

Choosing a Biblical Counselor...

We would like to help you find a reliable *Biblical Counselor*. The following are guidelines that will help you discern important issues before choosing any counselor.

Steps you should take:

- **Pray.** Ask God for wisdom. God promises to give you wisdom if you ask for it in faith (James 1:5-8). As you step out in faith, He will direct your steps to the right counselor. (Psalm 23, Proverbs 16:3 and Philippians 4:6-9.)
- **Seek Guidance.** If you belong to a church, seek the input from your pastor (Heb. 13:17) and other church leaders, as well as wise, trustworthy Christian friends. *Can they help you? Is there someone they would recommend?* The Bible teaches there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; and 24:6). If you do not have a church home, seek out godly, Bible-believing Christians to recommend wise & godly pastors who can help shepherd you. If you are trying to find Biblical counsel outside the church, ask lots of questions.

Suggested questions you should ask of a potential Counselor:

To help clarify what a counselor believes and how he/she will conduct the counseling sessions, ask the prospective counselor some questions on the phone before or during your first session. The type of counselor you will want is one who is humble and fully committed to the Sufficiency and Authority of Scripture. They should be willing to clarify what source they are trusting (e.g. Biblical, Behavioral, Cognitive, Integration, et al.). Below several helpful clarifying questions...

- 1) *What is your theological training / education?*
- 2) *What is your training/background in biblical studies?*
- 3) *How would you describe your approach to counseling?*

(All counselors will have a model from which they work– This includes training and theories that they have embraced, and will most likely determine how they will go about counseling you.)

- 4) *What do you think makes your counseling distinctively Christian or biblical?*
- 5) *How do you understand people's problems?*

(Another way to ask is “What framework do you use in understanding people and their problems?”)

- 6) *Please describe your understanding of the process of change?*

(What is involved in a person's life changing? What means are used to measure progress?)

- 7) *How do you help someone change and grow through counseling?*

(What role do you take as you try to help someone change through counseling?)

- 8) *What are your expectations for the counselee? What role do they play in the process? They are actively and continuously involved in the pursuit, effort and obedience of God's Word?*
- 9) *What role do the Bible, prayer, and the Holy Spirit play in your counseling?*
- 10) *Do you believe the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice?*

- 11) *Describe your understanding of the relationship of the physical and spiritual nature of people (Basic nature of man)?*
- 12) *How long does the counseling process typically take? How do you know when to stop?*
- 13) *Talk about your standard for thinking and behavior?*
- 14) *What are your goals in helping someone change?*
(What is the end result of counseling with you? How will we know when we are done?)
- 15) *What books have most influenced your approach to counseling?*
(This will reveal much about what philosophy the counselor is trusting.)
- 16) *What books or other resources do you recommend on a regular basis? Why?*
(These reveal much about what direction the counseling will be headed.)
- 17) *What is your educational and professional background? What role do these play?*
(To what degree is the counselor relying on any secular training? Do they have any theological education)
- 18) *Are you a Christian? What does that mean to you?*
(...this is asked at this point in time to freely gather fair answers on previous questions)
- 19) *How does your faith affect your view and practice of counseling?*
(To what degree is the counselor relying on God, the Holy Spirit, faith, the Word?)
- 20) *Do you pray with those you counsel?*
- 21) *Do you believe in the sufficiency of Scripture? What does that mean?*
- 22) *Do you attend church? If so, where? How long have you been a member?*
- 23) *Are you married? Do you have children? How does your marriage and family situation affect how you counsel people?*
- 24) *Does the counseling focus on the Lord?*
- 25) *Does it encourage others to become preoccupied with self? Others? Circumstances?... or the past?*
- 26) *Where is there hope to be found?*
- 27) *Does your counseling develop faith in the Lord?*
- 28) *Does it bring spiritual stamina from the Lord?*
- 29) *How can problems be overcome? How can they be resolved?*
- 30) *What is offered to struggling believers?*
- 31) *What do you think has to be given in each session even starting from the first session?*
- 32) *What do you try to get someone to understand?*
- 33) *Why do people have problems?*
- 34) *What are the assumptions of your counseling?*

- 35) *Where do you keep a person's focus?*
- 36) *What is required from the counselee during the counseling process?*
- 37) *What terminology do you use?*
- 38) *Will you lay aside human wisdom and rely totally upon the Word of God?*
- 39) *How often do you study God's Word?*
- 40) *Would you consider the Bible your supreme authority and resource within your counseling ministry? Not simply a footnote or filter, but the very source from which all of your counseling emerges.*
- 41) *When was the last time you read a good book on theology? Compare this to the last time you read a book on counseling?*
- 42) *Does your view of human nature, behavior and motivation come from theology or from theory?*

Question to ask YOURSELF after receiving counseling...

1. Does the counseling you are getting leave you with your focus more on Christ than yourself and others?
2. Does it leave you headed forward rather than dwelling endlessly on past offenses?
3. If it probes back into hurts of the past (that is sometimes legitimate), does it do so with a view toward leaving you at the foot of the cross, and moving forward into a productive Christian life?
4. Does it leave you throwing yourself into ministry to others, rather than withdrawing into pity parties and preoccupation with yourself?
5. Does it leave you more willing to obey God and follow him wholeheartedly?
6. Does it leave you coming to terms with your full responsibility for sin so you can confess and repent of it, leave it behind and experience the grace and healing of God?
7. Does it leave you trusting God more rather than trusting Him less?

A few suggested qualities to look for in a Counselor:

- Leads a godly life and can give testimony of a growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ 1 Tim 4:16
- Aligns theologically with your beliefs 1 Peter 3:8.
- Growing in faith, their relationship with Christ, becoming more and more like Christ 2 Peter 3:18.
- Is likeable; we should want to be around them, Ephesians 4:2.
- Has a biblically healthy family life. Ephesians 5.
- Has the appropriate biblical skills and training (doctrine, theological truths, biblical principles, skills of ministering the Word, encouragement, restoring people to a place of spiritual service...) 1 Thess 5:14

- Able to persevere through tough times without losing heart. (Heb. 12:3)
- Has full assurance that Jesus can bring change no matter what the issue. (Phil. 1:6)
- Believes that God's Word is given by God - to provide sufficient counsel for all of life's issues. (2 Pet. 1:2-4; Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Someone your pastor (or wise & godly Christian friend) believes would provide wise, biblical, loving, and faithful counsel.

If it does all this, it's doing good. If it doesn't, it's time to reevaluate.

Remember...

Counseling is an interactive and relational process, and you must take responsibility in the relationship. A counseling relationship, as is true with all relationships, is established and maintained on the basis of trust. Open and honest dialogue between a counselor and a counselee is the most important component of building trust. If you cannot establish this foundation early on, establishing that the Counselor will be wise, biblical, loving, and faithful in your interaction, you may need to look elsewhere. If you find a wise counselor who uses God's Word to help you grow in your Christian walk, your future will be blessed! Psalm 1:1-3