

THE
HELPERS
HANDBOOK

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HANDBOOK

HOW TO OFFER CHRISTIAN
CARE AND GUIDANCE

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

THE HELPERS HANDBOOK

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ONE

SO YOU WANT TO BE A HELPER

The calling to be a helper is not reserved for the person with state certification and an advance degree in psychology. While education and training are important, I believe *every* Christian can provide counsel to those in need. In your own way, you can be the person God uses to minister help and hope.

On these pages you will find biblical perspectives for helping individuals whose lives are in turmoil because of anxiety, guilt, depression, illness, divorce, negative habits, and an endless list of emotional issues.

A helper is a minister who operates by counseling.

The word “minister,” is a simple Bible term that means “servant.” There is nothing prestigious about it. The hours are long and the pay is low, however, the rewards are great!

How can one measure the cost or the price of a life being set free from mental torment and turmoil? Even if the Lord does a work a counselor could charge \$10,000 for, as a helper, you cannot insist, “You owe me \$1,000”—or any amount. You are not providing help so others will be indebted to you, rather to point them to God.

A true minister of the Lord in counseling is the servant

of Christ. He knows his life, time, and resources are not his own, they belong to God. As such, a helper is open to do what the Lord wants done, in *His* way.

Remember, Jesus gave up all His rights when He came down to earth. He humbled Himself and became a Man. He relinquished everything so He could offer us life. A counselor gives his life also, and it takes more than just “liking” people and wanting to help them.

Removing the dark clouds.

An effective counselor realizes that people are limited in what they learn and receive. There are few who are ready to permit God to do His one-hundred-percent perfect will in his or her situation at this very moment. People might say they are willing, but the Lord knows their heart.

In His mercy, God shows us glimpses of truth because we could not handle the truth all at once.

There are many dark clouds, habits of sin, people are reluctant to give up. They still enjoy them. God would willingly take these away if they would only call on His name.

The Lord showed me an example once when I was praying over a certain individual. In the Spirit, I saw an artichoke that God was peeling from the outside in, leaf by leaf. He was getting down to the core, to the heart. This is how the Holy Spirit works.

People have put up many protective shields over the years, and even when they are born again, they find it hard to let the freedom of God come forth. Veils of self have clouded their vision for so long, they have to be unraveled, and usually this takes time.

No one is perfect—and we are all in the same boat. I

know I am perfected only in Jesus, and I hang onto this truth every moment. We have to encourage ourselves daily because one of the most dangerous weapons of the enemy is discouragement.

THE KEY TO HELPING EFFECTIVELY

Although not everybody will be a counselor, each person, at one time or another, will offer help to someone else.

There is a difference between counseling and busy-bodding. A true counselor does not stick his nose in where it does not belong. You cannot invite yourself into an individual's life unless they want your help. Only when a person desires your care and concern can you minister effectively and see them reap the benefits.

These words from the psalmist should be every helper's prayer and desire:

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests. Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he answers him from his holy heaven with the saving power of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm. O Lord, save the king!

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Answer us when we call!" (Psalm 20:9).

There is not a person on this earth without a problem at one time or another, but our troubles are not the issue. It is what we do with the difficulties of life that makes the dramatic difference between victory and defeat.

In the above Scripture, we see that a counselor directs people to the Lord. May *"He"* send you help. May *"He"* give you the desire of your heart.

A true counselor recognizes that it is only God who can change people's circumstances, situations, attitudes, and hearts. It is the Lord's doing, not the counselor.

If a person calls and the helper is not available, his world should not crumble. An effective counselor directs people to the ultimate source.

POINT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Several years ago, I was enjoying fellowship with the Lord before a meeting, and as the Spirit of God started ministering to me, I suddenly began to weep and sob. Out of my mouth flowed these words over and over: "I thank You, Lord, that I am not You. I thank You, Lord, that I am not You."

I was thanking my heavenly Father for being the one and only Source. I just do my part which is to pray, let God give the wisdom and insight, give Scriptures, and minister through me what the person needs. It may not be what they want to hear, but it is what is required.

A counselor is not God, and although we must show people the right way, it is the Father who must deal with them. Our role is to love and encourage, to set the Word of

God before them, and teach the principles of Scripture. That is all. What they do with this is entirely up to them. The Holy Spirit must draw and convict each person, and then *“We will shout for joy when [they] are victorious, and we will lift up our banners in the name of our God”* (Psalm 20:5).

A dedicated counselor knows *“the Lord saves his anointed; he answers him from his holy heaven with the saving power of his right hand”* (verse 6). An effective helper believes this and acts accordingly.

Show people the way.

People are standing and falling every day because of their own decisions. This goes on all around us, and it does not take much spiritual discernment to see what is happening. But those who trust in the name of the Lord our God will rise up and stand firm.

A Christian counselor cannot operate out of his own mind. He has to help people make godly decisions, and most of the time he will tell them, “Go to the Lord. May God answer you when you are in distress. May He send you help from the sanctuary.” In other words, “I cannot tell you what to do, my friend. You have to turn to God. If you don’t know how, I will be happy to show the way.”

Life is loaded with countless decisions. We make some that are good, and others that are bad. Often they are reversible, and at other times they are not.

This is why we need to get before God. But, sad to say, there are people who do not know how to accomplish this. So a helper assists people in learning how to pray.

A counselor works with the Father as a co-laborer who brings men and women before the throne of God. Many do not know how to find the Lord’s will, plan, or purpose.

But a godly counselor helps people come before the Father so they can hear from Him personally.

There are individuals who do not even know there *is* a God, and sadly, many Christians who know Him do not realize that He will help them. For whatever reason, they may feel unworthy or are ignorant of what the Almighty has already provided. This is when a counselor steps in, takes them by the hand and brings them right before the presence of God. The helper then lets go of their hand and leaves the individual with the Lord.

You are a point of contact for God's power.

Some may question if a counselor is even required. People may say, "I just need God."

I have uttered those words myself, but I have found it is not always the whole truth. God called Himself the "Counselor" (Isaiah 9:6), yet He uses His people to do the work of the ministry.

The reason the Lord makes you whole is so you can be an extension of Him to others. This is a team effort. We need God, and He works in and through us.

The Almighty works through individuals who are tuned into His Spirit. Often, this is the way He loves His people and supplies for His ministries.

There may be times when a person becomes attached to a counselor, and this can be right at first. You are a point of contact for the power of the living God. However, the counselor eventually must point to Jesus as the answer to all their problems. We will address this extensively later in the book.

THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE

I often share Psalm 121 because I want everyone to have the proper perspective on counseling. When they grasp this message they can actually help you to be freer in ministering to them by not placing all the responsibility on you. The psalm says: *“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber”* (verses 1-3).

God is the only One who stays up all night. Why? Because He knows His counselors need rest.

When a helper is taxed by a person’s problems and is accused of not loving him anymore because he pays less attention, the counselor often feels he must give the person his total focus. This is wrong, because the individual must get his or her mind off of themselves. When the helper can get the person in need to pray for *him*, it does wonders for both parties. Soon the individual forgets *his* problems, the counselor receives a special blessing from God, and mighty things begin to happen.

Take time to get alone and hear from heaven.

There are times when you as a counselor are available to those in need, and times when you must get away and go before the Lord. This is when you can receive God’s Word and hear His voice. You cannot properly instruct people in the ways of the Almighty if you are not hearing His voice correctly.

If we can comprehend the true message of this Scripture, we will focus our full attention on God. A

counselor can help someone else, but only with the Lord's guidance.

Learn to become an intercessor.

Jesus once came to Peter and said, "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*" (Luke 22:31-32).

Most people do not realize that the first function of a counselor is to be an intercessor. Sometimes you share what God has shown you, while on other occasions you simply pray and do not utter a word to anybody. I believe that to say nothing is the higher order.

It is interesting to note that even though Jesus prayed for Peter, he still denied Jesus three times. On the surface, it appears as if the intercession was of no avail. And there are those who would ask, "What's the difference between Peter and Judas?"

Plenty! Peter repented. He asked for God's forgiveness and rose up mighty in the faith and led the church into victory. Yes, he failed miserably, but Jesus' prayer was not directed at the failing. That was Peter's choice—and no one can violate another's will in such cases. The intercession by the Lord held on to Peter and would not let him grovel in the dirt, allowing the devil to take him and destroy his life. Eventually Peter's hardened heart crumbled and he repented.

Demonstrate the power of forgiveness.

Jesus does not look at our failings or shortcomings. He looks at what He is going to accomplish through us as we hold onto His Word.

Thank God for forgiveness. It is one of the premier truths a helper will communicate to hurting people. This is what sets people free.

A caring mentor has the privilege to minister the love, mercy, and forgiveness of God—and at times you are called on to minister the justice of God. People do not always want to hear the latter, and try to blame others for what has happened. But when the person accepts personal responsibility for his actions and asks forgiveness, God is ready to pardon. It is then erased from the record, forgotten forever.

YOUR PRIMARY ASSIGNMENT

To have the right perspective on how to survive as a counselor, read these verses frequently: *“Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30).

The number one assignment for a helper is to bring the lost to Jesus. If people get to know Christ, learn who the heavenly Father is, understand God’s love, power, and wisdom, the counselor’s job is well done.

Unfortunately, we live in a world with all kinds of crazy things going on, but we can still enjoy the peace of God in the midst of it all. The amazing love of God is demonstrated in this world through believers. We cannot isolate ourselves in a cabin on a remote hill. Jesus gave His life for all humanity, and we must be ready and willing to minister to whoever He sends us, wherever we are.

You are releasing God's power.

Counselors must be aware of attitudes, not only in themselves, but in the people they are striving to help.

This is illustrated by an incident in Scripture. *“While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them, ‘Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power and godliness we had made this man walk?’”* (Acts 3:11-12).

I believe the apostles had a godly perspective in this miracle. They wondered why the people were so surprised, and they pointed out that they had nothing to do with this except they were responsible for releasing the power of God. It was not their human abilities, but the power of the Almighty.

Without branches there would be no fruit.

A care-giver speaks the Word of God, and when he does, it cleanses, helps, heals, and delivers. Jesus declares, *“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you”* (John 15:3).

This is why it is so important to use only divine principles. We cannot add our own opinions or thoughts. We must minister the pure, undiluted Word.

The Lord tells us, *“I am the vine; you are the branches”* (verse 5). This lets us know that apart from Jesus, we are nothing. We are both necessary elements and must work together. Without branches there would be no fruit. We are extensions of the love of God in this world, and the fruit is actually produced from our lives. Jesus has completed His work on earth—His part is done. He promises: *“If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish,*

and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (verses 7-8).

Now it is our turn to produce a harvest for Him.

GOD'S HAND, NOT YOURS

One of the first things a helper learns is that you cannot carry the burdens of others on your shoulders. The weight will only drag you down with them. This can happen when people do not really want to receive the healing of the blood of Jesus. They just want a willing ear to listen to their troubles.

I do not wish to discourage anyone, but on the other hand, if I go into the quicksand after them, what good is it if we both sink together?

My place is to stand firmly on the Rock which is Christ Jesus, and from there I can extend the hand of the Lord to pull them out of the sinking sand. Not my hand, but the Lord's. He is able to reach them wherever they are and say, "I love you. Come back. I can help you." If they refuse, and do not reach out and take His hand, they cannot be helped.

Help only those who seek it.

Although we care about people, we do not run out searching the highways and byways for them. There are many who are crippled and maimed in mind and body, but they will spit on you when you start talking about God. Be realistic. There are men and women with horrendous problems who we think should be receptive to hear of God's mercy and grace, but often it is the last thing they want to discuss.

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One divine principle is that God simply makes Himself available. He is our example as we offer ourselves to those who need help.

Your assignment as a helper.

Let me share the counselor's marching orders: "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (John 8:36 KJV).

The best thing I ever did was when I got rid of myself, and took on Jesus. He wooed me. He loved me. He accepted me. He gave me a new self. With the apostle Paul I can now exclaim, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20).

Today I can be an advocate for others by telling them that He whom the Son has set free is free indeed!

TWO

THE HELPER AS A GUIDE

What a high calling! A helper guides people in God's Word, emphasizing that when they become new creatures in Christ, old things are passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Yesterday no longer has power over them because their lives are now a walk with God, and they are constantly being transformed by the Holy Spirit. This is called sanctification. It is a process of being made holy on a daily basis, thanks to God's mercy and love.

The enemy, of course, will put pressure on people because he certainly doesn't play fair. This is when emotional problems may creep in through doors we keep open.

The truth will eventually be made known.

One of the first things a counselor discovers is that there are people who just do not care to hear the Word of God; even some Christians. This reveals the thoughts and intentions of their hearts as they seem to enjoy being in the snare of the devil. Thus, they are deceived, thinking they are right and everybody else is wrong. But according to Scripture, "*Whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open*" (Mark 4:22).

The truth will eventually be revealed.

The seed you plant will reap rewards.

We must never grow discouraged or give up. If the people will not receive the Word, you have done your part in sowing the truth, and you must move on. If they fail to respond, it is between them and their Creator. You go back to interceding, claiming the answer in Jesus' name.

Thank and praise God for those individuals, using your faith on their behalf. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17 KJV). The seed of Scripture that you planted will reap results.

Remember, the Bible tells us, *"If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you"* (John 15:7). The helper must spend time in the Word of God in order to use it effectively.

CARRYING THE BURDEN

Let me emphasize that a counselor's job is not to totally take the burdens and problems of the person he is counseling. It must be a shared responsibility. There is a very important principle which sets the helper free. Paul writes, *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load"* (Galatians 6:1-5).

People have different concepts of the words, *"restore him*

gently.” There are times when people need a good swift kick, and the Spirit of God would say “that is gentle.” However, if a person is heading for destruction in his life, such an act would be gentle in comparison.

To “*Carry each other’s burdens*” in order to “*fulfill the law of Christ*” may sound like a contradiction, but it is not. We do not literally carry the burdens in the physical, but through intercessory prayer.

The work has already been done.

