CARING

AND

COUNSELING

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How do you help the teen, the financially distressed, or those in difficult marriage problems?

What about the issues of confidentiality. . . what about counseling in the local church?

What are the normal Biblical commitments of godly counselors?

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Many issues are covered in this seminar material that will help any serious counselor.
It is my desire that you will receive much benefit from a thorough study of these pages.

Dr. Edward Watke Jr.

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PREPARATION TOWARD CARING AND COUNSELING

We need help to understand many things about counseling. This manual is being written that we might understand what Christian counseling is, who can do Christian counseling, how to be a Christian counselor, and how to build our skills as a Christian counselor.

There are many passages in the Word of God that show us who should be involved in Christian counseling. In Romans 15:14 we read, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." The brethren here are those who have had a personal salvation experience, who are members of the body of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have a desire to honor and glorify God in their lives. To these brethren Christ gives the ministry of counseling in the church.

Then in Galatians 6:1,2 we read, " Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." The brethren are charged with the ministry of counseling to help that one overtaken in a fault. Those who are spiritual, saved, filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit are called to counsel others in need. It is interesting (Titus 2:2-5) how the aged women are responsible for counseling the younger women; teaching, admonishing and instructing in certain areas of need.

COMMON COMMITMENTS OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS

What is Christian counseling? Those who are called to this have many common commitments that they share. These are common goals or commitments that are embraced by those who labor in counseling.

Christian Counselors are committed to a common goal: This goal is not of man's will, making or invention, but a goal that springs from the Word of God, as seen in Ephesians 4:14,15, which is God's desire for every Christian.That we be "no more children, tossed to and fro.... but may grow into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" The goal is Christlikeness, maturity, being no more babes in Christ, but growing into maturity. Paul stated this graphically in Colossians 2:28, "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." This is our goal!

Christian Counselors are committed to the reality of sin: We are to take seriously the portions of Scripture that deal with the reality of sin and the tragedy of sin as announced in the Word of God. Christian counselors have a common confession that sin is "exceedingly sinful" and that basically we are dealing with a "sin" problem in the counseling process. (Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-24; 6:23; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:1-13) We must not try and put a bandage on the problem of sin. We cannot make the crooked straight for only God's Word can do that. It takes the drastic work of conviction and total repentance to bring change. We must depend upon the power of God's Word, the truth, to change the hearts of men. In Isaiah 1:4- 6 we read, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a

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seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord....the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.. from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.." Surely God sets forth the seriousness of sin.

Christian Counselors are committed to the need of patience and grace: Godly Christian counselors recognize the need of an atmosphere of patience and grace in order that the counseling process might go on and the needs of the client met. In all secular writings about counseling we read of the need of an atmosphere of positive regard, acceptance and concern for the people in need.

This is also shared again and again in the Word of God. Paul spoke of the "need of the spirit of meekness (or humility)" in Galatians 6:1; and then in I Thessalonians 5:14 we are told to "comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all man." God has been so patient with us, what He has done for us we are to do toward others. Counseling demands much love, patience and understanding. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 2:1) We must embrace the reality that grace is what will change lives.

Christian Counselors are committed to help people bring about change: If we are going to be Biblical we will be committed to help people to recognize the need of building new attitudes and actions into their life-style. We will have a common goal of bringing about change. This will necessitate dehabituation and rehabituation, or a "putting off and putting on" process. (Ephesus 4:22-24; 4:28) We will want to see them grow into maturity, therefore bringing about in their lives a new activity of change. This will require time and a process is involved to bring about the change. The counselor will need to be patient and understanding and know how to labor with the client in order to effect such a permanent change. There is the need of building new habits as the old habits are broken and are replaced. The client must adopt a new life-style in those areas of needed change. The old garments of sin (of the old man, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:5-9) must be put off and replaced with the power of the new man. (Ephesians 4:24,23) There must be an adopting of new attitudes, new practices and real change as we see in Ephesians 4:25-28. Those that stole were to steal no more, but rather to labor with their own hands that they might have to give. What a change, from a thief, to one who labored to give to others.

Christian Counselors recognize their total dependence upon the Holy Spirit: We must recognize that apart from the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." We must humbly admit our total dependence upon the Holy Spirit to do the work in hearts and lives. (Ephesians 5:17,18) If there is going to be success in the counseling ministry there must be dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We must be empowered by the Holy Spirit, (Acts 1:8, Luke 24:49) At that time the disciples where not to go anywhere, or attempt to do anything until they were endued by the Holy Spirit of God. We cannot produce conviction but too often we do try to create conviction. We thus brow-beat the counselee, we get on them, push them, shove them, but they don't really change. There is no long lasting change in the life when it is our effort to try and effect change. In this effort we so often run ahead of the Holy Spirit for we are trying to do His work. We must discern what He is doing, listen to HIM, and be directed by HIM. Conviction and change are the result of the Holy Spirit's ministry. We are to be instruments to minister what God wants, the change must be brought by His working.

