

SEMINAR PAPER ON

**HOW TO COUNSEL:
A METAPHYSICAL ASPECT OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Abstract

Many people in our society are wallowing in great agony as a result of problems that are serving as heavy loads on them. This paper focused on how best to counsel such people using the Christian counseling approach. The paper looked into what Christian counseling is, the qualities of a Christian counselor, some basic skills needed for effective Christian counseling. The paper concluded by explaining how to counsel people with different over-whelming problems.

How to Counsel

The Oxford dictionary defines counseling as to advise or to give advice to people professionally on social problems. Christian counseling however, is the ministry of a Christian that is seeking to help another person with the problems of living (Spiritually and physically).

The ministry is a bit demanding but it is an assignment successfully carried out by Our Lord Jesus Christ therefore because He lives we can surely be the same. The counselor is expected to have met Jesus Christ i.e. he/she should be born again, living entirely for the glorification of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no need for us to go into counseling if we have not truly given our lives to the Lord. A Christian who has committed his life to Christ and has been called into this ministry is always willing through the power of the Holy Spirit to get others firmly rooted in Christ and in solving some of their problems.

Christian counseling is very distinct. It differs from other forms of counseling in many ways.

First, is the fact that it is based on God's word which is the surest standard for the individual, the family and the society at large. Adam (1975) stressed that the word of God is the basic instrument needed for effective counseling.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is the counselor. He is the one that reveals the root problem, He convicts sinners of their sins. He alone restores broken relationships, and comforts the disturbed. The ability and strength needed for the assignment comes from Him. No thorough counseling can be done except by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, Christian counseling differs from other forms of counseling because prayer is depended upon for a good result. It is the only key by which all hidden problems are manifested and the surest way of getting the problems solved.

Qualities of a Christian Counsellor

A Christian counselor must possess the following qualities. Apart from the fact that he has yielded his life to God, he must be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. This is because it is not possible to unseat the devil and establish men and women in the Lord, except by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, He comes in to live in us, but we need to ask Him, the Baptiser to Baptise us with His Holy Spirit. This is an indispensable experience for every Christian counselor.

A Christian counselor should be able to handle God's word correctly, closeness to God and to His word will help us to explain God's word correctly. We need to study God's word regularly and meditatively. We should form the habit of memorizing some verses which the Holy Spirit will remind us anytime we need them. In 2 Tim 2:15, we are told of how Timothy got himself acquainted with the sacred writings from childhood, no wonder, he was a successful minister of God. It is to be noted, that when the word of God dwells in us it becomes very easy to recall them when the need arises.

A Christian counselor must be very prayerful. God has given us this noble assignment, we need to be in constant prayers. In fact, it is not possible for us to receive from God and disseminate the message to others except we are in tune with God in prayers. Flesh predominates all our counseling programmes when we refuse to pray and anything that is done in the flesh is a waste. We should therefore as Christian counselors hand everything over to God, wait on Him, and allow Him to have His way by praying on a regular basis. Orosa, (1988) pointed out that Christians need to ask God to expose them to the realities of His heart so that they will in turn become effective in His service.

A Christian counselor should be full of compassion, warmth and sincerity. We are not to be callous, but full of emotion, always feeling for others, loving and willing to draw others to ourselves, not dubious but transparent. We are expected to be intercessors,

i.e standing in the gap for our counselees and for other people and be willing to meet their needs where and when possible.

A Christian counselor is the one that is able to keep confidentiality. Someone that can be depended upon. Not a busybody, not someone that gossip around but a Christian that could be trusted (Popoola 1998).

How to Develop a Climate of Trust

For our counselors to confide in us, a climate of trust must first be developed. To ensure this, we should always accept our counselors very warmly. We should show them love, get interested in everything that concerns them. Anytime we are to meet them, we should endeavor to choose a comfortable place that is free from distractions, privacy must be ensured.

Before we go into any discussion we should first try to put our counselee at ease by smiling to him/her treating him/her as a friend we should entertain him/her with whatever we can afford out it could be ordinary water, there is a reward for that. Whatever we give should be from a willing heart not out of compulsion and not grudgingly. We should be ready to spend quality time with our counselee.