The prophet Isaiah tells us how Jesus bore our griefs, sickness, disease, maladies, and carried our sorrows (all the emotional realm problems). The punishment that brought our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Since Christ accepted the burden, we have no business bearing it for ourselves or for anybody else. This is essential to remember because it is a lie the devil often uses on counselors. As we intercede for the people, we are fulfilling the law of Christ, which is the law of love.

It is the helper’s responsibility to assist them in understanding it is the Lord, not you, who holds the answers.

Help people become aware of their behavior.

In the process of helping, we need to guide people toward examining their own actions. Unfortunately, most individuals will tell you that someone else is the source of their crisis. They do not realistically have a true picture of themselves, but as time goes on in the counseling sessions, it becomes obvious who is the problem.

People deceive themselves, and, as the Scripture

instructs us, each one should examine his own actions. A counselor will help others become consciously aware of their behavior and thoughts and how their attitudes relate to the situation.

Beware of emotional attachments.

Many suffer with sickness, fears, worries, and weaknesses; feeling unloved and lonely. The counselor, however cannot fulfill all their emotional needs. This can become a dangerous situation because certain men and women are often drawn to the counselor and even attempt to establish a personal attachment beyond the advice being offered.

The helper must be careful to share the Word of God and spend the necessary time required to guide them lovingly and kindly to find their answers in Jesus. However, if they have an unnatural need for attention, you may find yourself on call twenty-four hours a day.

BREAKING FREE

Once a person acknowledges their need for help, they will be open to receive guidance in the Word of God. But if they do not express their desire for help, do not offer it.

When you conclude the counseling, they may attempt to place a guilt trip on you by saying you do not care and do not love them. This is when you assure them you truly want God's best for their situation, but they must open their eyes and recognize their need for His direction. As Scripture tells us, *"The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 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, 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” (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

People must personally break free from the grip of Satan. We cannot do it for them. Our role is to loose the power of Jesus and allow Him to provide the release.

It is vital for counselors to remember that we are just tools used by the Lord, anointed of God, to do the work He called us to do. We can do nothing by ourselves. As we guide these people to the throne room of the Father and they acknowledge their sin before Him, we simply speak the name of Jesus. His name releases the work of the Holy Spirit, and then God ministers to the people.

There will be situations that appear hopeless, but the Word assures us, *“What is impossible with men is possible with God”* (Luke 18:27).

The importance of “deliverance counseling.”

As we help others test their own actions, they begin to see with new understanding and recognize what is really taking place. This is called “deliverance counseling.” The helper puts his hand on a person, and prays; and God shows that individual everything. When he asks for the Father’s forgiveness, he begins to see the whole picture and the pieces start falling into place. He is delivered, and *“can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else”* (Galatians 6:4).

Seeing a man or woman released from the clutches of Satan calls for a time of rejoicing, a time to be proud. Proud of God, His love and mercy, and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not a fleshly pride, rather it is knowing that God is doing a wonderful work in that person. He does not

have to look at anyone else to measure up to because his worthiness is not dependent on how others respond. He begins to view himself as God sees him, and he, too, can be proud of what the Lord is doing in his life.

Rejoicing is contagious, and when people start to praise God for the answer, it is often the end of their problem. There will be times when a counselor will thank the Lord in advance and call "*things that are not as though they were*" (Romans 4:17).

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

Your prime obligation is to make yourself available and let others know that God is there, waiting to help. You are more than willing to be a guide to lead them to the Lord Jesus and to the promises in the Word of God, but they must make the decision to follow His direction. Philippians 2:12 instructs us to "*work out your salvation.*"

This means that nobody else can do it for us. We must line up our attitudes with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a helper, you may cry and pray for your people, share the Word, and attempt to help them, but they, themselves, must align their will with the Word of God. This will free you as a counselor to understand that all you can do is point them to the truth of Scripture.

If we could see ourselves as God sees us, we would eliminate most of our problems. This is something we should all be working towards. In the meantime, if we have attitudes that are out of line with God, His Word will get us back on track.

A counselor's responsibility is to put the Word of God before the people. We are not to condemn or convict. That

is the work of the Word. All we do is to enforce what the Lord is doing. Scripture is the ultimate authority, and it is our responsibility to make sure it is presented.

The dangers of rebellion.

Many will come to you with pre-conceived notions as to how they want to be counseled, and how they want to be treated. Some will express themselves verbally when you do not measure up to their expectations. These people usually do not want to hear the truth, and may go elsewhere, but the Spirit of God will be consistent wherever they go. Such individuals will not be helped until their attitudes change. Most of these unhappy seekers want attention, and will drift from one person to another, but they will never find peace or happiness from man. Only God can give the love they are so desperately searching for.

It is a sad thing to see Christians who willfully, knowingly continue to purpose in their hearts to go against God. This is rebellion, and we will see how God deals with them.

Proverbs 17:10 tells us, “*A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.*” In other words, regardless of how much a fool is disciplined, he will not learn anything and will never change. People like this are bent on their own ways and self-conceit, thinking they are right and everyone else is wrong. They will not listen to those who may try to reach out and help them. On the other hand, the wise man of discernment is impressed by a rebuke. He will become wiser as his attitudes change according to God’s desire.

The next verse reads, “*An evil man is bent only on rebellion; a merciless official will be sent against him*” (verse 11).

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Such an individual is not in rebellion against people, or against themselves. They have turned their backs on God.

Let the Lord discipline, not you.

A believer who is bent on disobedience, allows evil to enter into his life. He is deceived, and God will not let it slide.

A counselor who shows mercy to a rebellious person in a state of willful, knowing sin, and says it is all right and he continues in his sin, will have to account to God for his wrong attitude and behavior. The Lord will deal with that counselor because he has been called to show the disobedient how to measure up to God's Word. The person may not want to hear, but it is the counselor's responsibility to do all he can to direct him to the Lord Jesus in total surrender.

Scripture makes it clear, "*The Lord disciplines those he loves*" (Hebrews 12:6).

A WELL-BALANCED LIFE

There is a relief in not having to compare ourselves with anybody. This is one of the major problems with people, and is often why they look for help in counseling. They have tried to meet somebody else's expectations, and when they could not, they believed they were failures. In many cases this message was repeated and reinforced over the years to such a degree that they became a total wreck.

Thank God, He can free men and women from their past and give them a sound mind. They can become well-balanced, disciplined, healthy sons and daughters of the living God.

When we catch a glimpse of God's great love, we begin to understand that Jesus truly *did* carry our grief, sickness, disease, maladies, sorrows, guilt, pain, hurt, fears, doubts, confusion, depression, unworthiness, loneliness, and despair. Because of God's Son they are all gone, and we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Throw out the life-line.

A helper resembles a tug boat which comes up beside a ship in the harbor and escorts it to the safety of the port. If the larger vessel decides to get all engines blasting and go back out to sea, the tug boat must cut the tie. Otherwise he too will be pulled out into the ocean.

The helper's job is in the harbor, not out in the sea. He must stay anchored to the solid Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, and throw a life-line to try and pull them back to safety.

The counselor intercedes and bridges the gap. He guides them in the right direction according to the Word of God.

Freedom to choose.

God created us with a free will as a blessing, but after the fall of man, this characteristic became distorted. This is why our will has to be renewed to parallel Scripture.

It is the responsibility of the counselee to respond to God's Word, and no devil can violate a Christian's will to the point where they cannot make a choice. An unbeliever is at the beck and call of Satan. but a child of God, born of the Spirit, has the freedom to make his own choice.

The Bible warns, *"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a*

foothold” (Ephesians 4:26-27). In the Greek this means, don’t offer Satan a “home.”

Stay centered in the Spirit.

Our attitude must reflect the Word of God—the sooner the better—so the devil does not get a toe-hold in our lives. With God’s life and power flowing through us, there is nothing in hell that can stop us from making a proper, godly decision on the basis of the Word if we want help.

When people let the devil run rough-shod over them by refusing to do what God says, they are not only destroying themselves, but their disobedience will harm others. This is why a counselor must keep himself constantly in the Spirit of God.

A helper’s responsibility is to intercede, to guide and help people work through their problems. It is essential that the counselor does not get so involved that he tries to carry the person on his shoulders. A counselor cannot keep making excuses for them, or take blame for their situation. It will only make matters worse.

I have seen families where the children were covered and excused by their parents, and not taught to be accountable. Such young people usually grow up to be leeches on society, claiming that the world “owes” them.

SOWING AND REAPING

Where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness. Where there is no humility, there is no mercy. Just as no one but Jesus can carry your load, you cannot bear anyone

else's burden unless you want to be overwhelmed by the weight.

Scripture cautions, *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”* (Galatians 6:7-10).

It is a principle of God that people get what is coming to them. Long ago, King Solomon wrote, *“If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house”* (Proverbs 17:13).

This is why it is so important to make individuals aware that it is not always the other person who is at fault. If they are having problems, they need to first look in the mirror.

The path to spiritual maturity.

A counselor must be bold enough to speak the truth in love so the people can grow up and mature in the faith. God's plan for babies is for them to develop into adulthood and not stay as spiritual infants. The Lord desires for His people to grow into maturity—physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Everyone loves babies, but we cannot carry on a sensible conversation with them until they grow up. It is God's desire that in the Spirit, we develop into full manhood and womanhood in the Lord Jesus Christ so we can commune with our Father, and He with us. Remember, we were created for fellowship with God.

An essential part of guiding people is showing them the blessings that go with obedience, and the cursings that

accompany disobedience. When they realize they have a choice, they will either receive or reject what is offered.

This can be frustrating unless a counselor understands why they react the way they do. The Bible says, *“Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:12-15).

Jesus tells us that not everybody who calls to Him, *“Lord, Lord,”* is going to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It will be those who do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21).

As a helper, you have the joy and privilege of guiding people to the foot of the cross, bringing them God’s Son, who is the ultimate answer for *all* their needs.

THREE

THE HELPER AS A TEACHER

A counselor is not only called to be a guide, but a teacher. However, he can only teach what he knows. The person must comprehend God's Word well enough to put it into language easy enough for an unbeliever to understand.

What convicts people's hearts, however, is the power of the Spirit behind the Word. This is what transforms lives and heals individuals emotionally and physically.

Many can quote the Bible, but unless the Spirit of God is flowing through them as they speak, there is no life in their words.

One of the significant lessons a helper learns on this journey is that the Spirit of God draws people to the truth. He never coerces, knocks anybody over the head, or commands them. He woos and loves us.

No one comes to the Lord on their own. It is the Spirit who brings us to the foot of the cross where we find salvation, health, joy, peace, and everything else God has provided.

The Lord's message can be yours.

When the love of the Father floods your heart, it will be

communicated to others and they will be pulled to you like a magnet. Many times they may not know why, but as the Spirit of God begins to minister to their hearts, they will receive freedom.

Jesus declared, *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”* (Luke 4:18-19). This can be your message, too!

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, the Almighty gives you a new tongue to speak to Him in perfect prayer as the Spirit of God resides within you. Sometimes the anointing will fall as you release the Word, or when you are praying for someone, and everyone feels His glorious presence. Without the anointing, what you speak are just plain words, rhetoric. But the person who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be anointed to deliver the Word of God and touch lives.

In the above verses there is one anointing to preach the good news to the poor and another for healing. When you are operating by the Spirit, God will bless you with the right anointing for whatever assignment you have been given. But remember, it is the Holy Spirit who does the work; He simply uses us to minister to those who need help.

PROCLAIM FREEDOM!

A counselor will find there are many who have Jesus in their hearts, yet they are still captives because they have not relinquished areas in their lives allowing God to bring them total freedom. Fear, worry, and insecurity all keep people

in bondage and in need of deliverance. A helper proclaims freedom both physically and spiritually.

At times outside pressures may cause oppression, and a counselor teaches the person how to be released from that too.

It is not necessary for the helper to know the Bible inside out in order to teach people. All you need is one promise of God in any certain given area and you can blow the devil out of the water. Yes, just one promise can set a person free.

For example, if an individual suffers loneliness, you can tell them the Lord said, *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20 KJV).

If the man or woman receives this truth, it is all they need for their deliverance.

You can count on God.

Since we know that the Father’s Word is forever settled in heaven, we can trust Him to keep His promises. Remember, *“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”* (Numbers 23:19).

When the Lord says something you can count on it!

As a pastor I’ve heard people announce, “God told me this, and God told me that.” One moment He said one thing, and the next moment, He said something different regarding the same situation.

Friend, the Lord is not double-minded. Those who do this think they are hearing from God, when in reality it is their own thoughts. They must be taught that the Lord never varies from His Word.

A helper’s role is to find the promises of God in

Scripture and communicate them to the people who have those particular needs. If they require physical healing, it will not do much good to delve into Genesis where it lists the genealogies. This may help if a woman is having difficulty conceiving a child since it would minister life to her spirit. But if a person needs a physical healing, he longs to hear a promise such as, “*Surely he hath borne our griefs [speaking of Jesus]*” (Isaiah 53:4 KJV). The word, “grief,” in Hebrew means sickness, disease, and malady. He took these to the cross so we would not have to suffer. This is our right and privilege in Jesus Christ our Lord.

When you know deep in your heart that Jesus not only saved you from death, giving you eternal life, but He also gave you health right now, you have confidence that you do not have to bear any sickness in your body.

God’s people “*are destroyed from lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6), and if a counselor does not know the Father’s promises, he cannot walk in them and teach people what the Lord wants them to know.

God will give you the ability to change.

A helper must relate how the Lord loves them so much that He wants to forgive them. Jesus said to the woman who had committed adultery, “*Neither do I condemn you...Go now and leave you life of sin*” (John 8:11).

We need to know that the Lord will never tell people something if they do not have the ability to change, but when we turn to Him, He gives us this power. Philippians 2:13 tells us “*It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*”

One woman gave a testimony telling how she turned off the daily soap operas—because she felt watching all

that garbage polluted her mind. As soon as she purposed in her heart to stop this addiction, acknowledging it as sin, God gave her the ability to conquer this area of her life.

The change went into effect when she turned her back on her viewing habits and declared, “I do not want it any more. I am going to walk away from this.”