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Christian Counselors operate under the umbrella of the Lordship of Jesus Christ: The counselor's activities and desired direction toward the client is to help them totally yield to the written Word and the Living Word, the incarnate Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We can say, "Do this or do that because this is what Christ would tell you to do if He were setting in my place." We must give full allegiance to the Word of God ourselves, trusting that this is the agent that the Holy

Spirit will use to bring about change. All our direction in counseling must be rooted in the Word of God for we are indeed asking the counselee what the Word of God is asking them to do. Paul modeled this in the counseling process as he wrote to Timothy. He called Timothy to appropriate the truths of the Word of God, as he called Timothy's attention to doctrine. (II Timothy 1:13, 14) Timothy was urged to "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." I think that Timothy also had a problem with timidity and was urged to meet that need, as Paul counseled with the Word of God. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (II Timothy 1:7) Then Paul was urging him to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15) This took place because Timothy had many problems to face in the ministry and the only answer was the Word of God. From a child he had known the Scriptures and they were to be his resource to meet needs in the ministry God had given him. (II Timothy 2:15-17) It is obvious in all this that Christ must be Lord as we seek to obey His Word.

Christian Counselors realize that the ultimate responsibility for victory rests on the client, not themselves: Of course the counselor must do all he can Biblically to see the need of the client met but in the final analysis the outcome rests upon the counselee's willingness to apply truth. The individual's effort makes the difference. Sometimes as counselors we are prone to accept all the responsibility of success or failure of the sessions. We ought not do that, for if we have truly presented the Word of God, and made much of the Word of God as it was brought to bear upon the need, and we have been faithful to the principles of good counseling, we have done our part. The counselee must do his part, for the responsibility for change rest on him. In the end we are each "accountable" for our decisions. (Romans 14:12; II Cor. 9) We cannot make a client become what we would like them to be. Of course we must be very thorough, truly prepared and knowledgeable of how to counsel, but then after helping the counselee in every way possible we have to leave the results to their decisions and to the "free-will" of their choices. We must employ sound principles of counseling, use the Word of God, as we depend upon the Holy Spirit, but the client must bring himself into conformity to the Word of God.

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THE MINISTRY OF COUNSELING IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

How can we effectively counsel in the local church? Can there be such a ministry and if so, who can be involved? How can we effectively minister in a ministry of counseling in the church? When we understand what Paul did as he labored with the churches I think we also understand what is involved as we are commanded to "exhort one another daily, and so much the more as you see the day approaching", (Hebrews 10:25) and "...teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." (Colossians 3:16)

Who in the Church Should be Involved in Counseling? All who are spiritual, who consistently yield to the Holy Spirit, who are mature in Christ Jesus should determine to be used of the Lord to help others.

I have in my hand just now a book that I am reading from a church library. It is entitled, *"You Don't Have To Go It Alone"* by Leslie B. Flynn and some of the chapters deal with such aspects as..."We Need Each Other, Bearing One Another's Burdens, Confessing One to Another, Receiving One Another, Forgiving One Another, Forbearing One Another, Building Up One Another", etc.

It is obvious from this book that he is setting forth that we are to have a continuing ministry to one another.

In Scripture we are commanded to encourage one another, to exhort, to admonish, to build up, to strengthen, to excite, to encourage one another to spiritual living. Then we are also to warn, and rebuke one another. Our responsibility as members of the body of Christ is to counsel one another, even if that is not done in a professional sense. Counseling means basically "to admonish, to encourage and to excite" toward victorious Biblical living. We must seriously consider our responsibility to have a part in counseling others where we go to church, that is to exhort and encourage one another unto good works, and to godly living. That should take place where we go to church, in the Sunday School class, etc. People have needs and we have access to their lives in such a way as to encourage and exhort for God's glory. In warning we need to be sure that we are truly led by the Holy Spirit, and humbly, carefully, lovingly encouraging others, as many other aspects in this manual must come into play in the total picture.

What Will the Lord Lead Us To Do In The Counseling Process?

There are a number of things that the Lord will lead us to do, these basic things we note were aspects of Paul's counsel with Timothy.

We will call people to **remembrance**: (II Tim. 1:5,6) We will call the saved to remembrance of things that God has done, and their responsibility based on "what God has done". It is like "putting a hot poker in the brain, to fan the life of things that they have known and have neglected, it is to stir the head and heart." Paul wrote, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee." He would remind Timothy and encourage him in the present based on what had taken place in the past. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee..." This will take the form of a gentle reminder, or exhortation with love that the saved might remember that which they have neglected or forgotten concerning what God has done in the past.

We will be involved in a ministry of **exhortation.** (II. Tim. 1:8) Here Paul lovingly exhorted

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Timothy, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Paul lovingly exhorted, admonished and sometime aggressively confronted those with whom he labored. We cannot be a healer and helper until we are also willing to lovingly confront and exhort and admonish those to whom we would minister.

