

Biblical Counseling Training for Lay Counselors

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Session 00 - Overview (NIV based)

[NOTE: Due to its volume of content, this document may take several meeting sessions in order to adequately teach, discuss, comprehend, and digest all of the information contained herein.]

Introduction

- A. Definition of 'lay counseling': True believers, who have no college or seminary degree in counseling, conducting biblical counseling within the purview and oversight of an established church. [NOTE: Author Jay E. Adams has written several books that excellently and extensively describe biblical counseling.]
- B. Purpose of this series - to train and equip laypersons to serve the church, the body of Christ, through lay counseling.

I. Goals of Lay Counseling

- A. To equip laypersons to handle some of the counseling needs in their church (Eph. 4:11-15).
- B. To be a ministry of and service to the church:
 - 1. be under the authority of and accountable to the church and the church leadership, while maintaining accordance with government laws;
 - 2. seek to assist and work with pastors and church leaders (who typically are already overworked);
 - 3. avoid or reduce the potential for legal, ethical, and moral liability:
 - a. stay within the level of the lay counselor's competence and make referrals as the situation warrants;
 - b. not advertise or promote themselves as a "Counselor" or "Therapist";
 - c. decline charging any compensation for counseling services rendered.
- C. To facilitate lasting godly change in the life of the counselee.

II. Theory used in Lay Counseling

- A. Defining the problem from a biblical perspective
 - 1. SIN:
 - a. sin frequently is present in and a significant negative influence of causing many counseling problems (Jam. 4:17; Rom. 3:23);
 - b. sin comes naturally (Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 6:19; 1:32,30,24);
 - c. there can be a lack of control over sin (Rom. 6:5-7, 20; Eph. 2:3);
 - d. and there can be entrapment in bondage to serve sin (Rom. 6:11-17; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Eph. 2:1-3);
 - e. the Bible is God's instruction book that prescribes its teaching, counseling, and application as the solution for sin problems (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - 2. BATTLE occurring on a spiritual level:
 - a. against the inherent sinful nature (or flesh) (Gal. 5:16-18);
 - b. against the supra-human negative power-filled activities of the Kingdom of Darkness (Eph. 6:12; 2:1-2).
- B. Reaching the goal from a biblical perspective
 - 1. Ultimate goal: God desires for the counselee to become a godly servant - Matt. 28:18-20.
 - 2. The means to reach the goal: utilizing DIVINELY ORCHESTRATED PERSONALITY TRANSFORMATION.
 - a. Penetrate and break down the counselee's resistance, and win him/her over to the things of God; Hebrews 4:12 - "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."
 - b. Demolish various strongholds of sin - (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 6:22; Prov. 10:3); [NOTE: 'Strongholds of sin' is further discussed in 'Session 03' of this 'Biblical Counseling Training Series for Lay Counselors'. For additional in-depth information on strongholds, see Chapters 5 and 6 in the E-book "Children Of Fire" on the 'Counseling' web-page of this web-site, www.BelieverAssist.com.]
 - c. Intervene, persuade, and accomplish repentance (2 Tim. 2:25; Eph. 1:18).
 - d. Transform by the renewing of the mind (Gal. 5:22-24; Ps. 51:6);
Rom. 12:2 - "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the

renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is --his good, pleasing and perfect will."

e. Motivate to change (Jn. 16:8; 14:16-17,26; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:17; Col. 3:23-24).

f. Accomplish spiritual growth and make a fruit-bearing disciple (1 Cor. 3:6-7; 2 Tim. 1:7; Eph. 3:20; Jn 15:16).

3. The need for fertile conditions in the heart of the counselee (Ps. 51:16-17; Jam. 4:7-10).

4. The need for the right person(s) to engage in counseling the counselee (2 Tim. 2:24-26; Lk. 5:17-26).

5. The need for the right approach that collaborates with God (2 Tim. 3:16; Prov. 14:12; Col. 2:8).

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NIV) - "24. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26. and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."

III. Preparations for Lay Counseling

A. Prerequisite Qualifications for the Lay Counselor:

1. must have faith in Jesus Christ, that He died on the cross to pay the punishment for one's own sins, and that He rose from the dead on the third day (Jn. 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4);
2. have his/her life right with the Lord - walking in righteousness and devotion to God without hypocrisy;
3. minimally have a general knowledge of sound basic Bible doctrines;
4. be gifted and empowered by God for this kind of ministry: good listener; patient; able to teach; discerning; possesses the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23; has a positive demeanor; etc.;
5. have proper basic training in lay counseling;
6. possesses personal firsthand experience in gaining victory over areas of sin in his/her own life;
7. be comfortable doing evangelism, teaching the Word of God, and applying biblical principles;
8. be flexible, available, and desirous to do lay counseling.