The ability does not come when you are flirting with the devil—one foot in the world and the other in heaven, wanting a taste of both. The Bible tells us this is being double-minded, and “*a double-minded man [is] unstable in all he does*” (James 1:8).

THE PENETRATING WORD

A counselor must speak the truth in love even though it may hurt. “*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*” (Hebrews 4:12).

When the flesh gets in the way and tries to deny the truth, you may hear comments such as, “I don’t want to hear that,” or “It doesn’t apply to me.”

But when the sin is acknowledged and forgiveness is asked and received, the cleansing takes place. “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9).

Beauty for ashes.

All around us are men and women who are hopeless and despondent. Some feel there is nothing to live for. But the Lord has called you to teach those who mourn, that God will give them, “*beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning,*

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the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:3 KJV).

The Bible assures us, *“They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated”* (verse 4). I believe this applies to people and their lives.

I have seen countless homes healed and restored that had been tragically torn apart. People whose lives were ravaged began praising God, rejoicing and going strong for the Lord when the Holy Spirit did the healing work. They did not act like the same individuals!

Only God can take a hopeless situation that inflicts great despair, and turn it around, and make it a time of praise. As David asked, *“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God”* (Psalm 42:5).

THE WISDOM FACTOR

Every helper needs to understand that God will give the necessary wisdom for any given situation. The Lord will also offer understanding to the person who needs counsel. They can be assured of becoming overcomers, and that the Father’s perfect will is accomplished in their lives. God’s word promises this. We read, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt”* (James 1:5-6).

Lacking wisdom does not mean a person is stupid. It simply indicates he does not know what to do in a particular situation. Other people are quick to offer their opinions, advice, etc., but only God’s wisdom is perfect.

It's good to know that the Lord will not hold back, but will give generously.

Diligence brings the answer.

Our heavenly Father will give wisdom according to His promise, but we must patiently wait long enough to receive the answer. Daniel approached the Lord, but as he waited on God, he was diligent. He did not cease praying until the answer came.

As you read the book of Daniel, you will discover this was not a quick thirty second prayer. We find the angel arriving twenty-one days later with the answer. The angel proclaimed, *“Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them”* (Daniel 10:12).

I believe many fail to receive their answers because they are not earnestly seeking.

In Daniel's situation, there was nothing wrong with the angel. He was not an unfaithful servant, but he had to fight spiritual warfare. God had to send Michael, the archangel, to do battle with the principality of the air so Gabriel could reach Daniel.

It was because Daniel had purposed in his heart that he received the answer. It enabled the work of God to take place. If he had been wishy-washy, unstable, or double-minded, he never would have been given his word from the Lord.

Counselors must help people see this truth.

You will often hear people doubt, saying, “Lord, why is it taking so long?” or “Maybe it's not true.”

If this is their attitude, God will not do the work. Often, people get their own ideas in the way, and a

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counselor must help them sort out what is their fleshly desire, and what is the Lord's will.

If we are patient and hang on, act on God's promise, speak it, live it, and breath it, we will see the victory.

Another reason many people do not receive their answers from God is because it is not His will. "Lord, I asked for that purple house on the hill, and I got the orange one at the bottom. You let me down and I will never believe You again."

However, all along, it was God's will that they have the orange house at the bottom of the hill!

A lot of things people think they want are just plain foolishness, and may not be in God's perfect plan.

DON'T INTERFERE

There is a difference here between individuals who do not want a counselor's help even when their lives are falling apart around them, and those who say they want help, but only in the way it suits them. I have seen husband/wife fights when one or the other calls out for help.

People have rushed into those situations, and when the husband and wife reconciled, they ganged up on the counselor accusing him of meddling in their private business. One day they were fighting with each other, the next they both turned on the person who tried to help them.

Don't get involved where you are not wanted. As the Bible explains, "*Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own*" (Proverbs 26:17).

There is a distinct line between sticking your nose into somebody else's business, and coming to their aid with the

Word when it is really wanted and obeyed. It takes the wisdom of God to know when to step in and when to stay out!

Show yourself faithful.

A counselor's responsibility is to lead the people to Jesus through God's Word, praying that the love of God will penetrate their defenses. I have seen men and women hardened in unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment whose hearts melted like butter when they stood before Jesus.

However, this is a choice that can be made only by the individuals themselves. You cannot do it for them. Psalm 18:25-27 tells us, *"To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty."*

When a person is faithful to God, He will be faithful in return. But the Lord goes one step further. He is faithful to us even when we are not. He is always waiting for His children to come back to Him, and is ready to forgive when we repent.

Reasons for failure.

There are those who may believe they cannot do what God requires of them. If you hear this excuse, you can rest assured it is for one of three reasons:

1. They are operating out of themselves.
2. They are operating out of what somebody else has told them about themselves.
3. They are listening to the devil.

Lovingly remind them that God says, *“What I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach”* (Deuteronomy 30:11).

When man relies on his own ability, wisdom, or strength he will fail. When you believe you cannot stop carousing, drinking, smoking, etc., in truth, you cannot stop seeing yourself as a failure—and this is why you keep failing. But Scripture tells us we can do it—and it not beyond our reach. *“It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it”* (verses 12-14).

The apostle Paul wrote essentially the same thing: *“‘The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,’ that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved”* (Romans 10:8-10).

It’s just that simple!

HELP FROM ABOVE

How does a counselor function in the role of a teacher? He presents the problem, shows it clearly, helps the people to identify the problem, then proceeds to teach them from the Word of God.

Plus, you have divine help from above. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He proclaimed, *“All this I have spoken*

while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:25-26).

A counselor cannot teach what he has not heard, and the Holy Spirit cannot remind us of something that has not been received, so we must hear the Word of God first.

There have been times when a Scripture I read years ago came to memory at just the right time I needed it. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are operating by the Spirit of God, He has a vessel He is able to work with—but only if the Word is planted in your heart.

The three functions of a counselor actually apply to the work of the Holy Spirit: He helps us as an intercessor, He is our guide, and He is a teacher.

Let the Lord lead you.

Some Christians are afraid to encourage or talk to others because they are unsure of themselves in the Word. It may be better for them to keep quiet at this point, but as they continue to grow and learn, the Holy Spirit will be the teacher so that when they do speak, it will be pleasing to God and their words will help others.

On the other hand, we often see Christians who quote Scripture out of context, use half verses, and match a few words from one chapter with those of another. This does not help anyone. It is important to remember the Bible must be presented with integrity, precisely the way it reads.

The Lord will assist us as we move out in ministry to help others. He says, *“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).*

As a counselor, you will quickly learn that everything

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presented to you is not always the truth. You must rely on the Holy Spirit to sort out what is true and what is not.

You are more than a helper.

We should take great delight that the Lord is going to help us to be more effective in the ministry of the Spirit of God, and He will give us the right words to speak. I pray you will be able to say, *“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer”* (Psalm 19:14).

Today, rejoice in the fact that you have the opportunity to be more than a helper—as a teacher of God’s Word you are transforming lives.

FOUR

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

A helper must have a commitment in his heart to Jesus, and to the people being counseled. This means we are to be ready “in season and out of season”—to help at any time.

“In season” is when hurting individuals are ready for counseling and are willing to listen. “Out of season” is when they don’t want to hear what you have to say.

The first time you meet with someone, your objective is not to quickly pry into their problem, rather to get to know them and establish a relationship. This is the time to build trust and confidence.

Everyone’s favorite subject is themselves, so start the conversation by asking about their families, their jobs, their interests, and their relationship with Jesus Christ. They are not interested in hearing about you, so do not interject similar stories pertaining to yourself. Those who need counseling are usually too wrapped up in their own situations to be bothered by what others are going through.

Your number one objective is to listen. Look straight into their eyes—because it tells the person you are really focused on them.

One of the initial questions I ask is: “Are you talking with another counselor?” If the person replies, “No,” we

continue the conversation. If they say “Yes,” I will refer them back to the counselor or minister who has been working with them. This is very important. I would expect other counselors to show the same courtesy towards me; and also, I don’t want the counselee to become confused.

In the process of getting acquainted with the person, it is wise to avoid discussing their dislikes. Such topics could go on for an hour or more. It is much better to keep the conversation on the positive side. Ask them to share their Christian experience and their relationship with the Lord—and the blessings they have received from God.

If nothing more happens in your initial encounter than small talk and hearing the person share a few personal stories, don’t worry. You are creating a friendship which is essential when you discuss serious matters later.

Your passion is more important than your pedigree.

Certainly there are people who hesitate to open up to a helper who may not have a particular degree or license. Don’t be overly concerned. You are there to offer a listening ear, and share what the Spirit of God is speaking regarding their situation. When they see the sincerity of your heart, they will be ready to communicate.

In the Bible, we find the Sanhedrin, the High Council of the Jewish temple, wondering how such wisdom could be spoken by the disciples, however, “*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished (Acts 4:13). But then they remembered, “that these men had been with Jesus” (verse 13).*

Let me assure you that *any* person who spends time with the Lord is not going to be ignorant and unlearned for long. Now if you want to obtain a degree or two, this is

commendable, and you will learn much in the process. The most important factor, however, is to love people and have a passion to meet their needs.

Give them time to “open up.”

It may be toward the end of your first meeting or early during the second encounter when you open the door for the person to speak about the problem he or she is dealing with.

While it is true that people usually schedule a counseling session for the purpose of discussing a particular issue, when the moment arrives, they may just clam up! I’ve seen this happen on more than one occasion.

In other cases, the individual may not be able to tell you exactly what the problem is—they just know they are deeply hurting and are searching for the reasons why.

The issue may be jealousy, anger, bitterness, or unforgiveness, and it may take a few sessions before the real matter rises to the surface.

If you find the person has difficulty sharing their problem, encourage them by saying, “You have made a wonderful first step toward freedom in simply *desiring* to get free.” This will instill a little more confidence for them to open up and confide their thoughts and feelings.

Satan is always lurking around, attempting to keep men and women in bondage, and he doesn’t want to let them go! So a helper has to be a catalyst who allows the Holy Spirit of God to get through to their hearts.

Establish a strong bond of trust.

Individuals deal with conflict and strife in different ways. Some are very emotional and will yell and scream,

and may even punch a hole in the wall. Others bottle it all up inside. These are usually the ones who develop ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attacks, and a multitude of physical problems.

Getting people to discuss their problem is necessary in order to deal with it. Some may feel it is a “negative confession” and are afraid to talk. But, if you have a problem, you automatically have a negative situation! They may try to whitewash everything, but it must be dealt with.

A counselor who is sensitive, listening, and watching prayerfully will help people recognize the underlying condition and then take it to Jesus, the Problem-solver. When you begin to confront the situation, people will usually start to open up—especially when a strong bond of trust has been established.

In fact, they often may amaze themselves when they begin to pour out their hearts. When God establishes that relationship, it becomes easier for them to share their disappointments, discouragement, and pain.

Bring the problem to God in prayer.

In Acts 4 we find an excellent example of two men who faced hostility—Peter and John. The Lord had just healed a man through their prayers, and it was a mighty testimony to the glory of God. Many came to know Christ as a result, but these two disciples were hauled up before the Jewish religious leaders and were commanded “*not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus*” (Acts 4:19).

After they were let go, Peter and John went back to the other Christians and told them about the threats.

How did their fellow believers react? They immediately “*raised their voices together in prayer to God*” (verse 24).

And this is the action we must take with one another's problems. Instead of re-hashing them over and over again, we should turn to the Word of God to find the promise concerning that particular situation and then bring the person to the Lord in prayer. In the process, we encourage them to confess their faults to God.

We are the witness to their confession—and there is something about revealing our faults one to another that provides freedom (James 5:16).

LIFTING THE BURDEN

In the physical realm, no one has ever had a full-blown manifestation where they saw God face to face. The Lord uses believers to make Himself known. Therefore, when someone confesses their faults to you, you in turn, give it over to the Lord.

As they speak, they have a physical witness. Now somebody else knows their problem, and it lifts a tremendous weight off of their shoulders.

Many have been going around for years struggling with guilt or bondage, never telling anyone their lives were torn apart. Just releasing it all to another human being breaks the bondage and relieves the pressure. It is no longer a deep dark secret. God knew about it all along, but He uses us as witnesses to help liberate them.

The danger of taking sides.

In counseling, you may find that people begin to talk disparagingly about “so-and-so” who is not present, and is not actually the problem at all. When this happens, never

take sides, but see this as an opportunity for them to open up.

Let them talk, because once everything is brought to light, the devil's cover is blown. The floodlights are on the issue, and this is the point where freedom begins to thrive.

It does not matter how sordid, how gory, how miserable, how horrible and dishonorable the situation might be, God forgives all our transgressions. And it is your job as a helper to reinforce this wonderful, healing truth.

Let me insert a word of caution here. Sometimes you may feel the person is dumping on you, and perhaps you begin to feel unclean. This is when you must hand it over to God. Don't make the mistake of personally taking their problems on yourself.

If the individual you are counseling says, "I have never told this to anyone, and I do not want you to repeat it," you respond, "Friend, I love you. I want you free, but there is no way I can agree to that."

You see, if they are afraid to have you tell someone else, they are still shackled by the issues. And if you agree to their requirement, they leave scott free, and *you* become the one in bondage. In truth, however, they are still a prisoner. All they did was multiply their problem because now you share it too.

Of course you will keep a confidence, but don't allow someone to transfer his or her troubles into your spirit.

Keep reminding them that it is God who is doing the work, not the counselor. You are only bringing them to the Lord.

FEARLESS IN THE FACE OF GIANTS

I love the story of David and Goliath. We read how King Saul became fearful of the giant who was so large it took two men to carry his shield. But young David bravely said, *“Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him”* (1 Samuel 17:32).

Saul was a strong, mighty warrior. Then along comes this lad proclaiming, “Don’t worry, folks. I am going to fight him.” David could not even wear Saul’s armor, let alone challenge this formidable foe who was nine feet tall.

Saul could hardly believe what he was hearing. He exclaimed, *“You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth”* (verse 33).

