

SOME BASIC COUNSELING PRINCIPLES¹

Counseling can be defined as the ministry of one individual seeking to help another individual to recognize, understand, and solve his own problem.

I. COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS:

- A. Saved and dedicated.
- B. Yielded to God's will for his life.
- C. Understanding and love for teens.
- D. Having convictions and standards.
- E. Has a good testimony-separated from the world.
- F. Student of the Word of God.

II. COUNSELOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- A. Not all problems are spiritual problems, but all problems have a spiritual implication.
- B. You cannot lead anyone closer to the Lord than you are yourself.
- C. Counseling is learned by experience.
- D. You are not God's answer to every problem.
- E. Counseling is 75% love and 25% skill.
- F. There will be counseling casualties.
- G. Be a good listener.
- H. Be available.
- I. The biggest problem is not age, but maturity. Mature Christians learn to solve their own problems.
- J. Teens and young people are looking for someone who is real.
- K. Any time you do something for a young person that he can do for himself, you create problems for him.
- L. Remember, Jesus Christ is the problem solver and His Word has the answers. All other books and related material are only good for the use of understanding and clarifying the problem; the Word is the only book with the solution.

III. NATURE OF COUNSELING:

- A. Presenting salvation (James 5:20).
- B. Restoring a brother to fellowship (Galatians 6:1).
- C. Growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

IV. KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE AND PROBLEMS:

A. Nature of sin:

1. Its "natural" (Romans 7).
2. It has a devastating price tag (Galatians 6:7).
3. The attractiveness of sin (Hebrews 11:25).
4. The master of sin—Satan (John 10:44).
5. Christians sin.

B. Nature of man:

1. Depraved and evil.
2. Worth of one soul.

C. Nature of our times:

1. **Hedonistic**—loose morals or no morals at all.
2. **Materialistic**—temporal values.
3. **Humanistic**—*"I'm not responsible for my actions"*; cf. *"There is no God!"* & *"Mankind can solve the world's problems."*
4. Lack of discipline.
5. Lack of training in the things of God.

¹ These simple notes on counseling have been retyped and reproduced as a supplement for part of a course I teach on *"Youth Ministry."* The notes were originally taken from a *"Pro-Teens Training Manual"* (Rocky Mount, North Carolina, 1981). With only a couple of exceptions, they are reproduced verbatim. The writers of that manual in turn said they had adapted them from a counselor training week held at *The Wilds Christian Camp & Conference Center* taught by Dr. Ken Hay (who was then the director of The Wilds). —*Mike Edwards*, Baptist Mid-Missions, P.O. Box 127, St. Vincent, West Indies. —April, 2009 (rev. 2011 & 2012).

V. TYPES OF PROBLEMS.

- A. Surface problem—these are usually attention getting devices.
- B. Surface cause—insecurity.
- C. Root problems—self-image.
- D. Root cause—bitterness.

VI. FOUR WAYS TO HANDLE PROBLEMS:

- A. Ignore or deny them.
- B. Escape route.
- C. “*Grin and bear it.*”
- D. Solve through the Word.

VII. COUNSELING PROCESS (i.e. *CULTIVATION...CONSTRUCTION...CONSERVATION*):

A. CULTIVATION (“Pre,” i.e. *before* counseling):

1. Living a life that reflects the qualities of Christ that will develop the respect of your words.
2. Sensitive to the needs in others (“soul-conscious”).
3. Building confidence by keeping confidences.
4. Possess a true love for young people.
5. Available to help.

B. CONSTRUCTION (*during* the counseling session); five steps in a counseling session:

1. Introduction:

- a. Introduction of oneself.
- b. Ease tensions and gain rapport.
- c. Develop a relationship of respect.
- d. Endeavor to gain some degree of privacy.

2. Clarification:

- a. “*I do not have all the answers.*”
- b. “*The Word of God has the answers.*”
- c. “*Together we can look for the answers.*”
- d. “*It’s normal to have problems*” (Reminder: All problems are big problems to the one who has them!).

3. Expression:

a. Allow the teen to tell or explain his problem.

- 1) Accept what has been said.
- 2) Clarify what has been said.
- 3) Summarize what has been said.

b. Things to consider:

- 1) What he has said.
- 2) What he has omitted.
- 3) How he said it.

c. Purposeful questions:

- 1) Clarify his thinking.
- 2) Provoke new thought on the subject.
- 3) Be supportive.
- 4) Remain objective—don’t judge.

- d. Look and listen carefully and attentively.
- e. Furnish any necessary information.
- f. Summarize the situation.

4. Insight:

- a. Provide an authority: God’s Word.
- b. Go to the root of the problem.
- c. Provide Scriptural principles:
 - 1) Have the young person read it.

- 2) Have the young person tell you what it means.
- 3) Have the young person tell you how it applies to his/her problem.

- d. Use specific Scripture; too many verses can confuse the teenager/young person.
- e. Write the reference(s) down for him/her.
- f. Start all over again if he fails to understand it.

5. Solution:

- a. Correctly detecting the problem.
- b. Removing possible road blocks.
- c. Providing proper Scripture passages.
- d. Provide good substitutes for bad habits (principle of “**Replacement**” from Eph. 4 & Col. 3 [“*Put off*” & “*Put on*”]).
- e. Teen will accept *OR* reject God’s Word—you are not responsible for his/her response! The Holy Spirit’s timing is perfect.
- f. Let him know that you accept him whether or not he responds the way you would like him to.
 - 1) Keep the door open for further opportunities to counsel him.
 - 2) He may be testing you to see if you are really interested in him or just a decision.

