

COUNSELLING

Some Principles from the Word of God

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CHAPTER ONE

BIBLICAL STYLES OF COUNSELLING

1. Over the past 150 years, there have emerged many different styles of counselling, but the majority of these have been **based on psychological ideas** that have their foundation in occultism.

Both **Freud and Jung** were deeply influenced by dark forces of their nature, that ultimately proved to be demonic.

For this reason, Christians need to be very careful how much they use these methods, and keep their principles of counselling based squarely on the Word of God.

Just because there are some "successes" in western psychological techniques, does not mean they are valid or prove to be lasting in their methods.

2. When we turn to the Scriptures to learn about counselling, we find that there is not much said.

However, we should not think that our "modern" method of counselling is the only way. There are a number of **different styles** of "counselling" found in Jesus' approach to people in need.

- 1) The **direct** or **confrontational** approach

We find this type of encounter in the story of the woman at the well (*John 4:7-26*).

- 2) The type of **encouragement counselling**

In *Luke 7:37-50* we find Jesus giving encouragement to the woman, when everyone else around her was criticising her actions of anointing his feet with oil.

- 3) **Directive** counselling approach

The woman caught in adultery was not only shown mercy by Jesus but given simple and direct instruction about her lifestyle (*John 8:3-11*).

- 4) The method of **exhorting** someone

This kind of biblical counselling is direct too, but it offers a challenge to the hearer. In *John 5:6*, Jesus challenges the sick man at the Pool of

Bethsaida to vocalise his desire.

3. Notice that, in all the above encounters, Jesus gives the person an opportunity to think about deep truth, and **to respond** to it.

All of our counselling should be based on this principle.

The reason we counsel people is not to help them. If we try to keep on helping people with their problems then we will spend all of our time, prayer and energy running after people.

What God wants from counselling is for people to be **challenged with His truth**.

This happens when we present Biblical truths to them, showing them how it applies to their hurts and problems, and them **encourage them to obey** what the Word of God says.

When people do this, they are inwardly transformed by the Word of the Living God.

Note this principle:

Obedience to God's Word will always transform your character.

4. When we counsel people, we should always bear in mind that *it is not us* who can ultimately help people get better - it is **God's truth in His Word** that exposes the inner causes and brings healing.

However, most people come to us in order to be helped, not changed!

This is a fundamental problem.

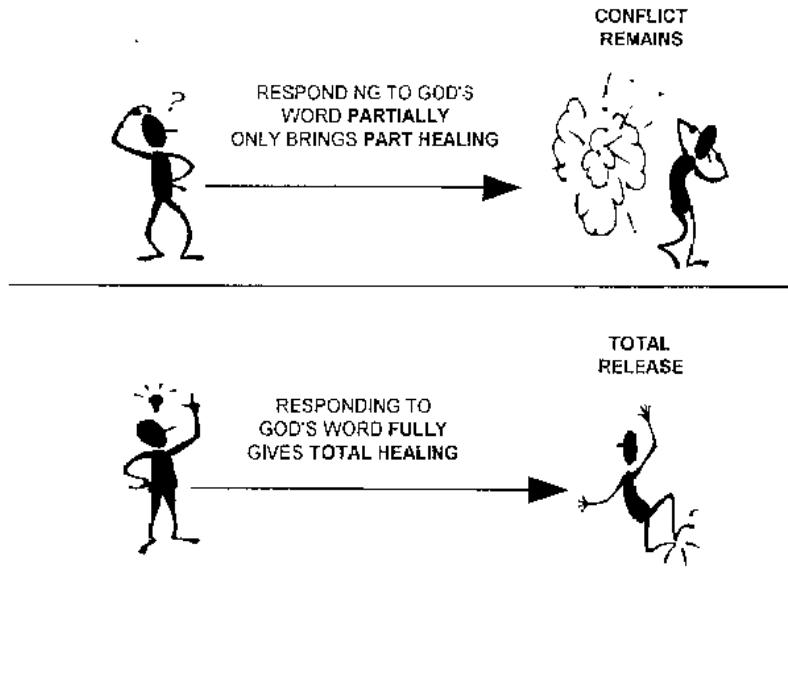
If people come because they really want to be changed, and are willing to do anything for this to happen, we would have much more "success."

5. The ultimate will of God for people is that they be totally healed in spirit, soul and body.

When people **fully respond** to God's will (as revealed in the Bible), they will find their problems resolved.

But when they only **partially respond** to God's will, as found in the Bible, they will always have some conflicts remaining in their life.

This diagram may help us to understand the process.



6. The aim of counselling, then, is to bring people into the **fullness of life**.

God's call to us is always to seek the **new life** He offers, no matter how painful.

It is His love for us that is our greatest hope when we are troubled.

God will bring us face to face with issues so that, through grace, they can be resolved. He never allows the dark things of life to haunt us. His will is that we come to face these things and, through His love and power, to break the bondage in our life.

This is often done by His "testing" us.

Hebrews 12:6 - ***For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.***

This "testing" is to make sure that the lessons we have been shown, through the Word, have gone deep into our hearts, so that we can draw on that character of the Inner Man.