How typical. People look at the circumstances and think, “No way. We can’t do anything about this.”

But David was not intimidated and would not give in. He insisted, *“Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear”* (verses 34-36).

“God will do it for you!”

When you are ministering to a person, don’t hesitate to testify by saying, “I have seen a situation where God did this for someone else. And you know, my friend, you have the same problem. God helped them, and He can help you right now.”

You will be doing what David did in recounting the works the Lord did through him. There is no way a young

boy could kill a bear and a lion unless God was with him.

David continued, *“This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine”* (verses 36-37).

He was the only one in the whole camp who had unwavering faith. David was pointing to the Lord, not to the problem of Goliath. He saw a big God, not a big giant!

This convinced Saul, and he told David, *“Go, and the Lord be with you”* (verse 37).

We know how the story ends. David went and announced to Goliath: *“This day the Lord will hand you over to me”* (verse 46).

It only took one smooth stone from a slingshot—guided by the Lord—and Goliath was no more.

If God did this for David, He will do it for any of His children who dare to place their trust in Him.

BEYOND “GOOD WORKS”

Being a helper is an extension of the fact that you were created for a purpose—which includes accomplishing the task your heavenly Father has planned.

Scripture talks about us being *“God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”* (Ephesians 2:10).

Many think that good works are doing nice things for people, giving money to charities and always being helpful to those who are need. Actually, none of these are good works unless God directs you to do them.

In the eyes of the Lord, the only acts of value are those which proceed from faith in Jesus—because we know God

loves us, and we now want to return that love and bless His people. This causes us to offer our help to those in need, to minister, and encourage others.

Be sure you are helping “as unto the Lord.”

A counselor who is working because of a personal desire to help people has a misguided purpose. You must be driven by a passion to manifest God’s love.

Jesus was asked, *“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”* (Matthew 25:37-39).

He answered, *“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me”* (verse 40).

In God’s sight, good works have nothing to do with any personal satisfaction we may enjoy because we helped a person in need. Many will stand before God telling Him of the wonderful deeds they accomplished, but unless they were performed because of their love for God, they will all be as hay, wood, and stubble.

Check your attitude.

An excellent way to test your reason for doing good works is to evaluate your response when those you helped forget to thank you. If you are more concerned about their reaction to your help, than to how the Lord sees your actions, you need to ask for God’s forgiveness.

The Lord always keeps perfect records, and He is the rewarder of the faithful. Scripture tells us, *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”* (Galatians 6:9).

You may deal with some hard-hearted (even hard-headed) individuals, and not get to see the end results, but if your heart is right before God and you are helping because of His love for you, the Word you sowed in the mighty name of Jesus will bring forth marvelous victories.

The Almighty declares that the *“word...that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”* (Isaiah 55:11 KJV).

On occasions people may seek your counsel and you feel totally unprepared to deal with them. Perhaps you are going through deep waters yourself, and feel unable to handle their problems along with your own. This is when you pray and ask God to shower you with His love in an ever increasing, ever flowing measure.

You can defeat the strongholds that are attempting to prevent you from loving people. Ask God to release His divine ability into you for the situation at hand.

LOVED, ACCEPTED, AND FORGIVEN

In helping others, pray that you will be an instrument to assist men and women in seeing things the way God does. Stand on 1 Corinthians 2:16: *“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ.”*

In almost every case, individuals view themselves differently than does their Creator. We must show them they are royal priests, a holy people, set apart from the world, God’s workmanship, His handiwork—loved, accepted, forgiven, with the strength of God within them through Jesus our Lord and Savior.

They must see their lives free from all insecurities, fears,

doubts, worries, depression, anxiety, confusion, and commotion.

If some of these thoughts are still running around in their minds, it is because they have not yet acknowledged that Jesus has freed them. They simply may not realize it, so a counselor must help them see what is happening in the heavenly realm.

Seek the mind of Christ.

On the authority of God's Word, we can assure them: *"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:2).

This is a daily renewing, and when you bring your thoughts into perfect obedience to the mind of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), the power of God rises up within you. You are no longer a failure; you are a success.

The person who meditates on the Word *"is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers"* (Psalm 1:3).

As we continually walk in the Word of God we will have everything that Jesus died for. Our spirit, mind, and body will be completely pure and holy before the Lord. We will be set apart for the purpose of doing the works that glorify God.

When your labor is for the Lord, your hours are never wasted. This is why we must fulfill our purpose with every ounce of energy we possess. As the apostle Paul writes, *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

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Always do the work completely, never half-way. No doubt you have many activities going on in your own life: family, career, and other responsibilities and interests. But there is only one reason why we are on this earth, and that is to be a praise to the glory of God in whatever we are doing. We are to be shining lights.

This is what changes people's lives.

In these initial meetings, by establishing a relationship based on trust and the truth of the Word, you will move far beyond "What's the problem?"

It won't be long until, with God's help, you will be providing the answer.

FIVE

TWO SIDES OF THE STORY

A significant portion of a counselor's work involves dealing with marital problems—sometimes speaking with the wife, other times with the husband, and eventually both together.

The husband will complain, “My wife is such a trouble maker; all she does is nag. I am fed up with it, and I do not want to hear it any more.”

Or you may get the other side: “He is just a worthless no-good. He doesn't do anything around the house, he is never home, he doesn't care about me one bit. I do not need him any more. Why did I ever marry him?”

Such negative complaints serve to bring out the fact there is tension and strife in the relationship, but the true reasons for the contention are usually buried much deeper.

Stay with the facts.

Regardless of which party you believe is telling the truth, hold your opinion. Stick with statements such as “I hear what you are saying,” or “I can understand why you are so concerned.”

If only one of the parties is present, keep your focus

only on the person you are trying to help, not the spouse who is the object of the emotional distress.

The partner who is spewing out garbage is only making themselves look bad, so help them see this by encouraging them to state facts rather than getting involved in name calling. In many cases, the “other person” may not be as large a hornet’s nest as the one sitting there with you.

Where is God in the situation?

Your initial objective should be to whittle the problem down to size. This can be a challenge since the issue may be so gigantic in the person’s life that God seems to be out of the picture completely.

After being involved in hundreds of marriage counseling sessions, I have come to the conclusion that the reason many couples are unable to solve their difficulties at home is because they have not truly sought the Lord and allowed His enabling power to work through them.

As Paul says, *“You...have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things...Do you not realize that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?”* (Romans 2:1,3).

In your mission as a helper, encourage people to be realistic about their own role in the matter and how God’s power working in and through them can resolve the problem.

WHO SHOULD YOU COUNSEL?

I am a firm believer that when a woman is a counselor,

the first session in a marital dispute must be with the wife, not with the husband.

The Lord can use a female helper to steer the wife on the right track in her home, but the counsel must be kept on a spiritual level.

When a man has marital problems, he looks for someone who is understanding, thinking a woman counselor could be the answer to his problems. However, she should refer him to a male helper first.

Only after a strong relationship is established (man to man or woman to woman), should you meet with the other spouse individually or both parties together.

As a wise precaution, if a man is counseling a woman, there should always be another person in the room, preferably the husband. If he is unavailable, try to find a female helper who can be present as an observer.

The ideal situation, though not always possible, is for a husband-wife team to counsel a married couple.

People with emotional problems are susceptible and vulnerable. They may have been very stable at one time, but when internal feelings run high, people do strange things—even accusing a counselor of actions or behavior which never took place.

Create the safest, most trusting and ethical environment possible.

Advice to husbands and wives.

God's Word instructs a husband to "*love his wife as he loves himself*" (Ephesians 5:33). That's plain and simple. And to the wife, Scripture says she must "*respect her husband*" (verse 33) as unto the Lord, and honor him.

The love and esteem must be mutual, since we are to “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (verse 21).

If a married couple desires God’s results in their home, they must be obedient to His Word. This is why as a helper, you must remain centered on divine principles.

BE A PROPONENT OF VOW-KEEPING

I’ve seen a person who wants a divorce run from counselor to counselor until he or she finds one who will agree with their decision and give them the go-ahead.

We cannot take a light attitude toward divorce and, as a helper, you must do everything in your power to hold to biblical standards on the issue and do whatever is possible to keep the union together.

You must be a proponent of keeping the sacred vows of marriage and steadfast love—which will usually involve mercy and forgiveness.

Since there is only one Judge, it’s not your role to suggest separation or divorce. You are to encourage life, love, and the healing of a marriage.

The heart of the issue.

We mentioned earlier that often the statements one spouse makes against the other is just an outward expression of a deep, inward problem.

You must help the person move forward by peeling off the false façade, getting to the heart of the issue. After all, the Bible says, “*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy*” (Proverbs 28:13).

When you are probing the problem and a wife retorts, “Well, my husband is a jerk,” you can rest assured that is not the real issue. The wife who does not respect and honor her husband gives the devil not only an opportunity to harm her own life, but she is undermining her household. By name-calling, she is loosing in the spiritual realm, the *actions* of a jerk. Scripture records, “*The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit*” (Proverbs 18:21).

A counselor must encourage people to speak what the Word of God says.

Move from listening to action.

There are two kinds of wisdom: (1) hearing the Word and (2) doing the Word.

We must listen to what God says in order to recognize who is at fault. In the above example, when a wife disrespects her husband, she has violated a principle of Scripture. Then, when a counselor shows her the Word, they move on to the second kind of wisdom, where she must examine her heart and confess her sin.

If the matter is respect (or the lack thereof), the wife needs to put into practice Romans 4:17, declaring what is not as though it is. She needs to start saying, “He is the most loving, kind, gentle, considerate, faithful, trustworthy, and godly man I have ever known.”

When he hears this, you can rest assured it will get his attention! And as she begins to demonstrate this in the home by honoring, respecting, and complimenting him, he may wonder what she is up to. However, before long he will sense something wonderful is taking place—and come

to the conclusion that he needs Jesus too.

Never underestimate a woman's influence.

A wife can win her husband to the Lord simply by her behavior; without even speaking. The apostle Peter admonishes wives to be submissive to their husbands, “*so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives*” (1 Peter 3:1).

Throughout Scripture, we see that women are held in high esteem in God's eyes and given a tremendous place of influence. I'm not speaking of authority, but influence, and there is a big difference:

- Adam, the purest man there ever was, fell because of Eve.
- Samson, the strongest man, was beguiled by Delilah.
- Solomon, with all his wisdom, was led astray by women.

In Adam's case, I believe the Lord said to him, “The woman is not your problem! Your trouble is that you did not take the authority I gave you and use it lovingly with your wife. You did not do what I commanded. You listened to her instead.”

It wasn't the serpent nor the woman who was the problem—Adam didn't listen to God.

The Creator made men and women differently so they could be a balance for each other. It's been established that in the vast majority of cases, women operate through their emotions, while men make decision from their thinking.

I'm not judging which is best, but each needs the other—and teamed together they can accomplish a powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

The roots of worry and anxiety.

There are wives who speak disrespectfully of their husbands to cover up their own insecurities and fears—whether it is over home responsibilities or finances. But the Bible tells us that godly women who put their hope in God are made beautiful (1 Peter 3:5)—giving as an example “*Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear*” (verses 6).

Worry and anxiety are rooted in a need for stability, which every woman craves. Unfortunately, fear leads a woman to start asking, “What about this? What about that?” Before long, their world seems to crumble around them.

A husband may try to reason, but the fear remains and the wife keeps complaining. As the Bible says, “*A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping*” (Proverbs 19:13), and “*It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman*” (Proverbs 21:19 KJV).

As hard as he may try, no man can rid fear from a woman's thoughts. God alone can totally provide the stability and complete love a woman needs.

A loving wife will overlook her husband's faults because “*love covers over a multitude of sins*” (1 Peter 4:8).

TOTAL FORGIVENESS

Faith overcomes fear.

Let me share the testimony of a wife whose husband ran off with another woman. The abandoned wife carried on just as if she was still married to the man. She was a good mother who handled the children well and was a stable believer who lived for the Lord. This was only possible because when a person's heart is in tune with the Father, He gives amazing strength and ability.

Twelve years later, the husband suddenly came to his senses and decided he wanted his first wife back. He repented, gave his heart to Jesus, disassociated himself from the other woman, and went back to his real wife. Why? Because in her heart she never stopped being married to him.

God forgives every sin man commits—even adultery and fornication. In response to true repentance, the Lord cancels and erases our trespasses and gives us the ability to start new and fresh. In our ministry, I have seen this happen many times.

Remember, "*With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*" (Matthew 19:26). It is faith that moves God, and when we speak His Word to others, we are speaking life—and life produces fruit.

See hope in every circumstance.

Always offer help from the perspective of a positive outcome and that any situation can be resolved when the Lord is involved. With such an attitude you are going to see awesome results.

When hopeless situations are resolved, even the counselor's faith is revived. I have seen God pull people together from opposite sides of the country. I have seen

Him save entire families that were into everything but God. Plus, I have witnessed many physical and emotional healings that in the natural were out of the question. But God had a different plan.

The Lord will finish the work.

As a helper, don't allow pride to tell you that you are special in your own right. Always say, *"I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

It's important to know that when you have spoken to the mountain and said, "Move!"—that's it. According to the Word, the case is solved, even though the answer may not yet be visible.

It is a humbling experience for a counselor to turn a problem over to the Lord and allow Him to finish the job. You stand on this promise: *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (1 Timothy 1:12 KJV).

Do your part and allow God to do His. Once, when Jesus had finished teaching, He simply said, *"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"* (Mark 4:9). In other words, those who wanted to receive the counsel heard and applied it; those who refused, turned and walked away. The Lord did not pursue them, rather He went about His Father's business.

A counselor can't afford to become downcast, worried, or fret. Jesus said, *"If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit"* (Matthew 15:14). He was saying that if they don't listen to the things of the Spirit which will help them, they will reap the consequences of their decision.

Beware of spiritual leeches!

There are individuals who can draw the power of God out of me all day and all night, and I wouldn't care as long as they are doing something productive with it. But if they just pull it out and my counsel is doing nothing more than bouncing off the walls and up into the stars, then that person is nothing more than a spiritual leech.