Although efforts should be made to be friendly, over familiarity should be avoided. We should relax and allow our counselee to open up, while he/she talks, we should take note of his/her non-verbal actions. As Christian counselors, we should try to guard against the tendency of talking too much. Do not dominate the discussion rather the counselee should be allowed to express his mind endeavor to feel his emotion and respond accordingly.

We should not hesitate to tell our counselee that we shall keep confidence. Build his faith by letting him/her know the power and the readiness of God to deliver those He has made in His own image from the bondage of the devil. Also, let him/her know that all your discussions and suggestions are based on Gods words making use of relevant passages.

We should assure our counselee that we shall not force our will on him and that he has to decide for himself the course of action. However we should assure him/her of our friendship and availability.

As much as possible, we should set a time limit to keep to our schedule and priorities but in doing this we have to be flexible and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We should endeavour to pace our counseling, other appointments can be made if necessary. We must avoid sudden or abrupt termination, this could easily be interpreted as rejection. Many of us are guilty of the inability to get our counselees rooted in Christ before we abandon them.

How to Use Some Basic Skills

(1) listening

As counselors we should bear in mind the fact that sympathetic listening can be therapeutic. We have to take note of his/her tone of voice and other nonverbal communication. We should not interrupt the counselee while he talks. As we listen with rapt attention, we should gradually weight what we hear, listen to God, and wait for signal to speak. Remember, the Bible says we should be quick to hear but slow to speak.

Asking Questions

There is hardly anyway we can get some issues clarified without asking some questions from our client or counselee. In asking questions, we should avoid a series of questions because these could be threatening. Questions asked should be carefully selected, it should be relevant to the issues being considered. We have to avoid "either/ or" questions because such questions tend to terminate dialogue with simple answers. It is possible for us to use the counselees words to get the questions across e.g "Did you say you confess or "

How to let the Holy Spirit be the Counsellor

Jesus Christ in the book of John 14 and 16 pointed out that He would send us another counselor who would teach and tell us all things. The Holy Spirit is undoubtedly the true counselor. To ensure effective counseling, we have to invite the Holy Spirit to lead in everything we shall be discussing with our counselee.

The Holy Spirit is God, He knows the mind of God the Father, He will give to us whatever He receives from the Father. Counseling that is devoid of the Holy Spirit is self-directed, such counseling is always fruitless, baseless and worthless. We have to pray and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal other controlling Spirits, habitual sins and other root problems. These revelations will ease our job and also help to set the counselee at liberty. As soon as we receive any revelation from the Holy Spirit, we should verify with the counselee. We should not speak our own words but the words given by the Holy Spirit. This could be a godly counsel, a scripture or word of wisdom.

How to Counsel those with Relationship Problem

At one time or the other we have had some problems with our spouses, relations, in-laws e.t.c. this is a common problem everywhere, in fact at this end-time the devil is all out to wreck families. Therefore, as counselors, we have a lot of work to do. Many will bring family problems to us for solutions. What should be borne in mind is that, it takes the grace of God for anyone to overcome the root of bitterness, and rancour that the devil has planted in the heart of many against their spouses, relations and colleagues.

It is possible for us to meet people that need to be helped to overcome problems such as personal hatred for some people bitterness, unforgiving spirit e.t.c. The first thing to consider is to encourage such people to repent of their sins and turn to Christ. Let them know all that Jesus taught about forgiveness by referring them to the following passages: I Jn 2:11, Matt 6:14-15, Luke 18:9-14, Heb 12:13.

Encourage such people to overcome evil with good, to bless their enemies instead of cursing, they should, with all humility forgive others, live at peace with their enemies and allow God to revenge. Rom 12:14-21. they should also be encouraged to make love their aim in dealing with all men. Wives should be encouraged to submit to their husbands, and husbands should love their wives as Jesus loves church and gave Himself for her.

To our leaders, senior and bosses respect and honour must be displayed as we have it discussed in Eph 6:5-9 and Rome 13:1-7. Counselee should be encouraged to forgive from the heart and forget. They are to apologize as soon as possible and accept others. Failure to do this will lead to hell fire, the importance of these vital steps should be made known to the counselee. Matt 18:21-35, Luke 18:21 Rom 15:5-7.