God desires us **to come to maturity**, and **He will try and prove our faith** to bring this about.

James 1:2-4 - ***My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.***

Our counselling should always include this principle from the Word of God. Without it, we are only leading people to a dry well.

They need life-giving water from the truths found in the Word of God.

If people **respond negatively or partially** to God's ways, there will be an inner disharmony in their life that will bring problems later.

According to the Word of God, this will bring about constant war between the flesh and the spirit. The Bible calls such a person "**double-souled**" which means "**to lead a double life.**"

In Romans, the end result of this partial response to God's life-giving Word makes a person a "**wretched man.**"

James 1:8 - ***He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***

Romans 7:24 - ***O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?***

CHAPTER TWO

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND COUNSELLING

1. If the Holy Spirit is not involved in our counselling then we are basically wasting our time and energy.

The Spirit of God should be actually **invoked to help** in a counselling session.

Paul tells us that it is the Spirit Himself who is able to help us at such times.

Romans 8:26-27 - Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

2. When we counsel people, we should be open to using the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** because this can shortcut much of the time in the session.

An outline of how this can be done is found below:

1. Start the counselling with specific prayer, with the person present.
2. As the person opens up and talks, you should be always asking the Holy Spirit for His input and clues.
3. When the Spirit gives you something to share, do so without too much delay.
4. Tell the person the Holy Spirit has given you something, as this encourages them to know God is interested and at work, and that it is not just your own advice.
5. Be bold yet loving, firmly speaking out what the Lord has revealed.
6. If there is something personal and potentially embarrassing for the person, be careful how you present it. Often ask a question rather than just blurt out what you have received.
7. Use Scripture to back up what you have received.

8. Write down the verses so they can follow them up later, after the session.
 9. Be active in your spirit as you seek from the Holy Spirit.
 10. Do not become passive during the counselling session; listening to the person's problems is not enough. Passivity can be a real danger.
 11. End the session with definite prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit for a specific anointing so you can impart life to the person. Do not just finish off with a general nice comforting prayer.
3. The work of the Holy Spirit in counselling is to bring about wholeness. This is, in fact, part of the meaning of the word "salvation."

As He helps us both **to** counsel and **in** counselling, the Spirit of God is able to see the past, present and future condition of a person.

This is why we need Him to help in ministering to others. Romans 8:26 shows us, in some detail, how the Spirit works **in** and **for** us.

Romans 8:26-27 - *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

4. How does the Holy Spirit help us?

The Greek word for "help" is "**sun anti lambano.**" It is actually three different words joined together to make the word "help."

Sun means to **link and join together as one.**

Anti can mean **opposition to,**
or **to exchange.**

Lambano means to have a **strong desire.**

So this means that, first, the **Holy Spirit joins with us** as we feel persecuted, have problems, or feel threatened.

He then opposes those things that are attempting to destroy us, and He **exchanges our weakness** with His power.

Finally, the Holy Spirit **desires** that we come to healing and maturity.

When these three things are all in harmony, the Holy Spirit is present to bring us through whatever we are facing.

So, His role in counselling is a vital one.

CHAPTER THREE

CONFORMING TO GOD'S IMAGE

1. It is God's desire that we come to maturity. The New Testament way of speaking about this is for us to "***conform to the image of God's Son.***"

As we grow into maturity, there will be **three main areas of conflict**. When we are counselling someone, these three areas will arise again and again.

A wise Christian counsellor will learn to recognise these quickly and deal with them in different ways.

2. The three areas of conflict are pressure from **people** around us, the **circumstances of life** that bring inconvenience and our **own self** and character.

1) People:

- We can be upset by other people' s personalities; in conflict with our own character.
- By those in authority around us; Pastors parents, and so forth.
- By the words that other people speak about us; gossip, lies, harsh words, and so forth.
- Being controlled by others; feeling manipulated.

2) Circumstances:

- Situations in life that make things inconvenient; tragedy, disease, and so forth.
- Things we have no control over bring us into conflict; faith can become weak
- Hopelessness can rise up making us doubt God's love

3) Self:

- Our character can be defective through past hurts, problems and anxieties.
- Our moral character may have weaknesses.

- We may feel rejected, unloved and have low self esteem.
 - The boundaries of our personal life may have been violated through sexual, spiritual, mental or physical abuse.
3. Learn to discern between the spirit and the soul life of our personality.

Only the Word of God can show us when a person is operating in their soul or spirit-man:

Hebrews 4:12 - *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

4. In counselling, we need to know for ourselves the difference between soul and spirit. We should spend time in the Word and with the Lord to understand these differences.

If we, as counsellors, are ruled by our souls instead of the Holy Spirit, we will make mistakes when giving counsel to people.

We need to learn to move and walk in the Holy Spirit so we can give the best possible help to people.

Watchman Nee once wrote:

“God’s people must not only know that they possess a spirit, they must also understand how this organ operates; its sensitivity, its work, its power, its laws. Only in this way can they walk according to their spirit and not the soul or the body or the flesh.”

“The Spiritual Man”
by Watchman Nee

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