Every time we pray there is energy that goes forth from the Spirit of God, and it must not be wasted. Jesus said, "*Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs*" (Matthew 7:6).

When people ignore your counsel, let them go with these words: "Come back when you have put what I have told you into practice. The next time you want to meet, be ready to give me a praise report."

If they are sincere, I can guarantee they will return with an attitude of gratitude. If they do it God's way they will reap God's results. Otherwise, they will still be carrying the weight of their problem.

ACCEPT INSTRUCTION

I received a telephone call at two o'clock in the morning from an individual whose sickly wife I had been counseling. He was frantic. "My wife is passed out on the floor. What do I do?"

I asked him, "Has she been eating three meals a day like I advised her to?"

"No," he replied.

"You had better get her to the hospital quick," I said. And for me, that was the end of the conversation.

In other words, if she was not going to follow the godly counsel I had given her, why should I be overly concerned now?

I say that in love. But you cannot expect to walk in divine health if you are abusing your body and not following basic principles of good health. This was a consequence of her decision.

The husband called me about four days later because he realized I did not want to hear from him until the woman started doing what was right for her body. I asked, “Did you take her to the hospital?”

“No,” he responded.

On questioning him further, he told me, “It was amazing. All of a sudden she got up off the floor and went to bed. She was fine.”

Apparently, the woman did not want to go to the hospital or see a doctor. Her bluff was called. She also started eating three meals a day!

A counselor does not help people by coddling them. It’s important to know when to let go.

There are those who would like you to do everything for them, but you cannot run their house anymore than they can run yours. The Bible clearly states, “*Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise*” (Proverbs 19:20).

This is good counsel indeed.

Speak strength instead of weakness.

Even when people refuse your recommendations, you must continue believing God for the answer. Never belittle your faith, especially since the Lord placed it within you.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Think of it! You are an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings, the Lord of all, and what you speak on this earth, your Father God is going to honor in heaven. God will get results in the name of Jesus.

When people tell you they are afraid or powerless, ask them to speak the Word: *“Let the weak say, I am strong”* (Joel 3:10).

A counselor must call on prayer and encouragement to keep going. Never waver in your faith in God’s ability. You will see Him move in every situation.

SIX

QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING

You will learn first hand that a major hindrance in counseling is the lack of cooperation on the part of the people being counseled. Many will be moaning and groaning, “Poor me, poor me”—which reveals a complaining attitude that is not of God.

These individuals are not blessed, and it will soon be obvious they are not reading their Bibles, praying, or having fellowship with other Christians.

A few recommendations.

Early in your helper-helpee relationship, ask the person to do a little homework, which means reading specific portions of Scripture. I believe the best place to begin is getting to know our miracle-working Christ.

If people are not familiar with the Word, ask them to read both the book of John and the book of Mark. John presents a clear path to salvation and Mark gives an account of specific instances of the healing and deliverance Christ brings.

Then they should be encouraged to pray. God is not interested in fancy prayers, just sincere words spoken from

the heart. That is why children's prayers are answered so quickly. As people grow in the Lord, they can learn to pray with more maturity and move ahead spiritually.

The Bible states, "*Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*" (James 4:2-3).

I believe the phrase "*upon your lusts*" means asking for something you want to keep for yourself. It is my opinion that God gives us blessings so we can share them with others as a testimony for His glory.

THE TROUBLES OF JOB

Just about every counselor will run into someone with a "Poor Job" complex—believing it was God who placed all Job's troubles on him, even taking away his riches and children.

However, if you read Scripture closely, you will learn it was the devil who was the cause of Job's problems. The Almighty only *allowed* him to be tested (Job 1).

As a human, however, Job had his weaknesses. At one point he said, "*For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me*" (Job 3:25)."

However, in God's sight, Job was righteous (Job 1:4). And today you and I have the righteousness of Christ because we love Him (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The danger of fear and worry.

Many Christians have a mistaken concept of Job and have placed him on a pedestal. But even righteous Job was living in a state of fear. The Bible tells us he had anxiety concerning his health and worried over his children, and

the very things he feared most came upon him.

There were three counselors who visited Job, and none of them had the correct advice. Each made comments about God that the Almighty considered abominable. So much so that the Lord told them, “*You have not spoken of me what is right*” (Job 42:8).

At one point, God informed Job that he had better pray for his three friends because of the words they had said about Him. Instead of the counselors praying for Job, he prayed for them (verse 10)!

In the latter chapters of the book of Job we find him guilty of spiritual pride, for which the Lord gently rebuked him. Job asked forgiveness for talking about matters of which he had no knowledge nor understanding.

When he repented, God blessed him not only with good health, but with twice as many riches as he had before—and he was already one of the wealthiest men of his day. God even blessed him with a new family.

You have a hedge of protection.

Too many dwell on the first part of the book of Job and the miseries he suffered, instead of rejoicing over his many favors after he repented.

I do not see the devil winning and God’s people losing. We counsel people to victory, and we encourage hope, faith, and a victorious attitude.

I believe in the divine protection of the Almighty where the devil cannot touch God’s people because He can place a hedge around us. The Lord will “*command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways*” (Psalm 91:11).

When tormentors attack our minds, we can cast them off in the name of Jesus—and they have to flee. We are

under “*the shadow of the Almighty*”(Psalm 91:1) and “*no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent*” (verse 10).

The only way a plague or evil can harm us is if God tests us or we open the door and let these things in our lives, as Job did through fear.

GOD’S MEASURE FOR GROWTH

The Word of God is the standard counselors must measure everything against. If it were too difficult to understand, the Lord would not have given it to us.

When you explain something to a child and make it clear to him, it is easy for the young person to comprehend. Children usually put all their effort into what they understand and feel they can do. When my youngsters were helping me weed the flower garden, it was easy to show them what to pull out. There was not a yellow dandelion left anywhere when they were finished! Such fervor is how God wants His people to respond.

Scripture tells us, “*A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke*” (Proverbs 13:1).

As we walk with God and put into practice what we are learning, it takes time. The principle is to act on divine knowledge—and this is how we grow thirty, sixty, or one hundred fold (Mark 4:20). The measure of growth depends on what we do with what we hear and learn.

Pray for discernment.

A counselor will encounter many foolish people, but Scripture forbids us to label them as such. Jesus declared, “*Anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell*” (Matthew 5:22).

You may recognize this kind of person, and that's discernment, but if you call him a fool, you are judging. *"The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning. Stay away from a foolish man, for you will not find knowledge on his lips"* (Proverbs 14:6-7).

We do not know who will or won't change, and we must never hinder anyone from an opportunity to get right with the Lord.

Set your priorities.

In a counseling session, if arguments of science, denominational doctrine, or other issues arise, either change the topic or terminate the discussion. You need to focus on why the person needs help instead of getting involved in a pointless debate. This same wisdom applies to witnessing.

While we are on this topic, let me share another important principle. You must not permit anyone to rob you of private time with your family by calls at home for instant counseling. Your family comes first. The order of priority is (1) the Lord; (2) you and your family; (3) the world.

Many churches are in trouble because they project the image of the Lord first, the church second, and the family last. This is not God's order. A counselor should never feel guilty for taking time with his family. When he builds a strong spiritual relationship at home, he is covering and protecting his household from outside influences.

According to the Word, a deacon or an elder *"must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)"* (1 Timothy 3:4-5). I

believe this applies to counselors too.

The work starts first in you and under your roof. Hours should be established. Counseling appointments should be kept at the arranged times and should not interfere with your family's schedule.

A helper should not have to take a call at two or three in the morning. Most of these types of calls are emotional outpourings that should be between that person and the Lord, not the counselor.

If a man or woman truly desires help, they should be willing to wait until you are able to meet with them. I have learned from past mistakes to use wisdom in becoming more organized in counseling.

There's a cost involved.

I thank God for a loving, considerate wife who put up with phone calls at dinner time, or on our way out the door. Those calls robbed me of valuable time with my family, and should not have happened. I should have said, "I will be happy to talk with you at such and such a time, on such and such a date if you will call back."

If that person really wants help, he will be willing to be patient. In fact, you will get better results because you will be operating as the Lord leads.

People appreciate things where a cost is involved. If a woman buys an expensive dress with her hard-earned money, she is going to take good care of it. She feels responsible and accountable for what she has spent.

Although we do not charge for counseling in our ministry (though I do not criticize those who do), our results are priceless because we ask people to invest their time in prayer and the Word. We point them to God who

has the answers to every problem.

Only go where you are called.

Let me address the topic of counseling people in a hospital. This should not be done unless it is requested. I have known of situations where well-meaning believers with plenty of faith (but not much wisdom) walked into a hospital room and begin laying hands on the sick—sometimes even on patients they did not originally come to visit.

What results is that the hospital staff becomes upset. So make it a practice to only counsel individuals when and where it is requested.

Are they taking responsibility?

You should never become guilt-induced to return a call, and certainly never intimidated by someone you are counseling. Don't become a runner of errands for those who lack attention.

Real kindness, love, and compassion from a counselor should cause people to take responsibility for themselves to go before God and allow Him to work in their lives.

A helper may be misunderstood for a seeming lack of concern, and even accused of being un-Christian. Sometimes God is blamed for the problems these people face, which I call spiritual pride and audacity. Such individuals usually want the counselor to solve all their problems, while they sit back and watch, making no effort to change.

Remember, you are not responsible for what actions people take with your counsel. Your mission is only to communicate the Word of God in love.

KEY QUESTIONS

There are several vital questions a counselor should ask people that will help sort things out for them. The first is, “What do you expect of me?”

This will assist you in determining why the person called, why he is seeking advice, and what he truly wants as a result. This eliminates them from rambling on for twenty or forty minutes about their problems.

When people are confronted with a direct question such as this, it causes them to think about counseling with a positive attitude. They will usually realize that the first need is prayer.

After praying together, they may just want to talk. Often, they need encouragement, or a promise from the Word of God. This is done in love, and as the counselor winds up the conversation, both feel good about what is taking place, and the time spent has been constructive, not wasted.

Are you the one to help?

The next question is one a counselor needs to ask himself privately: “Father, in Jesus’ name, did You send this person to me?”

A helper must be obedient to God’s will in this area. For example, you may need to send people back to their knees before God in prayer prior to the time counseling can begin. Sometimes individuals are too flippant, and as a result, do not receive answers to their prayers.

People are basically lazy and most will want to rely on you as a helper. This can become a trap, so let the person

know it is essential that they spend a great amount of time with the Lord and in the Word—because it is where they will find the ultimate answers.

Since a counselor or a minister may not be around when trouble suddenly strikes them, the person must learn to go directly to the Lord in times of distress. This is not unloving or lacking in compassion. When you study how Jesus ministered, you will see that He was not at the beck and call of the people, but pointed them to His Father.

How serious are they?

A counselor should not hesitate to ask, “Did you spend time with God in prayer before calling me?”

This helps establish the level of spiritual maturity the person has, and will give you an indication of how serious they are in finding God’s solution to their problems.

The next question should be: “Have you searched God’s Word yourself?”

We grow by reading and studying the Bible, by meditating on the Scriptures. A counselor will help people become established in an effective Bible reading plan so they are not skipping around reading verses here and there, gaining very little understanding of God’s Word.

As a helper assures his people that they have been freed from worries, fears, doubts, guilt, anxiety, and every kind of torment in the name of Jesus, they need to realize they are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. However, doubts may surface.

In some cases, you need to tactfully ask, “Why are you still burdened by this problem that is small to the Lord, but seems so big to you?”

Let everybody know they have the authority of heaven to solve any situation, large or small, in the mighty name of Jesus.

The role of the pastor.

Ministers are often criticized for not being easily available to people who want to talk with them. However, if clergymen allowed people to take up all their time (which they most assuredly would if they could), there would not be much done in the ministry.

The pastor who is tuned in to the Holy Spirit will know who God wants him to talk with. The Lord will put both of them together. Otherwise, other counselors on the staff can just as easily deal with men and women who need help.

A time for “tough love.”

If, after several sessions and specific advice from the helper, people are still struggling, the counselor may ask, “Have you been doing what I asked of you?”

There comes a time when you need to dispense some “tough love.”

Yes, the Bible instructs us to “*Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2). Where do we carry them? We take them to the Lord—and leave them there!

We do not place their problems on our shoulders. Rather, we accompany the counselee as he lays them at the foot of the cross.

God intends for His people to throw their shoulders back and walk boldly as sons and daughters of the Most High God. We are not spiritual cripples. In the words of Paul, “*Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride*

in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load” (Galatians 6:4-5).

If you are expecting somebody else to bear your burden as you walk with God, you are deceived. It is time to start growing and maturing in the faith. In the Lord Jesus, we are able to walk hand in hand with God and have complete victory.

When children are young, a parent may need to carry them now and then when they become weary and tired. But as they get older, they learn to walk in their own strength. This is how God’s people should be.

LISTEN TO GOD’S SPIRIT

A prime requisite for a counselee is to be completely honest and open. You cannot minister to anyone who is not totally truthful. Some may balk at this requirement, and may even accuse you of being unloving, uncaring, unsympathetic, etc. The sad part is that they usually will not tell *you*, but they feel free to unload on everyone else in town.

Remember, “*All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits*” (Proverbs 16:2 KJV). And later in this same chapter we read, “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death*” (verse 25).

Be aware of hidden agendas.

As a counselor is sensitive to the Spirit of God, he will learn there are often agendas people have that may not be evident at first. Certain deceitful individuals may pose as a best friend, gaining sympathy and confidence, and then turn around and betray you.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Today's Christian scene is littered with the stories of people who have conned counselors and ministers out of practically everything they owned. Some seek you out and appear to be warm-hearted, friendly, even *giving* towards you. It truth they give a little so they can tap your resources for a whole lot more.

For this reason, every helper must be wise and sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

People can declare, "He is Lord," with their mouths, but the true test is the fruit of their lives. This should not cause you to be afraid as long as your heart is sincere before God and you are moving in His Word, seeking, growing, and learning to do what He says.

Being a counselor is a worthy calling.