How to Counsel a Person that is Bereaved

The issue of bereavement is common to all and sundry, we experience this in our lives at one time or the other. In counseling someone who is bereaved we should make sure we don't prevent him/her from expressing sorrow but go on to help him accept the reality of the loss. The scripture will help him to know the following:

That death is inevitable Eec. 3:2

That Jesus shared our sorrows Jn 11:25-20

That there is the hope of resurrection I Thess 4:13-18.

The justice and mercy of God for God understands his plight and He knows how to deliver him because He loves him Rom 8:28.

When and where possible, give practical help such as accommodation finance and companionship.

Someone Having Terminal Sickness

The fact that we want to exercise our faith in God and receive divine healing for the sick should not prevent us from ministering the truth to someone having a terminal sickness. We should first discern the person's emotional stage and attitude e.g. denial, anger, depression, e.t.c. make effort to point him to the Lord, let him understand the reality of life and death, comfort him through scriptures. He/she must be helped to experience the assurance of forgiveness and renewal of inner nature and hope of glory 2 Cor 4:16-18 1Cor 15:42-44. We can give practical help e.g further visitation, finances, prayer supports e.t.c.

Someone Attempting Suicide

This is not too common here in Nigeria, however if we come across such cases, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we have to distinguish between a severely depressed person with definite suicidal plans and one who has a suicidal threat. We should then concentrate on putting together the information we receive from the person in distress and boldly ask the person his intention. Such counselee should not be challenged but be allowed to talk. We should show concern and share the hope that awaits him in Christ.

The counselee should be given further counseling through the following scriptures:

Jn 3:16 - Jesus loves him so much

Matt 4:35-41 - Jesus is able to help him.

Isaiah 49:13-16 - He is precious to God and that he is made in God's image.

Prov 8:35 - That when he finds God, he finds life He could be referred to professional counselors.

Unexpected Crisis Failure, Accidents, Premature Retrenchment

Jesus has always been our comforter, a leader that cares for His sheep Michael, (1986). For this reason, encourage the person to see the sovereignty and overruling providence of God. Rom 8:28 Focus on claiming the love of God and His care and hope in God that never disappoints and never too late. Help the person to see things in perspective and what step to take a head and pray with him. Counsel him through the following scriptures;

Eph 3:20 - God is able

I Peter 5:7 - God cares

Matt 6:26 - He is precious to God.

Ps 50: 15, Phil 4: 6-7 The power of prayer

Ps 68: 19 – Renew his trust in God give practical help e.g part- time jobs financial and other assistance.

As earlier mentioned, this noble assignment cannot be successfully carried out expect through prayers. The importance of prayer in getting convert rooted in Christ and in helping to solve the world endless problems cannot be underestimated. Prayer is the key that unlock the doors of heaven, we should always prepare ourselves in prayers. As prayer warriors, because we are in a battle with the devil, he stands to hinder the execution of the assignment by attacking us. Therefore adequate preparations should be made in prayers. Our counselees should be encouraged to cultivate the habit of praying of God on a constant basis for solution to his problems and for the establishment of a good relationship between God and himself. Jesus Christ our Lord, our greatest example successfully counseled many people while He was on earth. He counseled Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the woman caught in adultery and a host of other by allowing the Holy Spirit to dominate and direct the counseling sessions. He knew the counselee background, he met them at the time when they needed him most, He allowed His counselees to open up to Him, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were demonstrated by Him and He used several sure strategies to present the gospel and to drive home all His points. No wonder all the people He counseled knew the Lord and because blessings to others. Many were rehabilitated, saved as He allowed the Holy Spirit to discern their needs. He did not allow any opportunity to slip by. We have a great task before us but as long as He who has called us is on the throne, we shall succeed.

Conclusion

Christian counselors have much to do in ameliorating the problems of many in our society. Our prayers should be geared towards the realization of the goals set before us as Christian counselors, we should not sleep while it is day. Let us pray to God for the removal of all lukewarmness and non-challant attitudes that hinders God work in our lives. May God help us to be devoted to the course of the gospel in Jesus name (Amen).

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