



Criteria for Counseling

“What does the word ‘counseling’ mean?”

Counseling is help and hope given by a knowledgeable person to another. The counsel given can range from general advice and guidance to personal comfort and encouragement.

“For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 1:5)

“What qualifies you to give counsel?”

You already have relationships with friends and family, and you know their struggles.

*“Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,
and the pleasantness of a friend
springs from their heartfelt advice.”*
(Proverbs 27:9)

“Who needs counseling?”

More than one-half of all people who see medical doctors go because of symptoms rooted in psychological or spiritual problems.

*“The way of fools seems right to them,
but the wise listen to advice.”*
(Proverbs 12:15)

“Who is qualified to give biblically correct counsel?”

Any Christian who has a personal walk with God, who is deeply committed to Jesus Christ, and is led by the Holy Spirit is qualified to comfort and counsel others.

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God
of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles,
so that we can comfort those in any trouble with
the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”*
(2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

The Seven S’s of Spiritual Wisdom

1. The **solutions** are not your solutions. (John 14:26)
2. The **self-sufficiency** you lean on should be replaced with Christ-sufficiency. (John 15:5)
3. The **Spirit of Christ** is your counselor, enabling you to counsel with truth. (John 16:13)
4. The **Scriptures** will light the way as you help others walk out of darkness. (Psalm 119:105)
5. The **success** of your counseling is not dependent on your knowing all the answers. (Proverbs 3:5–6)
6. The **sin** of another should never be confronted with a condemning spirit. (1 Peter 3:15–16)
7. The **secret** of victory over sin is relying on the power of the indwelling presence of Christ. (Philippians 4:13)

Attitudes That Make a Difference

- **Respect** is communicated by having a basic belief that everyone is created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26)
- **Attentiveness** is communicated by closing the door to your own thoughts and focusing on listening and observing. (Proverbs 24:32)
- **Availability** is communicated by your willingness to give the other person your full presence and attention for an appropriate length of time. (Ecclesiastes 4:10)
- **Empathy** is communicated by entering into the other person’s world, both thinking the thoughts and feeling the emotions. (Romans 12:15)
- **Encouragement** is communicated by maintaining a spirit of hope and optimism. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Sincerity** is communicated by being yourself, being honest, and being vulnerable to another. (1 Timothy 1:5)

Questions and Answers

“I’ve been told that at times I help people more than I should. Why do I do that?”

Consider the following boundary issues:

- Could it be that allowing a needy person to be dependent on you makes you feel significant?
- Under the guise of being a “giving person,” are you being a modern-day martyr in order to attract attention?
- Do you ever think, *How could you do this to me after all I’ve done for you?*

Examine your motives. Pray to discern what the driving force is behind your need to help.

*“A person may think their own ways are right,
but the LORD weighs the heart.”*

(Proverbs 21:2)

“How much help is too much?”

If you are working harder than the person you are trying to help, you are not really helping. Your “help” has become a hindrance. Bailing out a person who continues to have financial crises ... or who continues a dependency on drugs ... is not smart. Giving too much “help” prevents a person from gaining valuable insights—lessons learned only through painful consequences. Quit bailing people out! Reaping what has been sown is often the best motivation to change.

*“Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked.
A man reaps what he sows.”*

(Galatians 6:7)

“How do you know when to stop working with those whose lifestyles are destructive?”

You cannot do the work for others that they need to do for themselves ... but you can give support. Stop trying to help them change until they prove they are serious about changing. You will know they are serious about change when they make an effort to change.

“Each one should carry their own load.”

(Galatians 6:5)

Key Verse to Memorize

“First seek the counsel of the LORD.”

(1 Kings 22:5)

Key Passage to Read

Proverbs 2:1–11

How to Be Set Free

Face the truth of your own negative behavior.

(Psalm 139:23)

Recognize which inner needs you are trying to meet by your negative attitude or action (love, significance, or security).

(Psalm 51:6)

Exchange trying to meet your own needs by allowing God to meet your needs. (Philippians 4:19)

Experience the inner power of Christ to be your source for change. (Philippians 4:13)

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

(John 8:36)

The Christian’s Identity

- **The Presence of Christ** is within you. (Colossians 1:27)
- **The Power of Christ** works through you. (2 Peter 1:3)
- **The Character of Christ** is reproduced in you. (Romans 8:29)
- **The Life of Christ** is reflected through you. (2 Corinthians 4:11)

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body,
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

(Galatians 2:20)

Practical Counseling: How Do I Do It?

Physical Preparation

- Provide a private, relaxing place to talk.
- Eliminate distractions.
- Prevent interruptions.
- Avoid physical barriers.
- Change lighting to reduce glare.
- Keep counseling aids handy.
- Place facial tissues and drinking water within reach.

Personal Nonverbal Nurturing

- Smile when greeting.
- Shake hands or use another appropriate greeting.
- Situate chairs in close proximity.
- Slant your body slightly forward.

- Sustain good eye contact.
- Stay open and approachable.
- Show a nod of head occasionally.

Probe for the Real Problem

- Call the person by name.
- Don't engage in small talk or surface chitchat.
- Ask a direct question.
- Don't ask, "What's your problem?"
- Realize that the presenting problem is often not the real problem.
- Above all else, communicate hope.

Past Experiences

- Ask background questions regarding family, home, school, dating, and work.
- Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered with *yes* or *no*.
- Encourage further talk.
- Listen to what feelings are being shared.
- Listen to what is not shared.
- Don't ask a question that contains the answer.
- Explore messages received during childhood and youth from significant people.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- Don't give false assurances.
- Don't minimize the experience.
- Don't fail to consult/refer to professionals.
- Don't take death threats lightly.
- Don't drop advice.
- Don't take over the role of "savior."

Plan to Address These Needs

- Love
- Significance
- Security

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"
(John 8:32).

*"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders;
make the most of every opportunity.
Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt,
so that you may know how to answer everyone."*
(Colossians 4:5-6)

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If you would like more information, biblical counsel, or prayer support, contact:
1-800-488-HOPE (4673)
www.HopeForTheHeart.org

The information in this resource is intended as guidelines for healthy living. Please consult qualified medical, legal, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual concerns.

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