Also there must be a ministry of **modeling.**(1:12) Paul reminded the people of God's faithfulness in the past, then he exhorted them unto good works and godly living. Then it is obvious that he also endeavored to model before them what he wanted them to be. As counselors, as helpers for the sake of others we must above all "model" what we want them to be. Paul modeled a dynamic, alive relationship to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit and in his service and life. We must have a dynamic, alive relationship with the Lord, fully alive unto the Jesus we are talking about. Paul was saying, Now "Timothy, look what the Lord has done for you in the past, don't be ashamed of the Lord, I must exhort and admonish you, son, Timothy, of God's faithfulness in the past as I exhort you in the present. I want to tell you what my own experience with Jesus Christ has been." Paul was a great model and he held up that modeling before Timothy whom he was counseling. The major way we help others is to model for they will basically learn from what we are. (II Tim. 2:2; Phil 4:9) What was Timothy's problem? We do not know for sure, but from verse seven it is noted that he must have had many fears. He probably was not committing everything to the Lord. He had lost his leader, Paul, who was now in prison. He probably was full of fear, anxiety, worry and was overly concerned, afraid of the future and what would happen to him now that Paul was gone. Probably Timothy felt strong, able and encouraged when Paul was with him, now he could have been captivated by fear, seized with anxiety and possibly very depressed in the midst of his concerns. Paul was encouraging him that (II Tim. 1:12) "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "God will meet every need, Timothy, I have committed all to Him, and you need not be afraid (for you can do the same)." Often we must allow the counselee to see the victory that we have in Christ Jesus, in a humble and loving way. (John 15:11; John 14:27)

We must also **encourage others to be "strong"** in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul made much of the grace of God. It is God's grace, wonderful, abundant, abounding victorious, healing grace. It is grace by which God forgives, and restores, it is "grace greater than our sin." (Rom. 5:15-20; II Cor 12:9; Eph 1:6; I Pet. 4:10; Eph. 2:7; Rom.5:21; Rom. 6:14; 5:2; II Cor. 9:8,14; II Tim. 2:1; II Pet. 3:18; I Peter 3:7) His grace is the source of all that we have: our salvation, call of God, faith, justification, forgiveness, and consolation. We must emphasize the abundant, abounding grace of God for every need.

We face a question: What part does psychology have in all this? Can psychology help? It does have some good things to say to us. It can help us to understand how people think, for in experimental psychology they study why people respond as they do, why they react as they do, what they do and why, or what causes them to do what they do, but we must be very discerning. We need to be careful when we read those kind of text books, or magazines, etc., They must be put through the sieve of God's Word! They must be scrutinized, and examined by the Word of God.

We must be careful that we only take in that which is faithful to the teaching of the Word of

God, we must be careful that we don't have a "model of psychology" and then try to get the Word of God to fit that model. Many psychologists who have written the books are unsaved humanists and we should expect their insights to often run contrary to truth. Psychology may at times help when it is a Biblical study of man and his reactions to sin and truth, and to help us understand the past actions and reactions that helped bring the person to his present problems, but most of all we must be committed to the faithful study and investigation of the Word of God for ourselves.

For the sake of the people we are going to counsel we must be sure that we are ..1) bathed in the Word of God, (James 1:21; Col. 3:16; Psa. 119, Psa 19) 2) bathed in the grace of God and depending upon the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit to change lives. 3) And have a testimony before others, so we can say, "I am persuaded.. that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him..." This is the way counseling in the local church ought to take place.

QUALITIES and CHARACTERISTICS WE MUST HAVE

What are the qualities we ought to possess as we get involved in laboring and counseling with others? If we are to exhort, admonish, rebuke, and also confront lovingly (which admonition in the original Greek text means... Col. 3:16), excite, and encourage unto God's will what kind of person do we need to be so that God can use us for His glory?

Then **we must have a large measure of adaptability**. Paul in I Thess. 5:14 wrote, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." Paul was urging them to recognize that there were three different categories of persons who had basic needs. They were to adapt their ministry, teaching, exhorting, etc., to the basic needs of the unruly, feeble-minded and the weak. They did not all deserve or need the same response, in fact to give the wrong response could be very devastating. There are the "unruly or disorderly" who need to be warned. Then there are the "little souls" which is meant to be feeble-minded, who were possibly timid, and afraid. If they were warned like the unruly they would be "beat into the ground and disappear from sight", so, what they needed was encouragement, and comfort. Then there are the "weak", who need support. We would not "comfort the unruly and warn the feeble minded and weak", for each needs counseling according to his needs.

A study of the book of Proverbs would bring to our attention four groups to whom the writer addresses himself. (Of course there are others also, but mainly these four.) He addressed the "wise man, the scorner, the fool, and the simple". If we took the time to make a detailed study of these four, looking at every text, we would find different applications to be made and a different counsel given to each one on the part of the writer. So in all our counseling we will need to understand the basic need of the counselee or the client and then adapt our counsel accordingly. We need to be so in tune with the Holy Spirit, so endued with the Word of God to be able to pull out of the Scriptures the answers according to the needs that the different kinds of people might have. It will necessitate a thorough knowledge of the Word of God and a thorough understanding of the client, and a willingness to adapt the Word of God and it's teaching (instruction, admonition,etc.) to that need.

We must be **consistently concerned about the counselee**. (I Thess. 5:14) Paul wrote about being "patient toward all men" that means to manifest concern, compassion, burden and desire to meet their needs. It is interesting to note that Paul wrote to the same church, "But we were gentle among

you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children... being affectionately desirous ...imparting unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.. laboring night and day... as ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." (I Thess. 2:7-11) Paul had a tremendous burden for those unto whom he ministered. In Galatians 4:19 we read, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." He had travailed once for their salvation, and now was travailing "again" until Christ be formed in them. To travail like a mother does for the birth of a child is indeed an evidence of deep concern for those to whom he ministered.

We then, also, **need insight into the main need the Client has**. There must be sensitivity to the need of the counselee, being able to identify the major problem(s) and with compassion and heart-felt concern meet that need. As we depend upon the Holy Spirit to lead us, willingly confronting the person about his needs with the Word of God, we must expect Him to bring about conviction. We also need to model the Lord Jesus Christ in that counseling situation.

