

Lesson 1-2a
Introduction to Biblical Counseling

I. What is counseling?

A. The dictionary defines "counsel" as:

1. The act of exchanging opinions and ideas; consultation
2. Advice or guidance, especially as solicited from a knowledgeable person
3. A plan of action
4. Synonyms include: advice, direction, guidance, consultation, recommendation

B. There are many definitions given from various sources for the process counseling. A few of them include the following:

1. Counseling is something that provides direction or advice as to a decision or course of action.
2. Counseling is "the process by which a professional counselor helps a person cope with mental or emotional distress, and understand and solve personal problems." –American Cancer Society
3. Counseling is "the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology." –American Counseling Association

Do you see anything questionable about these above definitions?

C. A good working definition for our purposes is:

Counseling is a form of guidance in which a trained or knowledgeable person offers advice or education about specific life problems or issues of living.

II. What are the various types of counseling?

There are several classical methods associated with the field of counseling. Most modern counselors find themselves using one of these or a combination of these. It is not our purpose to give exhaustive definitions of these methods but only to offer a brief summary of them for the purpose of comparison. A fuller understanding of these methods is discussed in *The Christian Counselor's Manual* by Jay Adams.

A. There is the Rogerian method popularized by Carl Rogers.

The Rogerian model is characterized by some of the following:

1. It presupposes that man has truth within himself and through guided introspection can come to a solution.

2. It usually avoids any direct advice, confrontation and references to moral absolutes.
3. The counselor's primary function is to help the counselee unlock the inner secrets within and realize his or her inner potential. He does this by mirroring the patient's thoughts and restating what has been said.

B. There is the Freudian method popularized by Sigmund Freud.

The Freudian model is characterized by some of the following:

1. It presupposes that man is basically a clean slate when he is born and that any problems he may have are due to the fact that he has been wrongly socialized by someone or something else (e.g. parents, environment).
2. Most Freudians believe that guilt is an artificial and harmful activity that is the result of parental and societal mores.
3. The primary method is to dig deep into the person's soul (psyche) and past to try to analyze why they are the way they are. Balance is often achieved by being able to blame others or offer an excuse for one's behavior.

C. There is the Skinnerian method popularized by B.F. Skinner.

The Skinnerian model is characterized by some of the following:

1. It presupposes that man is like any other animal and can be trained or behaviorally controlled by manipulating his environment or biology.
2. The primary method is to employ various behavior modification techniques that include stimulus and response. It may include behavior modification by the use of various drug related treatments.

D. There is the biblical method popularized by Jesus and the Apostles.

This, of course, is the method that we will be pursuing in this course about which we will give fuller definition and expression as we continue on.

III. What is biblical counseling?

A. Biblical counseling is to be distinguished from other forms of counseling in several ways:

1. Biblical counseling begins from the premise that man is created by God and did not evolve from lower life forms.
2. Biblical counseling, therefore, sees man as the crown of God's creation completely distinguished from the other animals, having a spirit, soul and a body.

3. Biblical counseling acknowledges that the God who created man understands man better than man understands himself.
4. Biblical counseling accepts the fact that the God of the universe has an opinion about most of the issues that affect mankind.
5. Biblical counseling acknowledges that the Bible is God's word to man and represents His opinion relative to every area that it addresses.
6. Biblical counseling assumes that God has given to man everything that man needs to make right decisions and solve all of life's problems (II Pet. 1:2-4).

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

May God bless you with his special favor and wonderful peace as you come to know Jesus, our God and Lord, better and better. As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature. So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. II Pet. 1:2-7, NLT

7. Biblical counseling assumes that man will never be able to function properly unless he is in right relationship with God and His word.

B. Biblical counseling has been compromised in many ways.

1. It has been compromised by the teaching of humanistic psychology that is taught in most institutions of learning.
2. It has been compromised by educators who themselves have been trained in humanistic psychology and tend to see what they have been taught as being superior to religious teaching or insight.
3. It has been compromised by the teaching of relative truth and situation ethics which see the Bible as an antiquated, religious relic.
4. It has been compromised by evolutionary concepts that pervade many realms of society. These concepts include the ideas that...

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- a. Man is inherently good.
 - b. Man is a product of his environment.
 - c. There is no absolute authority (God).
 - d. Morality is relative and culturally developed.
5. It has been compromised by Christian counselors that have blended biblical revelation with humanistic ideas.
 6. It has been compromised by the attempt to reclassify sinful behavior as diseases or disorders making it difficult to achieve biblical solutions.
 - Drunkenness becomes alcoholism
 - Fornication becomes "sexually active"
 - Homosexuality becomes "gay"
 - Thieves become kleptomaniacs
 - A variety of sinful behavior can be labeled emotional problems, co-dependency, personality disorder, dysfunctionality, etc.
 7. It has been compromised by an exaltation of the process of counseling rather than the responsible actions of the one being counseled.

What I mean by that is that sometimes people see counseling as an unending discipline that puts most of the responsibility for a solution on the one doing the counseling rather than on the one being counseled. Some counselors foster this attitude because their livelihood depends on people never fully recovering. This is where the term "counseling" often changes to "therapy."

Therapy often implies that there is a process that might help if the process is continued on a continual basis, but no solution is guaranteed. Chemotherapy for cancer cannot guarantee success. Physiotherapy for restoring full motions cannot be guaranteed.

It is difficult to extend real hope to people when there is no guaranteed result. Hoping can become "wishing" or "wishful thinking." The Bible offers real answers to real problems. The Bible has a solution for every need of man.

