

General Principles of Biblical Counseling

I. Introduction and review.

A. Psychology and Christian counseling.

1. Harmful errors of modern psychology.

2. Christian approaches to counseling.

B. The Biblical (nouthetic) Counseling Movement.

C. Some fundamental assumptions.

1. The Bible is sufficient as our textbook for counseling. II Pe. 1:3 II Ti. 3:16-17
Ps. 19:7-14 Heb. 4:12

2. The goal of counseling is change in conformity with God's revealed will, not necessarily the (selfish) desires of the counselee. Col. 1:28

3. Change according to God's standard can only take place by the power of the Holy Spirit. Phil. 4:13 Gal. 5:16f

4. The counselor is qualified through personal holiness and a knowledge of the Word of God. Ga. 6:1 I Ti. 4:16-17,7-8,13 3:1-7

II. Key elements in Biblical Counseling.

A. Involvement. Gal. 6:1

1. Avoid "professionalism" - proud, aloof, distant, mechanical. II Cor. 2:4

2. Instead, be humble and brotherly, treating your counselee with respect.
Mark 6:34 Matt. 9:35-36 Heb. 2:14-18 4:15 John 11:33-35
Acts 20:31 II Co. 2:4 4:28-29 I Th. 2:7-8 I Co. 13:7 Rom. 12:10 Phil. 2:3-4

3. Be careful not to fall into their sin! Gal. 6:1b Prov. 1:10f

a. Why might this happen?

b. What precautions should we take? Titus 2:3-5

c. Why shouldn't women counsel men? I Tim 2:12

4. **Don't become an emotional crutch - make them dependent upon God, not you!**
II Chron. 24:2

5. **Pray with and for your counselee. Phil. 1:3-4**

6. **Hope must be built from the earliest stages of counseling. I Cor. 10:13
Rom. 15:4-5,13 Phil. 1:6 II Cor. 5:17 Prov. 12:25 15:13 17:22 18:14
Mt. 11:28-30**
 - a. **What is our basis of hope? I Tim. 1:1**
 - b. **What is the nature of our hope? Heb. 11:1**
 - c. **What can be done to build hope?**
 - d. **Give manageable homework assignments to build hope.**

B. Investigation. Prov. 18:15

1. **Begin with a plan. Pr. 21:5**

2. **Don't jump to conclusions. Prov. 18:13 14:15**

3. **Learn to ask good questions and to listen. Pr. 20:5**

4. **Characteristics of good questions (see Mack p. 223f)**
 - a. **Thoughtful and gracious**
 - b. **Relevant**
 - c. **Produce facts**
 - d. **Open-ended**

5. **The PREACH principle for investigating**
 - a. **Physical: sleep, diet, exercise, drugs, alcohol, medications (Many psychotropic), caffeine II Co. 4:6 Ecc. 5:12**
 - b. **Resources: what help is available: church, family, friends: accountability?**
 - c. **Emotional: fear, worry, anxiety, bitterness, loneliness, depression, Anger**
 - d. **Action: Ps. 32 Gen. 4:5-8 Js. 1:22,25**
 - e. **Conceptual Mark 7:19-23 Eph. 4:23 Ro. 12:2 Heb. 4:12**
 - f. **Historical**

6. **Where possible, hear from all parties involved. Prov. 18:17**

7. **Not all problems are caused by personal sin.**
 - a. **Organic problems should be referred to physicians.**

 - b. **You may need to get the client stabilized physically before you can have a meaningful session - i.e. lack of sleep, under the influence.**

8. **One of the most important issues to determine is whether the counselee is a believer. I Jo. 5:1 2:3-4 4:7-8 Mt. 7:21-23**

9. **A tool - the Personal Data Inventory.**

10. **Also gather non-verbal data. Pr. 6:13 Gen. 4:5**

C. Interpretation. Rom. 12:2 Pr. 3:5-7

1. **After you have gathered adequate data, you need to draw some conclusions.**

2. **You need to evaluate your counselee's spiritual condition. I Th. 5:14**

3. **Often the counselee will not know what his problem is, or he will have incorrectly identified it. Pr. 14:12 16**

4. **You want to give biblical labels to the counselee's situation. Pr. 3:5-7**
 - a. **What biblical language best describes this person's problem?**