B. Arranging for a lay counseling session

1. Connect with a person who seeks counseling and is willing to meet with a lay counselor.
2. Select a suitable environment with:
 - a. sufficient time for both the counselor and the counselee;
 - b. privacy, where there preferably will be no distractions or interruptions;
 - c. adequate comfort.
3. Bring necessary supplies:
 - a. enough Bibles - in the same translation;
 - b. concordance; 'quick verse reference list' [NOTE: To assist counselors during a counseling session to quickly find a Bible verse that applies to a particular kind of problem of the counselee, a printable "Quick List of Bible References" is available on the 'Counseling' web-page of this web-site, www.BelieverAssist.com.];
 - c. paper, pens, pencils - for taking notes, making drawings, worksheets, prayer lists, bookmarks, assigning homework, etc.

IV. The Lay Counseling Session

A. Assessing the counselee's situation

1. Gathering data:
 - a. let him/her tell his/her story (or update) about the problem(s) he/she is having;
 - b. when necessary, help him/her stay on topic;
 - c. ask questions to attain clarification;
 - d. ask questions to attain examples of what the counselee means.
2. Taking notes:
 - a. the purpose of taking notes is for review, reference, and documenting progress;
 - b. protect confidentiality - obtain counselee's approval if the need arises to share the counselee's information with someone else;
 - c. write brief descriptions;
 - d. record relevant basic or important facts;
 - e. write down clues to other suspected and yet-undisclosed problems, areas of sin, or root causes that may need to be dealt with in future counseling sessions;
 - f. record significant quotations;
 - g. record a summarization of the history / background of each issue / problem.

B. Assessing the counselee's spiritual condition or level

1. An unbeliever - does not actually believe in Jesus to save himself/herself from the punishment of his/her own sins (1 Jn. 5:11-13).
 - a. Tips to help the counselor reasonably suspect that the counselee is not a believer:
 - 1) without coaching the counselee for the correct answer, when asking the counselee on what basis should he/she be granted admittance into heaven, he/she generates an answer that is based on anything other than solely of faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for his/her own sins (Jn. 14:6; 3:16);
 - 2) in reality, he/she does not accept the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14);
 - 3) he/she does not substantially exhibit any of the "fruit of the Spirit", as cited in Galatians 5:22-23;
 - 4) despite repeated admonishment, he/she is knowingly and willfully living in direct rebellious or defiant wickedness to God's Word (Matt. 18:15-17);
 - 5) he/she denies ever having sinned, or claims that he/she does not sin (1 Jn. 1:10).
 - b. Be prepared and watch for an opportunity to present the gospel and lead the counselee to place his/her faith in Christ for salvation from the eternal punishment for his/her own sins (evangelism).
[NOTE: The topic of "Presenting The Gospel" is addressed in 'Session 02' of this 'Biblical Counseling Training Series For Lay Counselors'. Also note that Biblical counseling essentially does not work on unbelievers. They do not have acceptance from God, nor a relationship with God, nor access to God's power, nor motivation to obey God. Therefore, it is futile to expect that they will readily understand, accept, and embrace obeying God until they get saved.]
1 Corinthians 2:14 - "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."
2. A believer - but is in a troublesome spiritual condition, such as being: carnal; backslidden; enslaved to sin and defeated; struggling; mistreated; abused; confused; misguided; deceived; in a difficult or no-win predicament; unsure what to do; making poor choices and decisions; believing false or erroneous doctrine(s); stunted in spiritual immaturity; and etc.

C. Identifying counseling issues, problems, topics, hidden issues, trauma, etc.

1. The presenting problem:
 - a. presented as simple but may be quite complex;
 - b. contains hidden crucial facts or details that need to be uncovered;
 - c. is not correctly understood by the counselee;
 - d. may be intrinsically linked to other seemingly unrelated issues.
2. Get a sufficient history.
3. Look for links of present behaviors / thinking to past events.
4. Look for issues with God.
5. Look for root causes / motivations / originating hurtful event(s).
6. Look for untruths and unreality.
7. Distinguish between 'needs' and 'wants'.
8. Distinguish between 'choices' and 'facts' in life.
9. Avoid getting bogged down in exploring issues and in merely putting a bandage on the symptoms.
10. As any newly-disclosed issues or clues to issues arise, make notations about them, in order to explore and deal with them later.
11. In order to avoid suffering further pain, counselees tend to avoid disclosing traumatic events until confidence in the counselor has been solidly established.