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PREPARATION TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE CARING AND COUNSELING PROCESS

TECHNIQUES TO USE IN COUNSELING

The **Counselor must be present** in the counseling process: The counselor must be sure that he is absolutely present in the session or situation. To be present means "to be there"; all distractions are out of the mind, listening, and giving full attention. This will be noted by the way we set, by body language, by the way we speak, and the way we look at the client (s). They must be fully convinced that we are truly there, totally for their sakes. (Often we do not listen to our family members like this, but only half listen.) So we must focus on them as we listen for problems, listen for themes, and listen for things that are emerging over and over again. You must know what kind of responses are appropriate. You must know what kind of probes to make, and what kind of questions to ask, and this can only take place by truly "being present". The questions, the probing and the response will be guided by the careful listening in the process. Then you can move on to informing the person, understanding the problem, and sharing and integrating what they are saying with answers from the Word of God, or you can move if necessary into confrontation.

You can begin to confront the person that he is not being faithful to Biblical principles, and then shape for him some actions to be taken in his life to build new habits and get rid of the old. Your goal is to make Christ manifest in his life. (Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-4)

The **Counselor must be committed to continuous support**. The counselee must be provided with ample support to be encouraged that the need or problem in his or her life can be met. Hope must be given by that continuous support. He needs to be phoned, encouraged, and strengthened by the continuous manifested concern of the counselor. We must be sure that the person is experiencing "ongoing" victory over the problem. Paul spoke of "travailing night and day" and of "travailing until Christ be formed in you." (I Thess. 2:9; Gal. 4:17) He knew what it meant to give continued support and show constant concern, both in action and in his prayer life for others. The counselee must sense that there is genuine compassion for him in his needs.

Initially the **Counselor must provide an atmosphere of love and acceptance**. It makes a big difference if the counselee senses that there is no prejudice toward him no matter how serious the matter, or how awful the sin, and the failure in the life. Counselors must be careful that they are not surprised about anything. While on one hand we must hate the sin, we must show love toward the sinner. The gospels often portray Christ in His love and acceptance toward hated sinners, and often He ate with them, and also ministered to them. Even the woman taken in adultery knew His love and acceptance, not of her sin, but toward her person as He sought to meet her need.

There must be **effort toward problem clarification**. What are the problems, the difficulties that are to be faced by the counselee? What is the real problem and not just the surface things or the symptoms? So often the person in need does not know what his problem really is. He is blind to the "root causes" which produced the conditions and circumstances. We must have the direction of the Holy Spirit, wisdom of God, and direction particularly of the Word of God that we might be wise in

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problem clarification. We must "give heed, seek out and set in order" as we have seen earlier in this study.

The next thing is to **move to action**; **homework duties must be given to the client**. There is work that must take place as the counselee brings about change! A designated action program is needed that will help the client to deliver himself from the problem.

Paul had a "action" program for Timothy. He was to get "into the study of the Word of God, embrace good doctrine, be strong in the grace of the Lord, train others, be apt to teach, and discipline himself as a husbandman, as an athlete, or as a soldier." For all this and more is set forth in the two epistles written to Timothy.

IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVES AND INVOLVEMENT

Our motivation is so extremely important. For what reason do we desire to work with people in a counseling situation? I hope that the reader understands that every Christian is to "admonish, exhort and encourage one another" but there is a special ministry of counseling for which some are called of the Lord to equipment themselves. What should be the motivations of any who labor to help others?

Often the Word of God speaks to us about our motivations. Paul wrote of his desires, and purposes, and whether as a preacher or a member of a church we must have God honoring motivations for all we do. Paul wrote of the fact that some preached Christ even of envy and strife. It is obvious that their motives were not right. Why do we want to counsel others? What is motivating us? There are motives that are valid and some that are invalid. This we want to examine, briefly.

Some **valid motives** would be love for people, and a desire to help for God's glory and honor. (Gal. 6:1) As we bear the burdens of others, we are helpful to others, pleasing to God and it should be fulfilling to us as well. But especially to see God magnified in the lives of others should be our main concern, that HE is glorified by their lives. (Eph. 1:12, II Thess. 1:10-12)

There are a number of **invalid motives** that need to be examined. Some may want to counsel others because of their **curiosity**; they want to know juicy things about others. They desire to know what is taking place in other lives, this is not a good reason to counsel. Then there are some who have great inner needs of their own and they feel that by counseling they can meet their own needs **for fulfillment, and building relationships**, for maybe they have few friends and this is a means to an end to build some friendships. This again is not a good or valid reason to be involved in any counseling ministry. Still others get involved for **they feel personally powerful** because they get to listen to others describe their problems. They think about the powerful position they have as they can now direct others, or guide the lives of others. They feel that they have control of the situation and could say, "Look this person is confiding in me and look how I am controlling this situation and can have input into this person's life." This is NOT a good or valid reason for having a counseling ministry.

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We must be sure that our motives are pure, godly, pleasing to the Lord and honoring to HIM. He must have the glory and we ought above all to be concerned about His magnification in the lives of others!