Every day you need to ask the Lord for His guidance as you deal with hurting hearts. Because of your efforts, men and women will be able to testify to God's transforming power.

SEVEN

MOTIVATION OF THE HEART

As a counselor, you need to examine your own heart. Do you want to grow in the Lord? Do you want to know the innermost truths of Scripture? What is it your desire from God?

He will take you as far as you are willing to go. Jesus said, *“According to your faith will it be done to you”* (Matthew 9:19).

Every helper needs a deeper understanding of himself before he can truly minister to others.

There are nine gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Personally, I want all of them so I can be more effective in ministry. It is believers who are really expecting, seeking, open, and pressing ahead in the Spirit who are going to be shining lights for the Lord.

God’s work is no place for someone who sits around with a ho-hum attitude. It takes effort that is driven by the heart for any minister to be used to the utmost by the Lord.

What about priorities?

When I was in my second year in seminary, God spoke to me, saying, “Son, I cannot use you the way you are right now.”

This came as a surprise to me! I had been working in churches for years before that time, proclaiming the Word of God, and mighty things were happening. Now I was president of the seminary student body and busy with campus life. What did the Lord mean?

That night in prayer, God asked me to search my heart and make a list of my priorities. When I did, I quickly discovered that my activities were taking precedence over the Lord—in fact He was not at the top of the list.

Ever since I was young, all I wanted to do was to serve God, and when He told me He couldn’t use me, I was crushed.

I had begun the preparation and laid the groundwork for ministry, even though I did not know how or where, I just knew I wanted to be His servant.

In my room, I fell on my face before God and wept until there were no more tears. Hours later the Spirit of God began revealing things to me. As I lay before the Lord, my spirit broken, I began to see my priorities. I asked God to forgive me for putting baseball ahead of Him, running campus events, helping in a church and all those other respectable things I was involved in.

You see, even though I was talking *about* God all the time, He was not on the throne of my soul and reigning as number one.

Often we get so caught up in our witnessing that we

forget about the Jesus we are supposed to be sharing. But as I examined my life, the Lord helped me see that all I did counted for nothing because my priorities were wrong.

Remember, a man's ways may seem right to him, *"but motives are weighed by the Lord"* (Proverbs 16:2).

ARE YOU PREPARED TO FOLLOW?

When Jesus called His disciples, they did not ask for a month to get their personal affairs in order. They immediately dropped everything they were doing—their nets, their boats—and followed Him.

I can just imagine Matthew *"sitting at the tax collector's booth"* (Matthew 9:9), with piles of money stacked on the table. But when Jesus came along with the invitation, *"Follow me,"* nothing else mattered. It's not normal for a person to walk away from money, yet Scripture tells us, *"Matthew got up and followed him"* (verse 9).

This is the kind of obedience God desires to see in His children today.

Never be deterred by your age.

Timothy was a young man, but Paul told him, *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity"* (1 Timothy 4:12).

On the other hand, there are people who have been church members forty or fifty years who still do not really know their heavenly Father. This grieves my heart.

No one is ever too old to live according to the Word and be obedient to His Spirit. Moses did not begin his

ministry until he was eighty! It took him that long to be prepared for God's plan and purpose.

We should resolve that we will not leave this earth until we have accomplished the mission the Lord has placed us here to fulfill. If we are wise, we will set our hearts toward that goal. And when we stand before our Maker some day, we will hear Him say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:21).

We must fight the good fight, run the race, and cross the finish line for the glory of God.

Take an introspective look.

Why do you want to serve the Lord? You love Him, you were created to praise Him, and your heart is brimming with gratitude and thanksgiving for what He has done.

Most of us want to do what the Almighty has called us to do, but life with its never-ending distractions causes us to become side-tracked and we waste precious time. It happens much too easily. This is why it is so essential that we have our priorities in order.

We all know people who attend church one day a week, sit there quietly for an hour, and when the service is over, they have their sense of being religious. Then they leave and do whatever they want the rest of the week.

If there is no delight in the Lord, and it is an effort to spend time with Him, they should take an introspective look at their commitment to Jesus. God longs for us to wait in His presence, to yearn for Him, to acknowledge His leading in everything we do, say, or think.

When you spend quality time with Jesus, His thoughts will become your thoughts. It is in the quiet moments that

you will hear His voice speak softly to you.

DON'T MISTAKE MOTIVATION FOR FULFILLMENT

There are many who have a desire to serve the Lord Jesus—whether from behind a pulpit, teaching, or counseling—but very few are actually willing to do what is required. It is surprising how many men and women think there is fame and even financial gain in being a minister, and some enter the profession for the wrong reasons. Others may be urged by well-meaning friends to expand to other areas of church work, but unless it is God speaking, they had better stay where they are.

To some, motivation is mistaken for fulfillment. For example, doing good deeds brings a sense of satisfaction to those who love people. The test is to ask, “Who is receiving the glory?”

Many lukewarm Christians do just enough to make themselves feel proud of helping someone else. The Lord has this to say about such individuals: *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth”* (Revelation 3:15-16).

It takes effort to be on fire for God. And this only happens when your priorities and motivations are perfectly pure in God’s sight.

What’s behind their behavior?

Let’s say you are witnessing to a non-believer, telling them about the love of Jesus. You see a frown appear and anger building, and you know they are offended. As you

keep talking, they become even more angry.

The natural inclination is to leave, shaking the dust from your feet.

When people come against you, perhaps even using curse words directed at your actions, stop for a moment and consider what is behind their behavior.

Regardless of their disposition, you must be willing to love them and let them know it. There will come a time when they will thank God for His love in your heart that helped you overlook their remarks and reactions.

The Lord is concerned with building bridges, not blowing them up! *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation”* (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Our desire is to draw people together in the love of God, not separating or dividing them. Be honest with yourself to see if you have a problem in this area.

Are you compelled to do His will?

When you minister with the proper motivation in the love of Jesus, you will not be upset over negative reactions. You are able and willing to ignore scorn because you truly care about the person’s soul.

Paul writes, *“Christ’s love compels us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14)—it constrains and persuades us to do His will.

The way the Spirit of God works and moves is strange to the natural mind. But the Lord can take a person who is addicted to alcohol, drugs, and immorality of every kind, then, by the mere touch of His hand, transform them into a clean, pure vessel for His honor and glory. God can change impossible family situations.

I cannot tell you how He does this, but I know He

changes hearts and minds, and makes bodies whole.

TRANSFORMED BY TRUTH

Amazing things can happen when the Word of God is the “sword” (Hebrews 4:12). Its fine, sharp edge will cut to the heart of those who are hardened, stiff-necked, or rebellious. What a joy to see them become new creatures, ready to start living for the Lord.

During the days of Jesus on earth, *“Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, ‘He is a good man.’ Others replied, ‘No, he deceives the people.’ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews”* (John 7:12-13).

The throngs were listening to Jesus, and at the same time forming opinions about Him in their thoughts. This still happens today, and is the reason many miss out on the truths of God’s Spirit. It is easy to make a hasty decision that is not consistent with the Lord’s will, and end up overlooking what He is trying to convey.

Our knowledge must come from above.

Jesus was a Master Counselor and could pierce the hearts of those who were listening to Him.

In any given assembly where He was preaching and teaching, there were people who believed in Him, and others who were there just to see something spectacular take place. In addition, some attempted to trip Him up with trick questions.

Jesus, however, spoke total truth because He received the knowledge from His Father. He was in complete

obedience to God, spending time in prayer and reading the Scriptures

As we follow His example, the Lord will show us what to do and teach us by His Spirit. Being counselors, our teaching and communication are not our own. We seek the clear, undefiled, unadulterated truth of God.

Many heard Jesus, but only those who did what He said really knew He was the Son of God.

When the Lord gives a command, we must not hesitate to respond, but immediately obey. Looking back is dangerous because it will cause us to revert to the cares of the world. But when we keep our eyes riveted on Jesus and get into God's Word, we are renewed and strengthened daily

Chains couldn't stop him.

Walking close to the Lord doesn't mean a smooth journey. Paul paid a high price for proclaiming Christ and doing the will of the Father. He wrote in his letter to the believers at Philippi, "*Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*" (Philippians 1:12).

At the time, he was sitting in prison for sharing the love of Jesus, Yet Paul was able to declare, "*Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly*" (verse 14).

The apostle had one driving force, a passion to see the message of Christ reach the whole world. And since he was single-minded, nothing would deter him—not even prison chains.

BEHIND THE BEHAVIOR

What individuals say on the surface may not actually be what is in their hearts. However, a counselor who is led by the Spirit of God will eventually get to the crux of the matter and find the true reason a person behaves the way he does.

Part of your goal is to have people examine their attitudes, actions, and responses, and to measure them on the basis of what the Word of God says.

A helper must try to understand human nature and realize that every action and word are prompted by certain cravings. Some are good, some are negative, and some are destructive.

What triggers the action?

Desire for excitement and adventure is one motivator. Escape is another. It is vital to understand that the reasons people do what they do is not always as simple as it may appear. Many actions and words are triggered by selfishness, greed, envy, fear, love, acceptance, security, guilt, lust, covetousness, fear of failure, jealousy, manipulation (trying to control someone else), anger, desire for recognition, loneliness, inferiority, depravation, grief, and overcompensation (to develop in one area to compensate for another one where they feel they are lacking).

This is why it is so beneficial for every counselor to search out the motivations in his own heart to understand why he speaks and acts in certain ways. By knowing your own inner-workings, you can help others identify the root of their problem.

BEYOND GREED AND GUILT

When you study God's Word, you find that through the ages human nature has not changed.

Take a look at Judas. The first thing we think of at the mention of his name is his betrayal of Jesus. Why would a fellow who traveled with Jesus for three years sell Him for thirty pieces of silver? That was an insignificant amount. Since Judas was the treasurer, there certainly must have been much more money than this flow through the treasury coffers.

What motivated Judas?

The Bible tells us that a spirit of Satan came within Judas (John 13:27). What opened the door to the devil? It was greed—which is considered idolatry in the Bible.

Judas was expecting Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth as the Messiah who was going to conquer the Romans and all the other enemies of the land. When he saw that Jesus had no intention of setting up an earthly kingdom, he was disappointed and disillusioned. This was a powerful motivator in Judas' life, and it swung open the door for Satan to use him.

The results of guilt.

Scripture records that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Matthew 26:47-49). We think of this as an affectionate, loving gesture, and those who witnessed his actions would have thought the two were friends.

But Judas was giving a signal to the Roman leaders to have Jesus arrested. However, his actions resulted in such guilt, he was driven to hang himself.

Imagine the emotions Judas went through when he

realized that Jesus knew he was betraying Him while they sat together at the Last Supper. You can see how the devil can so blind individuals that they deceive themselves. When everything was uncovered, Judas saw what he had really done, but because of the deception, he failed to remember what Jesus had taught on repentance and forgiveness.

An expression of love.

On another occasion, Jesus was visiting at the home of one of the Pharisees, and they neglected to wash the feet of the guests according to the custom of the day. A woman came in off the street and everyone knew who she was. She approached Jesus and, weeping, poured precious ointment over His feet and wiped them with her hair.

Others present made a big issue out of the expensive ointment being wasted, and believed it should have been sold to assist the poor.

When people are concerned about the monetary value of things, it becomes obvious what motivates their heart. To give the proceeds from the ointment to the needy was certainly a worthy idea, but it was so much better to use it in bathing and perfuming Jesus' feet.

This was a woman of the streets, but her love for Jesus brought about repentance and forgiveness, and set her free from her old life. She was filled with thankfulness and gratitude to God, and expressed it by ministering to Jesus, the Man.

The reaction to insecurity.

At one point, Jesus told Peter that He would be going to the cross. Peter's response was, "*Never, Lord!...This shall*

never happen to you!” (Matthew 16:22).

What caused Peter to deny the need for Jesus to die this way? It was insecurity. He was afraid of being left alone. He had grown to love the Lord Jesus greatly, depending upon Him.

As of this time, the disciples were not yet leaders. They were still followers, and to think of the Master leaving them was disheartening.

When Peter spoke to Jesus out of his insecurity, the Lord looked at him and gave this rebuke: *“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men”* (verse 23).

Peter was being influenced by the devil, and we can be too if we are not on guard.

How about your heart?

God is doing a marvelous work and He is changing us. He is making us into men and women who are just like Him. I believe that if Judas had repented, he would have been forgiven and restored. But he did not. The woman who washed the feet of Jesus did repent and she was made clean and pure in God’s eyes. Peter, too, was forgiven and became a powerful leader in the early church.

We may look at the exterior, but the Lord sees the motivation of our hearts.

EIGHT

LIFE LESSONS FOR HELPERS

When you examine the men and women whose lives are recorded in Scripture, you will find they were driven by one of two forces: either by the flesh (what I want to do for me) or the Spirit (what God wants me to do for Him and others).

An often overlooked story in the Old Testament gives us an insight into one woman, Abigail—and an essential lesson for counselors to learn.

During this time, King Saul was making threats against young David, the popular hero who had killed the Philistine giant. Because of jealousy Saul was out to take his life.

While on the run, David's servants approached one of the wealthiest men in the land, Nabal (Abigail's husband), for some provisions for his armies and himself.

However, Nabal hurled insults at their request. Meanwhile, one of the shepherds came to Abigail and told her what had happened. Nabal refused to help, even though David and his friends had done nothing to harm him. The men felt there was no reason for the way they

were treated, and told Abigail that Nabal was “*such a wicked man that no one can talk to him*” (1 Samuel 25:17).

When the servants informed David what had happened, he ordered: “*Put on your swords!*” (verse 12)—and they prepared to confront Nabal.

Abigail didn’t waste any time! Immediately she gathered together two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five sacks of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs and loaded them on donkeys. Then she instructed her servants to go on ahead and she would follow them. “*But she did not tell her husband Nabal*” (verse 19).

We learn that when Abigail saw David, she quickly dismounted from her donkey and bowed down before him with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and pleaded, “*My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent*” (verses 24-25).

What was her secret agenda?