D. Prioritizing issues

1. Sort through all of the issues to identify the ones that by their nature necessitate immediate attention.
2. Place high priority on addressing particularly the dangerous or destructive problems first:
 - a. even though the counselee may be pressing for his/her own agenda or priority of issues;
 - b. the immediate goal is to neutralize all physical danger and stabilize any serious crisis situations first, before devoting counseling time on other matters - i.e. put out the big forest fires first before working on the little fires;
 - c. as necessary, perform triage - stop the profuse hemorrhaging first;
 - d. requires alertness, discernment, and wise management of time in the counseling session.
3. Next, depending on the counselee's receptivity, start addressing the lesser-serious issues that seem to support or contribute to the strength or prevalence of the high priority issues.
4. For the long-term, strive toward thoroughly covering all aspects of all issues (as appropriate and

feasible).

E. Formulating a diagnosis

1. After acquiring from the counselee a significant amount of data relating to his/her problem, ask yourself, "What is the real (or big) issue here?"
2. Organize and analyze the data and symptoms to construct a tentative diagnosis.
3. Determine and take into account the role of emotions on the counselee's thinking and behaviors.
4. Allow room for modification of the diagnosis as more data is acquired.

F. Formulating a treatment plan

1. Ask the counselee what he/she has tried, to solve his/her problems.
2. Consider whether medical intervention is needed.
3. Analyze how the counselee's behavior(s) affect or benefit him/her.
4. Assess the counselee's support network (family members, relatives, or friends who are helpful).
5. As applicable, consider your own past personal and/or counseling experiences that are somewhat similar to what the counselee is experiencing.
6. Make a biblical analysis of the counselee's entire situation.
7. Consider, determine, or find a biblical solution - how God wants the counselee to respond to his/her problems that have brought him/her to counseling.
8. From that biblical solution, construct an initial treatment plan that proceeds along that biblical solution and includes corresponding immediate accomplishable action-steps for the counselee to take.
9. Particularly in the first session, communicate to the counselee what the treatment strategy is in general, without disclosing the specifics and details of the treatment plan, because the counselee may not be ready at this point to be receptive to what God wants him/her to do or change. This communicating of the 'treatment strategy in general' gives the counselee hope that through the counseling, he/she will arrive at a suitable remedying solution.
10. Modify the treatment plan as needed, and/or as the counseling process unfolds.
11. The rate at which the treatment plan is implemented will depend primarily upon the counselee's willingness to cooperate with the treatment plan - i.e. willingness and resolve to submit to God (Jam. 4:7-10).

G. Giving godly counsel

1. Start with where the counselee is at, in regard to the most pressing priority aspect of his/her current situation that has brought him/her to seek counseling.
2. When addressing a problem or issue, have the counselee discover and list options of how to proceed in solving or remedying the problem or issue; then discuss the probable outcome of each option that the counselee lists.
3. Restructure the problem to view it from God's perspective, and then walk the counselee through a process of rediscovering his/her problem from God's perspective, so that he/she will take ownership in the solution that God prescribes in the Scriptures.
4. Give hope - because God wants to help - but in God's way.
5. Keep advice clear, uncomplicated and as simple as possible, understandable and not confusing.
6. ALL advice should ALWAYS be aligned with and agreeable with Scriptures.
7. The best advice will be based upon Scriptures or upon biblical principles from the Scriptures.
8. Whenever possible, use the Scriptures to, in a sense, give advice from God.
9. Assist the counselee in implementing the following general biblical steps for addressing issues, for the counselee:
 - a. to become agreeable to and reliant on utilizing prayer and the Word of God extensively throughout the entire treatment process of each issue;
 - b. to accept the identification(s) of what the nature of the issue is, for examples, if the issue contains one or more of the following: sin; stronghold of sin; addiction; lie; falsehood; deceived; misbelief; misperception; misguided; false or erroneous doctrine; mistreatment; abuse; unforgiveness; etc.;
 - c. to consider carefully, sincerely, and thoroughly the truth from God's Word regarding the issue and its nature;
 - d. to change his/her mind and turn away from responding in his/her manner to the issue and its nature, and instead replace it with believing and applying what God says in His Word about how to respond in God's manner to the issue and its nature (Eph. 4:22-24);
 - e. in prayer, to present to the Lord this change of mind and response to the issue and its nature, and confess to Him any sins that he/she committed in regard to this issue and its

nature (1 Jn. 1:9);