There may be a number of misconceptions about the counselor's role that give rise to common problems

Some **see counseling as visiting**, they feel if they have talked with someone for a period of time in "chit-chat" that they have actually involved themselves in a counseling situation. Visiting is not counseling, I think that sometimes pastors feel that they have helped their people when most of their calling in member's home is just "idle conversation" with no particular direction, meeting no particular need or bringing any particular challenge. Actually there has been no admonishing, exhorting, encouraging, enticing, or exciting others unto good works, etc., just talk. While this is not an actual professional counseling session still there ought to be some of the basic purposes seen in counseling take place in that home.

Others may feel that counseling is **giving advice.** So they quickly get involved in giving someone advice and they go away from that advice giving situation thinking that they have given someone counsel. In this scenario there is a kind of hastiness that gives rise to disrespect toward the other person. The person who is involved too quickly will probably practice inattentiveness to what the other person is trying to say. If we are going to be involved in counseling we must 1) learn how to be present in the counseling situation; 2) focus on what the other person is saying,and 3) give real attention to them so that they know we respect them and are sincerely desirous to help them and are interested in them for whom they are.

Sometimes people see the counselor's **role as being a judge.** For they think that the counseling ministry is a service of passing judgment or rendering some decision on some action or thought that the counselee had. Such people will enter into the counseling field with a tremendous judgmental spirit; they will often overwhelm the client with their judgments. Judging or making discerning decisions on how to help the client is a part of the counseling process. But we are in great error if we think our main task is to pass judgment on the other person, or on their actions, thoughts, motives, etc.

Then there are those who feel **counseling is "telling all your know**". They overwhelm the person in need with twenty five answers for their problem and they feel so grand for having so many ideas. The client presents the problem and the person doing the counseling gives them everything they can think of in as short a time as they can.... like twenty five verses on the subject that immediately deals with the problem. The counselee sets there and is thoroughly overwhelmed.

He feels like he has been in the presence of someone who has given him a verbal tidal wave of answers or thoughts. He is bombarded with ideas and simply thrown along on the wings of an overwhelming amount of advice. But the counselor feels that he has done a great job.

Such people think that **counseling is being directive**. Probably the early learner of counseling methods will feel that basically it is just directing the person as to what he should do. The learner often forgets that it is also being interpretive. If it is only giving directions then interpreting the needs of the other person will largely be lost. One of the main things that must take place in

counseling is interpreting for the other person the involvements that he has. Think about alternatives, talk about the meaning behind what he is doing. So instead of just giving direction and information be sure that you attempt to generate some insight into his problem so he understands when he leaves why he made the decisions he has made and why he has had the problem that he has experienced. If he does not see "where the problems have come from" or understand the why of the problems and doesn't see the solutions" what value is all the directions or information given? He must understand the roots of the problems and see vividly how to extricate himself and bring about change.

Counseling to others is **being emotionally involved** in the counselee's problems. They believe that if they are emotionally there for the other person, if they are expressive emotionally as the client talks, or with body language and words express emotional involvement then they are successful counselors. Such individuals feel that with tremendous amounts of emotional involvement with the other person they will be doing a great job in the counseling session. Being emotional themselves they feel that when they show a lot of emotion it will naturally bring success. A counselor probably will be involved emotionally to some degree, but if one is too emotionally involved he will forget to analyze the needs, to be interpretive, and will actually more likely have poor discernment. He will likely forget those things that caused the client to be in the mess he is in, and what is needed to truly help him effect change. Counseling is not just an emotional process but it is a directing, intellectual process in which we seek to help the counselee to understand their case and to bring action to change things.

Then there are those who in counseling are **extremely defensive**. In this case the counselor feels that he has all the answers and feels threatened if the counselee or client does not agree with him. The counselor may feel that he has the right to be considered "correct" in his analysis and sometimes the counselee may say something to the counselor that may be construed as an attack or a disagreement. The counselor, if defensive by nature, will destroy the whole counseling process if he so reacts.

In conclusion we must stay away from the ideas that counseling is 1) visiting, 2) or just giving advice, 3) making judgment, 4) telling all we know, 5) giving direction or information, 6) being emotionally involved, or, 7) being considered right for this gives me a sense of power and prestige.

FACING THE ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

There are several aspects of ethical considerations that are involved in the counseling process that need to be considered. These are imperative and deal primarily with confidentiality both when it must be held and when it must or might be abridged or broken.

There are times one must be very careful with what he hears and what is experienced in the counseling situation. It must be clearly understood that the session is **private**. The counselor must take great care that he does not give himself to gossip or repeating the things that are heard to others.

There are times when others must be informed. For example, the person could be a suicide candidate. Then that which was private must be made public or others must be brought into the case to seek to meet the need. If the person is very weak emotionally, he is struggling, and talking a lot about suicide, or may seem to be in eminent danger to himself you would need to set aside

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confidentiality and inform some authority or some one prepared to deal with this kind of problem.

There is another time when you'd need to break confidence. Suppose that the person is not a danger to himself or herself but is a danger to another person. He is talking about doing great harm or great injury to someone else, or he is already involved in severe abuse of another person, you would need to involved the right authorities and also let them know of your intent and need to divulge the information.

Then there are times when the court must have access to the information that you have as a counselor. When that happens you do not have a choice for when the court subpoenas your testimony or records you will have to go ahead and cooperate with the court.