Abigail had arranged for the provisions to help David, and she delivered the goods herself without telling her husband beforehand. Not only did she call her husband a fool, but let David know that if his men had personally come to her, she would have helped them out. She continued, “My husband is an evil wicked man,” and assured David she was on his side.

Instead of plotting revenge against Nabal, David accepted Abigail’s gifts and agreed not to harm her husband.

Upon arriving home, she found Nabal presiding over a lavish banquet like that of a king. The Bible says, *“He was in high spirits and very drunk”* (verse 36).

So Abigail didn’t tell him anything regarding what she had done until the next morning. Then, when he was sober, she related the entire story.

At that very moment, he had a heart attack and *“became like a stone. About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died”* (verses 37-38).

When David learned of his demise, he said, *“Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal’s wrongdoing down on his own head”* (verse 38).

Next, David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife. When the men delivered the message, she bowed down with her face to the ground and uttered these words: *“Here is your maidservant, ready to serve you and wash the feet of my master’s servants”* (verse 41).

Fear and lust: a dangerous combination.

On the surface, it would appear that Abigail was a very virtuous, righteous, upstanding woman of God. However, as we look beyond her actions and words, we see a rebellious, unsubmitive wife. In referring to her husband as a fool, it shows her disrespect for her spouse.

According to the Bible, God took Nabal’s life for insulting His servant, David. But did the Lord need Abigail’s help? Her actions played a role in Nabal’s death. Why would she take things into her own hands? What was her motivation? It was fear. She was afraid for her life and that of her servants. It appears she was not overly concerned for her husband, so the spirit operating in her

was independent, wounded, judgmental, and disloyal.

Another factor to consider is that Abigail was “*an intelligent and beautiful woman*” (1 Samuel 25:3), and, according to Scripture, David was a handsome man (1 Samuel 16:12).

This introduces motivation number two: she was lusting in the flesh after another man, wanting to be his wife. She was ready to leave Nabal whom she considered to be an obese, old drunk.

No doubt, word had spread that David was to be the next king, and Abigail was not only selfish, looking out for her own interests, but also ambitious.

To be fair, David’s track record was not all that commendable either. Yes, he had accomplished many great things for the Lord, and was a man after God’s own heart, but he made plenty of human errors and fell into sin. However, he was always quick to ask for God’s forgiveness and make things right.

This is a very important lesson for a helper to learn. Many times people share with you a story that is not always true. They have a natural inclination to build themselves up, look as good as they can and make someone else the fall guy. The counselor needs discernment and wisdom from God to help wounded people make the necessary changes.

DRIVEN BY REJECTION

There is another woman mentioned in Scripture who’s fear of being exposed as a deceiver caused her to make unfounded charges. She was the wife of a man named Potiphar.

The book of Genesis details the account of how Joseph was sold into slavery, and ended up in Egypt. He was taken into the house of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. While there he proved himself to be a faithful and loyal servant—and was soon exalted to be the head manager over all of the household affairs.

One day, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, but Joseph rebuffed her advances, saying, "*How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*" (Genesis 39:9).

Joseph was motivated in his heart with love for the Almighty, loyalty to his master (Potiphar), purity, and a desire for holiness. So he ran away from the woman.

She became upset and was now driven by rejection, revenge, anger, hurt pride, resentment, and outright hatred.

Potiphar's wife was at fault and had no reason to say anything about the incident to her husband. But she did—concocting a story that it was Joseph who attempted to seduce her!

Why would she make such a false claim? She wanted Potiphar to take action and punish Joseph.

You can't escape the law of sowing and reaping.

When a person has the wrong motives they will have guilt and do whatever is necessary to conceal their iniquity.

As a result, Joseph was unjustly thrown into prison.

I believe this woman's sin eventually caught up with her. We are told, "*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. the one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life*" (Galatians 6:7-8).

If you sow love, love will come to you. If you sow trust,

trust will be your reward. On the other hand, if you sow hatred, this is what you will reap. The same holds true of unforgiveness and bitterness.

A MOTHER'S REQUEST

Over the years, I've had parents come for counseling—not for themselves, but on behalf of their children. Usually it is for advice regarding how to deal with a wayward teen or a rebellious child. However, there have been times when a mom or dad simply wants to know how to encourage their child to achieve the best life possible.

Once, a mother approached Jesus with her two sons and knelt down before Him to ask a favor.

“What is it you want?” the Lord inquired.

The woman replied, “*Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom*” (Matthew 20:21).

Every mother wants advantages for her children, and there was nothing wrong with the desire, or the asking. However, Jesus told her “[*It*] is not for me to grant. *These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father*” (verse 23).

That should have been the end of the incident. However, the other disciples overheard the conversation, and needless to say, they became angry. I believe they were upset because they didn't think of it first and ask for those positions for themselves!

The danger of exaltation.

Let's examine the motives of the mother first. She

loved Jesus, and loved her sons, and yearned for a place of honor for them.

There is nothing wrong with wanting a blessing from the Lord, but when you ask for a position, that is something only God can determine. In asking for her sons to be lifted up to a place of esteem above others, she was creating strife.

In the flesh, people long to be lauded, but the Bible tells us, *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12).

Praise from people is short-lived, but honor from God is eternal.

Always esteem others as better than yourself.

On the surface, it would appear that this mother was driven by love. In truth, however, it was selfishness, because the honor would have been at the expense of others.

What about the sons? Their mother did the talking for them, and they probably thought it was a worthy request. Sure, they wanted elevated positions in the kingdom, but were personally hesitant to ask—thinking it might sound less self-serving coming from someone else, like their mom.

But notice the other disciples were angry at the two sons, not the mother (verse 25). They had been taught and trained to be equals, and these brothers were trying to jump ahead into esteemed positions.

Scripture admonishes: *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the*

interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

This is a vital lesson for the parents and children we are counseling today.

LESSONS FOR DISCIPLES

Do you remember reading the story of how some mothers came to Jesus with their little ones, wanting Him to lay hands on them and give them a blessing?

The disciples, however, told them the Master was too busy, and tried to send them away (Mark 10:13).

Jesus had been ministering constantly and was tired, when here came these women with their children. It appeared the disciples were concerned about His well-being and wanted Him to get some peace and quiet.

The disciples obviously felt that these mothers with their noisy children were not too important, and they would be a bother to Jesus. But they certainly didn't display the same protective attitude if a ruler from the synagogue or a high official in the government approached them asking to see Jesus.

So when the Master saw what was taking place, He was indignant. He called the disciples aside and counseled them, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these”* (verse 14). Then He added, *“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it”* (verse 16).

Finally, He took the children in his arms, put His hands on them and blessed them, demonstrating His compassion and mercy.

The Son of God shows no partiality. He ministers to

whoever the Spirit leads Him to.

The Lord rebukes those He loves.

Jesus wanted His disciples to know the heart of God and He trained them in the way the Father would have them grow and develop. In fact, He spent more time correcting the disciples than He did instructing them.

Just as Jesus chastised His most devoted followers, God rebukes those He loves. As the Bible declares, *“Better is open rebuke than hidden love”* (Proverbs 27:5).

Later, when similar incidents occurred in the first century church, these same disciples were much more cautious in rebuking others. They wanted everyone to be able to come to Christ.

“Do not stop him!”

The twelve disciples were chosen by Jesus, but they were men with human weakness and had to constantly monitor their emotions, whether they be fear, anger, or jealousy.

In one instance, a man was performing miracles in the name of Jesus and they became quite upset. John ran to the Lord and exclaimed, *“Teacher...we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us”* (Matthew 9:37).

Obviously, they believed the Lord would thank them for their actions. However, they were surprised when Jesus cautioned, *“Do not stop him...No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us”* (verse 40).

Here was a person who received the truth of what Jesus

was teaching, and started doing the works of Christ. The disciples became jealous because they were still tagging along on Jesus' apron strings, letting Him do all the works, while they took pride in being close to Him as personal friends.

Why did the disciples tell this man to stop what he was doing? It was because he was not a member of their inner circle. From their perspective, he was not a part of their little clique. They thought that as true followers of Jesus, the power belonged only to them. As a result, they were exhibiting selfishness, pride, envy, conceit, and division.

Jesus was attempting to train them to minister just as the other man was doing, but they couldn't see it. And we see this happening among believers today.

Thankfully, Jesus puts it all into the proper perspective.

SELF-DISCIPLINE AND DILIGENCE

When you have counseled a hundred people, you may be surprised to learn each has a different reason for seeking your help. Some may come for instruction—to increase in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Some will be there because they have been forced to by a parent or a spouse. Others, while they know they have a need, are just curious as to what really happens in a counseling session.

Two essential qualities required for a spiritual helper are self-discipline and diligence. In reality the two go hand in hand.

A counselor must refuse to let the devil control one inch of his life. He must be diligent to quickly catch Satan's attempts to enter:

- When fear comes, he confronts it.
- When doubt comes, he deals with it.
- When worry comes, he faces it.

Sometimes four or five arrows of the enemy will target you at once, but a godly counselor is always alert, watching and praying. Scripture warns us to *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8 KJV).

This is a time for seriousness. People are dying every day, and they do not know the love of Jesus. Homes are breaking up right and left because they do not accept God’s love. There is no room for foolishness or wasting days in nonsensical, meaningless activities. You may be criticized for your diligence, but when you stand before God, you will be able to give a worthy account.

Intensity is required.

People have asked me, “Why are you so intense?”

It is because life and death is happening all around me and I want to live in the joy and abundance Jesus supplies. I cannot let anything hinder my walk with the Lord.

We know that God is *“a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6). This requires intensity—the same kind Jacob had when he wrestled with the angel. If we want something badly enough, a half-hearted attitude won’t suffice. We must be determined to get all that God has promised us.

A time to rejoice!

On the other hand, there are those who ask, “Why do

you laugh so much?”

I tell them it is because I am happy that my God reigns and provides for His children. This is why I can tell others. *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart”* (Psalm 37:4).

As a spiritual helper, there will be a time to pray, a time to be diligent, a time to cry, and a time to rejoice.

Certainly, you are concerned for the lives God has entrusted to your care, but if the problems cause you to bury yourself with anxiety and worry, you will never be able to lift people out of their crippling circumstances.

Take time every day to put the words of the apostle Paul into action: *“Rejoice in the Lord always”* (Philippians 4:4).

Say it again, “Rejoice!”

NINE

YOUR GIFTS ARE FOR GIVING

If you have received Jesus as your Savior and are filled with the Spirit of God, you have ministry gifts operating in your life according to the grace given you. As we learn from the Word, *“If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully”* Romans 12:6-8).

You will recognize which specific gift is yours because it will flow naturally, with no strain or burden. You will know if God has given you the ability to teach because people will listen to you. If they are not, it is a sign this is not your calling.

For example, if you walk into a nursing home and your heart goes out to those people with compassion to the extent you just want to hug and love those folks, then you are operating in a ministry service with the gift of mercy.

However, another individual may start crying and have to leave. They should realize this is not their ministry.

It is best to try various areas of service to see what God reveals is right for you. When He does, begin to equip yourself to accomplish the task with excellence.

Demonstrate generosity.

Let's talk about one of the gifts mentioned in the above passage. *"If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously"* (verse 8). This concerns a ministry of giving—not just God's tithe, but offerings over and above. You are not only supporting the work of the church, but also assisting people in need.

Again and again I have observed that those who are givers never seem to lack funds. They may contribute their last dollar, but the Lord will multiply it back to them, so they always have plenty to offer. It's the way God operates. According to Scripture, *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:7-8).

If you have a generous and thankful heart, God will replenish your supply and you will never lack.

Here's the exciting part. When the Word talks about generosity, it encompasses much more than money. What we present should be unsparing, whether we are giving love, encouragement, funds, our time, or whatever it might be.

OVERFLOWING LOVE

As a Spirit-led helper, the love God has placed within

you is demonstrated daily. When you counsel, people will see that *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

How amazing! God’s love never ceases. And what He places inside us is abundant enough to overflow and touch the lives of every person we meet.

It has been calculated that if each believer would share the message of Christ with twelve people in one year (one a month), the Gospel would be spread to the entire world’s population within a span of two years! Are you doing your part?

Have a spirit of sincerity.

At times people glibly say, “I love you,” and the words are appreciated. But are they being honest? Is this what they express when you are not around? God’s Word demands, *“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good”* (Romans 12:9-10).

A counselor needs the kind of discernment to differentiate between truth and hypocrisy.

It is an uplifting experience to have a man or woman you have never met before come up to you in sincerity to let you know your spirit bears witness with them. I have had individuals approach me and start pouring out their hearts at our first conversation.

I feel it was the Spirit of God at work, drawing that person to me. They had a problem and I had the answer from the Word to set them free.

MERCY AND GRACE

Perhaps the Lord has blessed you with the gift of mercy. If so, you are to offer it “*cheerfully*” (Romans 12:8). Scripture counsels that “*Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men*” (Colossians 3:23).

If we find our attitude in helping others does not reflect the above Scripture, there’s a serious problem. When God’s Spirit is truly operating in us, people will not only be touched by His mercy and grace, but also by ours.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God*” (Matthew 5:8). Those who are sincere in their motivations are going to see the glory of the Father demonstrated through them.

Be “on fire” with the truth.

Another quality of a spiritual helper is zealousness. We are admonished to “*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord.*” (Romans 12:11).

We should be “on fire,” ablaze with the anointing, when presenting God’s truth.

When your faith is energized by Spirit-led prayer, you “*build yourselves up in your most holy faith*” (Jude 20), and God will begin to use you mightily.

People who lack fervency will let their guard down and become spiritually fatigued. Yet the Bible tells us, “*Let us not become weary in doing good*” (Galatians 6:9).

You may have encountered a person who wears you down physically and spiritually, and you dread to see them coming. But if you are doing God’s work as He commands,

you will find the strength to minister to them and not grow weary.

To maintain your spiritual zeal, your attitude must always be centered on serving the Lord rather than an individual. Never try to make statements or offer advice based on what you think a person wants to hear, rather what the Lord desires to communicate.

Your reward is a gift from God, and only what is pleasing to Him will bring glory.