- f. to terminate all involvement in responding to the issue and its nature in his/her manner, including getting rid of all of its trappings and paraphernalia;
 - g. to continue to persistently pray against his/her previous manner of responding to the issue and its nature, that he/she does not like his/her previous manner, that he/she is taking a stand against engaging in his/her previous manner, and that he/she is resolutely committed to now and henceforth responding in the manner that God says in His Word (Eph. 6:11-13);
 - h. in prayer, to ask the Lord to break off and remove any involvement that the Kingdom of Darkness has been exerting in he/she regarding this issue and its nature (v.29 in Mark 9:14-29);
 - i. meanwhile, to comprehensively put on new righteous thinking and behaviors, establishing and consistently maintaining disciplines of the faith, such as: daily personal devotions of prayer and Bible studying; regular church attendance; pursuing holiness and righteous living; growing in the knowledge of basic doctrines of the faith; and serving the Lord;
 - j. to stay alert and diligent against re-indulging in responding to the issue and its nature in his/her previous manner again (relapse);
 - k. to agreeably cooperate with follow-up, that searches for, digs out, identifies, and addresses any affiliated or tentacled issues and their nature, including any corresponding root cause(s) that occurred prior in history, and deal with them in the same manner.
- 10. Crossing over from merely observing the suffering of the counselee to actually feeling the suffering of the counselee can cloud counseling skills, objectivity, reasoning, etc.
 - 11. Discourage dependence upon the counselor.
 - 12. Continue the counseling as long as the counselee is willing to work on his/her issues.

H. Possible reasons for stalled treatment

- 1. The counselee is not a true believer - has not been "born again" (v.3 in Jn. 3:1-18).
- 2. The counselee and/or counselor is not aware that a sufficiently-powerful hindering issue or stronghold is present in the counselee's life.
- 3. The counselee does not regard the hindering issue or stronghold as a threat or a problem.
- 4. The hindering issue or stronghold is too strong or too entrenched to overcome yet.
- 5. Deep down inside, the counselee loves the hindering issue or stronghold, and in reality wants to keep it even though he/she knows it is wrong. He/she is not ready to have it removed and he/she lacks adequate motivation to battle it properly.
- 6. The counselee and/or counselor lacks correct knowledge or strategy of how to get the hindering issue or stronghold removed biblically.
- 7. The hindering issue or stronghold is inseparably linked or tentacled to other hindering issues or strongholds and root causes or motivations that must be dealt with as well. (It is a common mistake to prematurely assume that a hindering issue or stronghold has been completely dealt with and removed.)
- 8. The counselee has not been adequately maintaining his/her devotional life and disciplines of the faith; he/she has not been putting on new righteous behaviors and thinking, to replace the stronghold and/or meet his/her needs.
- 9. There is something blocking the process that is either very traumatic, powerful, or compelling, such as for examples: fear of harm to someone; a crime or criminal activity; gross sin; experience(s) of past severe abuse or torture, with repressed memory; military combat; and etc.
- 10. There is a hindering issue(s) between the counselee and the counselor.
- 11. The counselee has a fundamental personality defect, for examples such as dissociation (split personality), schizophrenia (lost touch with reality), and etc.; personality defect should be suspected if the counselee may have endured severe abuse, particularly as a child (in the age range of newborn up to about 14 years old).

I. Homework

- 1. Assigning homework:
 - a. directly pertains to and addresses what is currently being worked on in the sessions;
 - b. is hands-on for the counselee to do - e.g. visual, thought-provoking, records behavior, etc.;
 - c. requires the counselee to in some way interact with God and/or His Word;
 - d. requires the counselee to exert some work and time, but not too much.
- 2. Checking on homework assignments:

- a. at the beginning of each subsequent session, assess its completion and counselee's willingness to do the assigned homework (accountability);
 - b. reassign it if it is not done or is inadequate;
 - c. or else have the counselee do it in that subsequent session.
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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