So there are times ethically that you will need to break confidentiality. But for the most part you have a responsibility to protect the information that is given you by the counselee. You need to be very careful to honor the Biblical responsibility of love and confidence and you need to convince the person that you can be trusted with the kind of information that you have been given. The Lord wants to use you, but you must be careful that the client also fully trusts you because of your careful responses.

Counseling is a very involved and draining task. Doubtless, when you make a study of the apostle Paul's ministry you realize that he freely gave himself to the need of others and so felt a great burden and emotional drain as he endeavored to bear their burdens. (Gal. 4:17; II Cor. 4; II Cor. 6:4-10) As we involve ourselves in the counseling process with motives that are pure and we properly understand the Biblical task as it is Biblically defined, we will find that it demands our very best. As we attempt to honor ethically the responsibility before us or that we incur in the counseling process it can be a very time consuming and energy consuming task.

A WARNING CONCERNING OVER-INVOLVEMENT

It is easy to feel overwhelmed in the counseling process. If one finds it easy to be emotionally involved and begins to open his life, home, office, etc., to people day and night, never turning away anyone at any time, it can easily bring **"burn-out"** and potentially even personal ruin.

It would be wise not to open one's own home as a counseling situation or office unless there can be a separate office there, and hours strictly kept for the sake of all involved. Many people are so caught up in the counseling ministry that they get overly involved and they get over extended. They tell people to call them at any time day or night. They say, "I will always be available for you in the midst your problem, so call me morning, noon, or night." Soon people are there for breakfast, for lunch and for dinner, and finally the person who started out so thrilled and so interested in being a counselor and in helping people finds himself burned out. He wishes he would never see another counselee. He may wish that he did not need to be around anyone as he is experiencing a problem that we call **burnout**.

Burnout brings with it an inability to think, to reason properly and a change of emotions as the person who was once so interested in others finds
himself very weary of seeing anyone. Burnout brings that general feeling of loss and that the counselor is the one that needs help. One might even feel like he is going crazy.

This kind of problem can be solved, but you will need to ask yourself the question, "How did I get into this condition in the first place." Was it because I was overextended, overly involved and

overly identified with the role of counseling, and did I become too emotionally involved with the problems others face? There are several things that can be done to over come the problem:

Recognize that you have been **involved in a ministry, but not with the Lord.** Probably the counselor will have to face the fact that his or her own devotional life has "gone by the board." Much time has been spent with others, but there has been neglect of the strengthening that comes from "waiting upon the Lord" (Isa 40:28-31; 41:10; Isa 26:3). Probably the discipline of a vital, and meaningful devotional walk with the Lord has been neglected. You have been so busy with other's needs you have not taken time with the Lord, or given attention to the study of the Word of God.

Now you feel dried up on the inside, and the very core of your being seems dead and dry. You sense that your inner person is barren, empty and all seems vain. The spiritual walk has been neglected and the source of life "from the fountain of life", the Lord, has become nil.

You will probably **recognize** that your **mind has been overworked.** You have given yourself too much to think about, problems others face are running through your head night and day and you feel short circuited. So often all this happens because there has been little time for "rest and relaxation". There must be a change of pace, relaxation therapy is needed and a time set aside for recharging emotionally, physically and spiritually. The Lord must become the counselor's counselor, the healer, comfort and source of victory and strength. (Psa. 61,62,62) You must turn to the Lord, and spend time with the Scriptures and the God of the work and not just with the work.

The Holy Spirit must become real as the One who gives ability, strength, comfort, leading into all truth, and filling the counselor with the fullness of God. We must exchange emptiness for fullness, stress for peace, anxiety for joy, and a distraught spirit for the fullness of love. We must know experientially the blessing of the Holy Spirit's control and fullness.

And the counselor **must have an excellent marriage.** You will need an excellent marriage for the only thing that may stand between you and disaster as a Christian counselor is a good marriage. The spouse can serve as a "balance wheel, advisor, and encourager." One must put his own family and marriage first, for the close harmony and love life with the mate will spare one from many a temptation. There must be extreme care about the potential of sexual entanglements! The counselor can never really know for sure the motive of the counselee. There can be the potential of a "love crush" that may take place in the life of the counselee. The counselor seems so understanding and loving to the mind of the client. It is best to counsel only those of the same sex. It can be serious for a male to counsel with a female unless there is someone else there, such as a secretary, etc., or some way to assure total protection for all involved. One should never compromise the Word of God and good ethics.

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DEALING WITH CRISIS SITUATIONS

As the counselor gets a reputation, there will be more and more difficult situations that will come to his attention. While we may not feel qualified to deal with every kind of crisis situations, there will be many that must be addressed and there is the need of knowledge in a general way about these aspects of problems.

There are **situational crisis** needs such as death, a loss of some kind which could be job, health, accidents, etc., divorce or other situations that effect family relationships with in-laws, etc.

Then there are **developmental crisis** that come over a period of time, such as declining health, or dealing with aging. There can be difficulty in the teen years, or special childhood problems that develop in the home.

Many times the **crisis is existential** in that there are existent problems that come with various things faced. This could be anxiety over a death, about being a widow, or about some terrible failure in the life due to some sinful habit, practice, or moral fall. There may be such crisis as you will note in other parts of this study.

How do we help with Crisis Counseling?

What are the goals that should be considered in such counseling situations?