8. It has been compromised as pastors and church leaders are intimidated by professional counselor.

Pastors and church leaders are made to feel that they are ill-equipped to handle the modern problems of sexual abuse, abortion, repressed memories and the like. Pastors are intimidated by terms and concepts that are not referenced in the Bible and can easily capitulate to the pressure placed upon them by trained professionals.

Pastors and church leaders are also intimidated when their solutions are called "simplistic" by those who love to complicate things. We are just as simplistic as Peter was on the day of Pentecost when he gave counsel to about 3000 people.

I like what Martin Luther once said. It went something like, "A poor uneducated man armed with the Bible is more equipped and more powerful than all of the university-trained doctors and lawyers without the Bible."

I am not anti-education or pro-ignorance. I am saying that no problem that occurs in the lives of people is a surprise to God. His word addresses every condition of mankind.

IV. What are the main reasons why people seek counseling?

"Counseling is the interaction of people at the need level of life sharing insights toward the solutions of real problems." Charles H. Nichols

A. Counseling is sought in many different realms of life and living.

1. Career Counseling
2. Relationship Counseling
3. Marriage Counseling
4. Family Counseling
5. Financial Counseling
6. Grief Counseling
7. Behavioral Counseling (Addictions, Anger, Worry, Fear)
8. Crisis Counseling

B. Counseling is sought for many different reasons.

1. The counselee simply needs advice about a decision.
2. The counselee needs guidance concerning life goals.
3. The counselee needs support through an emotional season.
4. The counselee needs motivation for change.
5. The counselee needs assistance in resolving conflict.
6. The counselee needs to be free from bondage in an area.
7. The counselee needs insight into the expression of gifts and ministries.
8. The counselee needs to understand principles of cultivating and maintaining healthy friendship and relationships.
9. The counselee needs instruction in some of the practical areas of life (marriage, child-rearing, finances, etc.).
10. The counselee needs to deal with issues of bitterness and unforgiveness.
11. The counselee needs help in sorting out their priorities.
12. The counselee needs direction and inspiration relative to their personal spiritual growth.

- C. The counseling process may be initiated by the presence of certain symptoms in the counselee(s).

Some of these include: Depression, loneliness, bitterness, resentment, stress, guilt, relational conflict, fears, frustration, etc.

V. Where is the ministry of counseling found in the Bible?

- A. There are not many times when the words “counsel or counseling” are found in the Bible.

1. The closest Old Testament word that is most often translated “counsel” is the word *yah-gatz*. This word literally means “to advise.”

- a. Jethro gave counsel to Moses (Ex. 18:19, 23).

And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do... If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.

- b. Ahithophel was a counselor to David and Absalom (II Sam. 16:23).

Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

- c. God is the source of counsel (Ps. 16:7-8). He is the Wonderful Counselor (Is. 9:6; 11:1-4).

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Psalm 16:7-8

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Isaiah 11:1-4

- d. Much of the time this word is used in a negative sense of wicked people taking counsel together to devise wicked schemes (Jer. 49:30).

2. The closest New Testament word that is most often translated “counsel” is the word *sumbouleo*. This word literally means “to give or take advice jointly.” It means “to recommend, deliberate or determine.”
 - a. Most of the time it is used in a negative sense of the opponents of Jesus taking counsel how they might destroy Him (Mt. 26:4).
 - b. The primary positive use of this word reminds us that God does not need anyone’s counsel (Rom. 11:33-36).

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!
“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His
counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?
For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory
forever. Amen.*

This is assuring, because it indicates that God has answers. He not only has answers, He has all of the answers (all knowledge and all wisdom belong to Him).

Notice how the Message Version states this passage:

Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It’s way over our heads. We’ll never figure it out. Is there anyone around who can explain God? Anyone smart enough to tell him what to do? Anyone who has done him such a huge favor that God has to ask his advice? Everything comes from him; Everything happens through him; Everything ends up in him. Always glory! Always praise! Yes. Yes. Yes.

- B. There are many words that are found in the Bible that enter into the counseling process.

1. **Reprove** (*Elenko*)

- a. Definition: To convict, to expose, by conviction to bring to light, to admonish, to correct, to call to account, to show one his fault (demanding an explanation), to chasten, to punish

*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. **Convince**, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. II Timothy 4:2*

*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; **correct**, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. --NIV*

- b. Other references: Mt. 18:15; Luke 3:19; John 3:20; 8:9,46; 16:8; I Cor. 14:24; Eph. 5:11,13; I Tim. 5:20; II Tim. 3:16; Tit. 1:9,13; 2:15; Heb. 12:5; Jam. 2:9; Rev. 3:19

2. Rebuke (*Epitimao*)

- a. Definition: To tax with a fault, rate, chide, reprove, censure severely

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. II Timothy 4:2

- b. Other references: Mt. 12:16; 16:22; 17:18; Luke 9:55; 17:3; Jude 9

3. Admonish (*Noutheteo*)

- a. Definition: To admonish, warn or exhort

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you... I Thessalonians 5:12

Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong.
-NLT

Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. II Thessalonians 5:14, NLT

- b. Other references: Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14; I Cor. 4:14; 10:11; Eph. 6:4; Col. 1:28; 3:16; II Th. 3:15; Tit. 3:10

4. Correct (*Epanorthosis*)

- a. Definition: To correct, to restore to an upright or right state, to raise up again, to reform, to restore, to reestablish

- b. See: II Timothy 3:16-17; James 5:19-20

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
II Timothy 3:16-17

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:19-20

5. Judge (*Krino*)

- a. Definition: To separate, put asunder, to select, to approve, to determine, decree, to judge, to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong, to rule, to govern, to preside over with power of giving judicial decisions

For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed... For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." I Corinthians 5:3, 12-13

- b. Other references: I Corinthians 6:2-31; 14:29