondly, religion is overly concerned with what people are going to say. The art is therefore to live in such a way that you are not caught out. One could therefore jokingly say that many people live driven by an eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not be caught!" however, as far the Gospel is concerned, the focus is not on people. Believers understand who God really is. He/she knows that God knows everything in any case. Furthermore, he/she knows that God is a merciful God and he/she hears the call of Jesus – and heeds the call: "Come to Me ...". All that remains for me is to throw myself in his merciful arms – without ever wanting to make this grace cheap.
- Thirdly, religion says that a Christian should regularly read the Bible, pray and go to church. The Gospel, on the other hand, states that reading the Bible, praying and going to church may be the biggest waste of time. But it is only a waste of time if it is not combined with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The call always remains: "Come to Me ...".
- The fourth difference is related to the difference between a Satan and sin directedness, as opposed to a Christ-centred approach focussing on sanctification to glorify Him. This has already been discussed previously.

The essential difference between religion and the Gospel can perhaps be summarized by a story about Pat Boone and Elvis Presley. These two celebrities were great friends. A week before the death of Elvis they met each other. Pat was on his way to a Christian meeting and Elvis was on his way to having fun. Elvis jokingly said to Pat: "*Pat, the problem with you is that you have always been going in the wrong direction*". Pat gave him an excellent answer which could have changed Elvis' life had he heeded it. This answer summarizes the essence of Biblical counselling: "*It is not a matter of where you are going; it is a matter of where you are coming from!*"

Praise the Creator God for such creative words of wisdom and true life. Reflection on these truths guides a person into the rest of God – a rest which is accompanied by the peace that exceeds all understanding!