Help the person to cope and **return to normal functioning**. They may have lost their equilibrium because of the powerful crisis they have gone through. Your desire to help them to equilibrium will help them return to normal functioning. As you look around, you will find possible assistance that can be brought to bear in the situation. How can you help them cope? What kind of family resources are available? What kind of church resources are available, and what kind of community resources would be helpful? You must bring the resources together that are available to help that person cope so they can return to normal functioning.

You are to attempt to reduce anxiety in and during the crisis. You must attempt to pray with the person (s), for prayer can be a tremendous asset to reduce anxiety the person is feeling. Be a calming influence, site instances of God's faithfulness and help them to see God is able and far more concerned than they are. You must help them see the available sources of strength that are available in God's love, grace and wisdom. Help them to understand the promises and God's great compassion. You must help them to focus the mind and heart on God and HIS love and not on the things producing the anxiety, for the main focus of their mind and heart is so very important in the process of healing. (Isa. 26:3; Isa 41:10; 40:28-31; Psa 27)

You must help them apply Scriptural principles. The Word of God must be the source of answers for their problems. The counselor must be there as a positive influence, and guiding them to Bible truths that focus on their needs. They must see how God is going to help aid them in their crisis.

The counselor must be an instrument in God's hand to marshal the resources that are available so that the person will be able to see that they are not alone. The counselee needs to see the assets that are present in the environment that can be brought together in order to help the person deal with

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the crisis, and especially that God cares and has answers for the need.

We can help the client to reduce anxiety by 1) bringing that calming influence, 2) by focusing on and clarifying the problem and providing answers to the problem at hand, 3) by evaluating resources and bringing them to bear, 4) by pointing out spiritual answers and resources and by 5) helping them see various resources and inner personal resources as they learn to walk with the Lord in the burden that faces them.

By helping them to be active in a good local church the counselor can help to find a great resource there. The pastor and the counselor together can marshal a wide variety of expertise to help them in the heart-ache or need. You can help them bring together spiritual personnel who will really aid them in the crisis. And there may be the need of those who would supply physical assistance, such as cleaning a house, fix meals, etc., to alleviate pressures in the times of need and crisis. Then there can be effort brought about for long range intervention as they look to their pastor and loving people in the context of the local church. The counselor could aid them by encouraging willingness to share the burden with the pastor and people.

The counselor can instill hope. No matter how dark the moment, or the night may seem to be, or no matter how serious the problem is there is always hope. The counselor must know the Word of God well, and bring to light the Scriptures that would give hope. (I Cor. 10:13) God is faithful, and they must see that He will meet them in their hour of need. In every crisis God has enabled HIS OWN to rise above a crisis of any and every kind that has ever been known by mankind. There is nothing we could face but what Christ has faced it also. He would encourage us to "Come boldly to the throne of grace and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16,17) .. for He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities." He is able to succor (or save and support) them that are tempted for He is our High Priest. (Heb. 2:18; 7:25) The counselor is there to give hope and to point the needy one to the answers in Christ. **You may need to make a referral** for that one in need. There are times in the crises that people face you will find it beyond your expertise. It is wise to have a referral list, and to make that referral. If you have someone acting in a bizarre fashion, hearing voices, up one day and down the next with potential of suicide you will need to secure help for them. Maybe they do not want to get out of bed, maybe have a need for medical attention, or have some unbalanced condition, make sure that you seek other professional help. Don't go it alone!

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DEALING WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS IN THE CARING AND COUNSELING PROCESS

GIVING MARITAL COUNSELING

Recognizing the root problems and pointing out answers.

I have written a number of books that would help immensely in this area. In fact there are also many tapes available from our office that would help the counselor to work with the client toward answers in the midst of many marital problems. Much of this material would be helpful in preventive teaching and training as well.

GENERAL PROBLEMS FAMILIES FACE

Marriages are falling apart in greater and greater numbers than ever before in our knowledge of the history of our nation. Conflict is almost universal. It not only the problem of bombardment from without but also deterioration from within. Many couples seemingly do not see the need of the application of the Word of God to their problems and lives. The Word of God has a lot to say about marriage counseling, and we need to be effective in our labors with couples. The Word of God says a lot about why people have marital problems. Most of the marital problems are caused by deviation from Biblical truth and standards.

The Scriptures teach us that we should "leave" and "cleave" and "weave" our lives together in marriage or become one flesh. As you look around today folk are not committed to this process of leaving-cleaving and weaving their lives together as one. Some times they do not emotionally leave their mothers and fathers, some times they don't cleave or are not genuinely committed to one another and decide they are going to stick together no matter what. This produces problems. (Genesis 2:23,24; Matt. 19:3-8) (We have a chapter in the book, *" Counseling for the Christian Family"* that would help immensely in this area.)

Then there is faulty communication! Couples do not learn how to communicate effectively with one another. They lack understanding of how to communicate and so often this causes tremendous problems as well. This is "central" to all that happens in a marriage, for if the couple cannot communicate they cannot solve anything nor can they build the unity and harmony that they need in daily living.

Often there is defensiveness and **self-centered living**. Couples often get married very young and there is a lot of self centered living that characterizes the relationships. When we get married we are often hoping for our own needs to be met and not meeting the needs of the other person, and so then defensive and self-centered attitudes cause tremendous problems in the marriage.