C. CONSERVATION (*post, or after, counseling*):

1. Ask if there are any more questions.
2. Have a closing prayer.
3. Make yourself available at any future time.
4. Within a few days endeavor to see how he is doing with any decisions he/she made.

5. Seven basic things that every young person should know:

- a. **Salvation** (Romans 10:9-10).
- b. **Dedication** (Romans 12:1-2).
- c. **How to study and interpret the Bible** (I Timothy 2:15).
- d. **The importance and practice of prayer** (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- e. **To be a witness** (Acts 1:8).
- f. **How to confess sin** (I John 1:9).
- g. **Goals: Learning how to know God’s will for his life** (e.g. Eph. 5:17; I Thessalonians 4:3-7; etc)

VIII. COUNSELING SITUATION SUGGESTIONS:

A. Expect to be tested:

1. with extreme problems.
2. with unrelated problems.

B. Don’t take information secondhand (“*I’d rather you tell me about it.*”)

C. If a teenager/young person comes to you about a problem of a friend, accept it as just that.

D. Don’t hurry, spend time with him/her. If you don’t have the time right then, tell him so and set up an appointment.

E. Stay emotionally neutral. Watch out for crying tactics.

F. Don’t take anything for granted! Sometimes the basic problem for the most spiritual young person is that he needs to be saved.

G. Make an effort to spend some time with the teen or young person after the counseling session.

H. Don’t make any rash, foolish promises. For instance, if a young person says, “*I have a big problem I need to talk to you about, but first you’ve got to promise me that you absolutely won’t tell anyone else.*” **DON’T MAKE THAT PROMISE!** What if they then tell you of a crime they or others have committed or witnessed (e.g. theft, underage abortion, murder, rape, etc)? If you report it you then have broken your word. If you don’t, you may be arrested for aiding and abetting (assisting) a crime! Instead tell them, “*You’re going to have to trust me that I will not tell anyone that doesn’t need to know. But I won’t make a blanket promise that I might not be able to fulfill.*”

IX. BASIC PROBLEMS OF TEENS/YOUNG PEOPLE:

A. Three basic root problems:

- 1. Bitterness.**
- 2. Temporal (worldly) value system.**
- 3. Moral impurity.**

B. Six major areas of conflict:

- 1. Acceptance of self** (Psalm 139; Eph. 2:10, etc).
- 2. Assurance of salvation** (1 John 5:11-13; John 6:47; etc).
- 3. Goals/Purpose in life** (I Thessalonians 3:3-7).
- 4. Home & Authority** (Ephesians 6:1-4; Romans 13:1; etc).
- 5. Mature dating/finding God's will regarding a life partner** (I Corinthians 10:31; etc).
- 6. Friends** (Philippians 3:17-19; Ephesians 3:11; etc).

C. Some particular/typical areas of concern-with some possible Scriptures you can use to help:

1. Insecurity (Psalm 139:13-14; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5; Proverbs 3:5-6; etc).
2. Will of God for their life (I Thessalonians 4:3-7; Ephesians 5:17-6:9; Romans 12:1-2; etc).
3. Homosexuality (Romans 1:18-32; I Cor. 6:9; Leviticus. 18:22-23; Genesis 18-19; etc).
4. Dancing (Romans 14:14; etc).
5. Music (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:15-16; Psalm 40:3; I Samuel 16:23; Philippians 4:7-8; etc).
6. Movies, videos, TV, DVD's, Internet (Psalm 101:3; 94:9; Proverbs 4:23, 25; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Gal. 5:16-21; Rom. 13:14; 16:19c).
7. Authority (Romans 13:1; Ephesians 6:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-16; etc).
8. Impurity (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:13-18; etc).
9. Drugs (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 5:20; Revelation 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15).
10. Rebellion (1 Samuel 15:23).
11. Friends (Ephesians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14).
12. Pride (Proverbs 16:5).
13. Inferiority (Psalm 139:14-15).
14. Smoking (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
15. Dress (Romans 14:14; 1 Timothy 2:9; etc).
16. Bad language (Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; etc).
17. Bad literature, pornography, Internet, *Facebook*, etc (Philippians 4:8; Job 31:1; Proverbs 15:3; etc).
18. Superiority (Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3; etc).
19. Long hair (1 Corinthians 11:14).
20. Fear (Psalm 56:3; John 10:27-29; 1 John 4:4; etc).

D. Some good basic verses to use in counseling:

1. 1 Corinthians 10:31: *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."*
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:22: *"Abstain from all appearance of evil."*
3. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: *"...What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body..."*
4. Romans 12:1-2: *"I beseech you that you present your body a living sacrifice...and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."*
5. Philippians 4:8: *"Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely... (And) of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."*
6. 2 Timothy 2:22: *"Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."*(NASV)
7. 1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
8. Galatians 6:7, 14: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap...God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."*
9. Romans 14:12: *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*
10. Romans 14:23: *"And he that doubteth is (judged) if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."*
11. 1 Peter 3:12: *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."*
12. 1 Corinthians 10:13: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*
13. Philippians 4:13: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."*