Leave people hungering for more.

One of the reasons the Lord gives us the gift of wisdom is so we will recognize His timing in all things.

When you are asked a question, answer to the best of your ability, but don't overload them with a lot of extraneous information. Always leave them hungering for more, because this is how people grow.

If you study the life of Jesus, there were times He answered specific questions, and on other occasions He ignored the person. Was this rude? No, He knew the condition of their heart and when they attempted to entrap Him, He would disregard their arguments.

This happened when the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman to him who had been caught in the act of adultery. They pressed Him, demanding, "*In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?*" (John 8:5).

Instead of acknowledging their trick question, Jesus quietly bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. Then, as they continued, He straightened up and said to them, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the*

first to throw a stone at her" (verse 7).

His critics silently backed away, one at a time, until Jesus ministered life rather than condemnation to the adulterous woman.

DO WHAT THE LORD ASKS

Continue to pray for God's gift of wisdom and discernment since not everyone who requests counsel really wants help.

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus wanted to know, "*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" (Luke 18:18).

It appeared he wanted what the Lord was offering. Then Jesus asked him, "*Why do you call me good?...No one is good—except God alone*" (verse 19).

The Son of God mentioned the Ten Commandments to him, and he responded that he had obeyed them since he was a child. But the Lord looked straight into his heart and knew the man was lying. Then He said, "*You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me*" (verse 22).

When the young ruler heard these words, he became sick in the pit of his stomach because he was a man of great wealth. He left without giving his heart to Christ.

Had he truly wanted eternal life he would have obeyed the words of Jesus.

This story doesn't mean we should all go out and sell our possessions to give to the poor. But in this case it was a stumbling block to the rich man. He approached Jesus looking for something he could add to what he already

possessed. He had temporal wealth, but the Lord had treasures which last forever.

Many desire eternal life on their own terms, but Jesus demands, *“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it”* (Matthew 16:25).

As a helper, regardless of what a person does with your counsel, you have contributed your part by sharing what the Lord places on your heart.

Your assignment is to share the Word.

God has given each of His children a commission to love His people. But let me emphasize again that I have seen many whom the Lord would have used mightily, but they fell on the rocks because they let themselves take on the cares of the men and women they were ministering to. Higher than average suicide rates are documented among psychologists, doctors, psychiatrists, and ministers. The reason being they let themselves become burden bearers and it overwhelms them.

As a helper, you are not responsible for what another person decides. You simply share the Word of God and their response is a personal decision.

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Man’s wisdom is foolishness to God, and God’s wisdom is foolishness to man. The Father came to earth in the flesh to be born in a crude stall with donkeys and cattle. He grew up in a small town without acclaim. When Philip told Nathaniel about this Man called Jesus, he responded, *“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”* (John 1:46).

How wonderful that God takes things the world considers unworthy, and miraculously transforms them.

From the accounts in Scripture to the events of the present day, every true ministry started with practically nothing—with “nobodies” the Lord called and gave gifts to. He equipped and made them successful. God gave the increase for one reason alone: so He could receive the glory.

As I look back at our own humble beginnings, it started with a handful of people in a laundromat. There was no one seeking glamor or praise, but the Lord began blessing in unusual ways. We watched as people from all walks of life were healed, delivered, and changed by the power of the Spirit.

The reason we are touching thousands of lives through our church and its media outreach is because we turned everything over the Lord—He runs the operation. It is His work. We even named it after Him: Glory to God Ministries.

Start where you are!

I believe the Lord has allowed you to read this book for a reason. You may have never considered yourself to be worthy of being called a counselor. But if you feel the slightest tugging in your heart to move in this direction, it is God speaking.

Start where you are! Be open to His bidding and begin preparing yourself by bathing your soul and spirit in the Word. The Lord will give you the knowledge and skills necessary to touch men and women for eternity.

As you seek God’s face He will impart the gifts of His

choosing into your heart. Then, as you begin walking in His will, these gifts will grow and develop until you are involved in the mission the Lord has placed you on this earth to fulfill.

I am praying for you and believe you will join me in the marvelous ministry of helping lives—for the Glory of God!

TEN

THE HELPERS SCRIPTURE GUIDE

When you are praying and helping people with specific problems, always use God’s Word as your authority. Here is a quick-reference topical guide.

ABORTION

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

“This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid” (Isaiah 44:2).

– Isaiah 43:1; 44:24; 49:1-5; 64:8; Jeremiah 1:4-5.

AFFLICTION

“A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all” (Psalm 34:19).

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“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

– Psalm 119:67; 145:14; Isaiah 43:2; Romans 8:28.

ALCOHOLISM

“Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap” (Luke 21:34).

– Proverbs 23:20; Isaiah 5:11; Romans 13:13;
Galatians 5:19-21.

ANXIETY

“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

– Proverbs 16:3; Isaiah 43:2; Matthew 6:25-34;
Luke 21:34.

BACKSLIDER

“Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me” (Jeremiah 2:19).

“If you return to the Lord, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him” (2 Chronicles 30:9).

– Psalm 145:14; Isaiah 44:22; Luke 15:4-7; 15:11-32.

BAPTISM (Water)

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5).

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

– Matthew 3:13-16; Acts 8:26-41; Colossians 2:12.

BIBLE

Inspired by God

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching,

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rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

– Galatians 1:11-12; 2 Peter 1:21.

Irrevocable

“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18).

– Isaiah 55:11; Mark 13:31; Revelation 22:18-19.

Must be Read and Obeyed

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:7-9).

– Deuteronomy 12:28; Psalm 119:105; Matthew 4:4;
Romans 15:4; Revelation 1:3.

BORN AGAIN

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12-13).

“Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom

of God unless he is born again.’ ‘How can a man be born when he is old’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:3-7).

– 1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 John 5:4.

CHILDREN

Of Righteousness

“Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28).

– Psalm 103:17; Isaiah 54:13.

Training

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 34 22:6)

– Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; Ephesians 6:4;
Colossians 3:23.

DEATH (Of the Righteous)

“The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout

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men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death” (Isaiah 57:1-2).

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

– Psalm 116:15; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Acts 7:59;
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 14:13.

DEPRESSION

“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you” (Psalm 9:9-10).

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Psalm 42:11).

– Psalm 31:22-24; Isaiah 50:10; Jeremiah 29:11-13;
Hebrews 12:12-13.

DISCOURAGED

“If the Lord delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand” (Psalm 37:23-24).

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

– 2 Chronicles 15:7; Psalm 27:14; Proverbs 24:16;
Isaiah 40:31; Hebrews 4:15-16.

DIVORCE

“But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:32).

“Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him” (1 Corinthians 7:20).

– Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-17.

ENEMIES

Attitude Toward

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:27-31).

– Proverbs 24:17-18; Matthew 5:44-46; Romans.

Protection Against

“He is the God who avenges me, who subdues nations under me,

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who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes; from violent men you rescued me” (Psalm 18:47-48).

– Exodus 14:14; Isaiah 50:7-9; Psalm 60:12.

ETERNAL LIFE

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40).

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13).

– John 3:15-16; John 6:47; John 10:27-29.

FAITH

Faith Defined

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Your Source of Faith

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race

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marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Your Faith is to be Exercised

“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17-20).

– Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 3:11.

Your Faith will be Tested

“These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7).

– Matthew 8:23-26; James 1:2-7; 1 John 5:4.

Your Faith will be Honored

“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven” (James 5:15).

– Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 9:23; Luke 18:35-43.

FALSE DOCTRINES

“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time” (Mark 13:21-23).

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute” (2 Peter 2:1-2).

– Colossian 2:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3.

FASTING

“Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, ‘A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar’...Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah” (2 Chronicles 20:33).

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:16-18).

– 2 Samuel 12:15-23; Jonah 3:1-10; Matthew 4:2.

FEAR

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident” (Psalm 27:1-3).

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

– Psalm 34:4; Isaiah 35:3; Hebrews 13:6;
1 Peter 3:12-13.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness of God to Man

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins” (Colossians 2:13).

– Psalm 103:12; Heb 10:17; 1 John 1:9.

Forgiveness of Man to Fellow Men

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your

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heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

– Matthew 18:21-22; Mark 11:25-26; Ephesians 4:32.

GIVING

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38).

– Deuteronomy 15:11; Proverbs 11:24; Matthew 6:1-4;
Romans 12:8.

GUILT

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2).

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

– Isaiah 44:22; Philippians 1:6; 3:13-14.

HEALING

Christ's Commission

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name...they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well’” (Mark 16:15-18)

– Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:1-2.

Healing is Part of the Atonement

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

– Matthew 8:16-17; 1 Peter 2:24.

Healing is Promised

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases” (Psalm 103:2-3),

Healing is Hindered by Unbelief

“Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their

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synagogue, and they were amazed... Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.' And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith" (Matthew 13:54-58).

– Matthew 17:14-20

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a Gift of God

"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

– Acts 2:38-39

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

– Joel 2:28-29; John 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8;
2 Peter 1:21.

The Fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Gifts of the Spirit

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

– Romans 12:5-8

HUMILITY

“The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor” (Proverbs 15:33).

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

– Proverbs 18:12; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 20:26-28.

JESUS

The Prophecy of Jesus

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

– Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 53.

The Preexistence of Jesus

“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5).

– John 1:1-3; 8:58; Colossians 1:15-17.

The Divinity of Jesus

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

– John 17.

The Humanity of Jesus

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8).

The Ministry of Jesus

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

– Matthew 3:11; Matthew 5:17; Luke 4:18-19.

The Second Coming of Christ

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

– Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:11.

The Signs of the Second Coming of Christ

“There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, teacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

– Matthew 24:3-13; Luke 17:26-37; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; 2 Peter 3:3-1.

LOVE

God’s Love to Us

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

– John 3:16; 16:27.

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Our Love to God

“And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12).

– Proverbs 8:17; Matthew 10:37; John 14:21;
1 Corinthians 16:22.

Our Love to Others

“The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14).

– Luke 6:31-34; John 13:34-35; Romans 13:6-10.

OBEDIENCE

Obedience to God

“I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

– 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 48:18; John 14:15.

Obedience to Those in Authority

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established”
(Romans 13:1).

– Matthew 22:17-21; Colossians 3:22-24;
1 Peter 2:13-20.

Obedience to Parents

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right”
(Ephesians 6:1).

– Colossians 3:20.

OCCULT

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

– Leviticus 19:31; Jeremiah 27:9; 2 Chronicles 33:6.

PATIENCE

“I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1).

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“The testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:3-4).

– Psalm 37:7; Romans 12:10-12; Hebrews 6:12;
James 5:7-8.

PEACE

“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3).

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

– Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 32:17; John 16:33.

PERSECUTION

“The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten” (Jeremiah 20:11).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).

– Isaiah 13:21-23; Romans 8:35-38; 12:14.

PRAISE

“I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips” (Psalm 34:1).

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

– Psalm 50:23; Psalm 100:4; Isaiah 42:8; 1 Peter 2:9.

PRAYER

We are Admonished to Pray

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7).

– Psalm 50:15; Jeremiah 29:12-13; 33:3; Matthew 6:5-8.

Answers to Prayer are Conditional

“Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:21-22).

– Mark 9:23; 11:21-24; John 9:31.

Unanswered Prayers

“If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable” (Proverbs 28:9).

– Isaiah 1:11-15.

PRIDE

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

– Deuteronomy 8:10-18; Prov 6:16-19; 11:2;
Matthew 20:26-27.

PROSPERITY

Prosperity of the Righteous

“Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all” (1 Chronicles 29:12).

– Deuteronomy 28:1-14; 1 Samuel 2:7.

Prosperity of the Wicked

“Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out” (Proverbs 24:19-20).

– Psalm 37:1-2; Psalm 73; 1 Timothy 5:24.

PROTECTION

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (Isaiah 43:2).

“I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you...I will save you from the hands of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the cruel” (Jeremiah 15:20-21).

– Psalm 7:10; Proverbs 3:24-26; 29:25.

REWARDS

“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve” (Jeremiah 17:10).

“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (Hebrews 10:36).

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– 2 Chronicles 15:7; Psalm 58:11; Mark 9:41.

SALVATION

Salvation is a Gift

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

– Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9.

Salvation Comes by Repentance and Confession

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

– Matthew 3:1-2; Luke 15:10; Acts 2:38-39.

Our Assurance of Salvation

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

– 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:25.

SATAN

The Origin of Satan

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18).

– Isaiah 14:12-16; Ezekiel 28:13-19.

How Satan Affects our Body and Mind

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

– Job 1:6-12; Luke 13:16; 1 Corinthians 4:4.

How Satan Interferes with Us

“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path” (Matthew 13:19).

Satan is a Murderer and Liar

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

– Act 5:3; Revelation 12:9-10; 20:3-10.

Christ has Defeated Satan

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Colossians 1:13).

– Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14.

Satan's Power is Controlled by God and Believers

“He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you” (Luke 10:18-19).

We Must Resist Satan

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

– Ephesians 4:27; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Luke 4:1-14.

Satan's Doom

“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

SEXUAL SINS

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

– Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 6:32-33; Malachi 3:5;
Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 1:24-32.

SORROW

“Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy”(Psalm 126:5).

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

– Psalm 30:5; Matthew 5:4.

SUFFERING

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

– 1 Peter 2:19-20.

TEMPTATION

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Mark 14:38).

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

– Hebrews 2:18; James 1:2-4; 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

THANKFULNESS

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name” (Psalm 100:4).

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

– Psalm 50:14; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6-7.

THOUGHTS

“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” (Romans 12:2).

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

– Psalm 1:1-2; Proverbs 23:7; 1 Corinthians 2:16.

TRUTH

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

– 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 John 4:5-6.

UNPARDONABLE SIN

“I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin” (Mark 3:28-29).

VENGEANCE

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:17-18).

“For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people’” (Hebrews 10:30).

– Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:38-39; Luke 6:35;

WISDOM

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow

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his precepts have good understanding” (Psalm 111:10).

“For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict” (Luke 21:15).

– 2 Chronicles 1:7-12; 1 Corinthians 3:18-20:
James 1:5-7.

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