There is a lot of inner personal tension that is a part of the early marriage process. This may include a lot of the following items. 1) Love deficiencies, not knowing how to give or receive

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love; 2) sexual problems, or maladjustments; 3) religious differences; 4) role conflict possibly with little understanding of the role that we are to fulfill, with possibly very poor modeling on the part of parents; 5) Value conflicts, with differing goals, desires and purposes in life; 6) how children are going to be disciplined and led; 7) and conflict over in-laws and who, and when we are going to spend time with each; 8) and then so often there is tremendous conflict over finances and the management of money. There can be a lot of problems generated over these and other problems or issues.

There can be inner family conflicts with children, teens, etc., with parent set against parent. Sometimes being able to survive in the marriage is being able to survive the adolescence period of conflict in the home.

So there are many problems about which we must be sensitive if we are going to truly help the families that look to us.

WAYS WE CAN HELP FAMILIES COPE WITH PROBLEM AREAS

In the area of Communication. In our book, "*Counsel for the Christian Family"* we have six pages that deal in great detail with this subject. It is full of Scripture, and helpful suggestions and Biblical principles about this very important aspect of daily, family living. With the book is the set of cassette tapes (a total of sixteen tapes which are C-90's) that includes four tapes which gives much detailed help in a seminar and preaching format. In this book we deal with such subjects as "Problems in Communication", "Necessity of Good Communication", "The Purpose of Good Communication" "Principles of Good Communication" and "The Practice of Effective Communication." With this series of studies are questions, and other materials that will aid the couple greatly.

The couple must learn the language of their partner. They must learn how to listen attentively, lovingly, and avoid blaming statements or the accusatory, "you" and the "you never" and the "you always" statements which we are often so apt to use. It is always better to use the "we" term and not the "you" term. It makes a big difference if we say, "We are having a problem with _____." and not "You are having a problem with _____." Or one could say, "I feel that _____." We must teach them to listen sympathetically and carefully.

The problem of finances! This is an area where youth (or young couples) need much help! Early in l989 I spent a week at a church in Alabama speaking about fourteen times on the subject of *"Managing Money God's Way"* With this series of messages of six tapes (twelve messages) is the book of the same title, and also we have other materials and books dealing with how to succeed with money management. One out of every five families today are on the edge of financial ruin. If they missed one pay check they would not be current with their bills, for the average family has over $6,000.00 debt on credit cards alone. This is deep debt.

If we going to help the couple we must urge them to build a budgeting plan, and know how to discuss and help each other in financial matters. We need to learn what money means to each person. Sometimes money is the way of getting things, sometimes it is a way of having power over the other person. We must help them to establish a budget that is workable and meaningful to them and to agree on spending policies. Maybe we should have them come to an agreement that they will not spend more that $20.00 without the approval of the other mate. They must decide that financial decisions should be joint decisions and all expenditure decisions will be joint decisions.

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Having them listen to a series of messages about "Money Mistakes, "Basic Budget Breakers", "Financial Bondage and Financial Freedom", "How to Have a Money Plan", and "Adopting and Using a Budget", etc., would help them greatly. These can be ordered from our office in a complete set of six tapes in a lovely album... entitled... *"Managing Money God's Way".*

Sometimes we must **help them in the basic issue of husband and wife roles.** Do they really have a Biblical role development in their home? Do they really have a sharing of responsibility in the home management? Do they understand God's plan and purpose in the roles of each?

Again in the book, *"Counsel for the Christian Family"* we have dealt in great detail about the roles of a husband and wife, and in the set of six tapes under this title there are a number of messages that bring this all into focus. This would help the couple immensely as well as our set of tapes on the subject of *Husband and Wife Relationships*. (There are six C-90's or nine hours of listening)

Sometimes husbands get the idea that everything that goes on in the home is the wife's responsibility. She has to take care of it all, and if that is true maybe we need to help him realize that once in a while his running the vacuum cleaner, doing some dishes, etc., could really do a lot to improve the marriage relationships. He needs to "love as Christ loves" and seek to develop a servant's heart.

Then it may be the wife that does not realize that she is becoming a nagging, complaining, and self-centered wife who is determined to have her own way, possibly with no thought of thankfulness or praise toward her husband for all that he is seeking to do to meet her needs and to fulfill her wants. She would find that the Biblical counsel in Ephesians 5:33 would go a long way toward improving relationships.

Sometimes there are **religious differences.** These must be addressed and we must help them to resolve this problem. This can be a divisive thing which can bring great heart-ache. We will have to help them to put into place a process of resolving this conflict. This may take time and a lot of patience on the part of all.

The management of children can be one of the major areas of conflict in marriages today. We must give them what the Bible says about how children are to be reared. Again in the book mentioned a number of times above we have a lengthy chapter and much other material that addresses this subject of rearing children. Also in the set of tapes that covers this material there are a number of messages which go into greater detail and give much substantial help to any couple with children of various ages. Also we have a set of tapes entitled... *"Answers For Teens"* which has six tapes with nine hours of listening that would help the family greatly.

We could help the couple by giving them a set of tapes to listen to, also the book mentioned above would help them in parenting. They need help to approach child rearing Biblically and to come to grips with all aspects. As they become comfortable in managing children in unity they will find it a source of blessing and not a source of division and strife between the two of them. They should desire the best for their children for God's glory.

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