 - b. **What insights does the Bible give for the probable causes of such problems?**
Js. 4:1f

5. **Distinguish between the symptoms and the causes of problems.**

6. **Often your greatest challenge will be to sort out and prioritize the counselee's issues.**
7. **Problems stem from the heart. Jer. 17:5-10 Mark 7:18-23**

D. Instruction. II Tim. 3:16-17 Eph. 4:17-28

1. **Rely Upon the Inerrant and Powerful Word of God. Pr. 3:5-7**
 - a. **Handle the Scriptures carefully. Js. 3:1f II Tim. 2:15**
 - b. **Use texts for the purpose God gave them.**
2. **Prepare counseling outlines.**
3. **Teach interactively and creatively.**
4. **Teach redemptively (answers are in Christ). Rom 6:1f**
5. **You must deal firmly with sin. Eph. 4:17-22 I Thess. 5:14 I Jo. 1:8-10 Acts 20:31 Ga. 2:11 II Ti. 3:16-17 Mt. 5:21f**
6. **Sin must be repented of - put off. I John 1:9 Ps. 32:3-5 Prov. 28:13 Mt. 5:29-30 II Cor. 7:8-11**
7. **New life patterns must be established - put on. Eph. 4:22-28**
8. **Be careful not to be legalistic: commanding beyond what the Bible says.**
9. **Resources - The Christian Counselor's Manual, Helps for Counselors, (Adams)**

E. Intention. Luke 9:23-24 14:25-34 Phil. 2:12-13 Pr. 14:23

- 1. Counseling is more than instruction. Js. 1:22 Luke 14:25f**

- 2. The counselee is responsible to commit to obedience to God. II Co. 7:8-11**

- 3. Motives are crucial. Rom. 14:23 Col. 3:20**

What does real repentance look like? II Co. 7:8-11 Ps. 51

- 4. Deal with behavior, not mere feelings. The counselee must agree to obey God, whether he feels like it or not.**

- 5. Be prepared to meet with resistance. Mt. 21:28-30**

- 6. Continue to offer hope: faith in Christ works. Ro. 6:1-14 II Co. 5:17 Mk. 9:22-24 I Co. 10:13 John 15:5 Phil. 4:13**

- 7. If a counselee refuses to commit to do God's will, you may need to end the counseling relationship. Matt. 7:6 18:15-18 Pr. 13:15 29:1 II Th. 3:14**

F. Implementation.

- 1. The counselee cannot expect the counselor to change him. Phil. 2:12-13**

- 2. The counseling sessions are not ends in and of themselves.**
 - a. Action and obedience are needed. Mark 10:17-22**

 - b. Explain to your counselee how progressive sanctification works. Ro. 6:11 Eph. 4:22f Phil. 1:6**

3. **The greatest progress in counseling is made in between sessions.**
 - a. **Prepare for temptation: concrete steps: call someone, go outside, etc.**
II Tim. 2:22 Pr. 22:3
 - b. **Prepare for failures. I Jo. 1:9 Pr. 24:16 Ps. 43:5**
 - c. **Expect growth. II Co. 3:17-18**

4. **Concrete homework assignments should be given. Why give homework?**
 - a. **Actions and behavior. I Cor. 15:33 Pr. 13:20 Mt. 5:29-30 25:40**
Eph. 4:28

 - b. **Scripture reading and memory.**

 - c. **Christian books, pamphlets, and tapes.**

 - d. **Journals.**

 - e. **Other assignments.**

5. **Resource: A Homework Manual for Biblical Counseling I & II, (Mack)**

G. Integration.

1. **The structure of the local church should be used in maintaining accountability.**
 - a. **We do not want to become substitute psychologists (*professionals*).**

 - b. **Ideally, a pastor or other church leader should attend counseling.**

 - c. **Sometimes church discipline may be required. Matt. 18:15-17**

 - d. **What about confidentiality in counseling?**

2. **You are not seeking merely a solution to one problem, but a total restructuring of a life over the period of time.**

3. **New, godly habits are built over time. Eph. 4:13-14**

4. **The goal is that the counselee will be able to counsel himself and others. Gal. 6:6**

III. Conclusion.