

THE BIBLICAL COUNSELOR

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Counsel (n) **1** a mutual exchange of ideas, opinions, etc.; discussion and deliberation. **2** a) advice resulting from such an exchange, b) any advice.

Counselor (n) **1** a person who counsels; advisor; specifically one who advises students or clients regarding educational and occupational alternatives, personal problems, etc.

Counseling (v) **1** to give advice to; **2** to urge the acceptance of (action, plan, etc.); to recommend.

From these general definitions by *Webster* it is obvious that counseling may be done by someone other than a licensed professional. A good counselor may be a best friend, parent, or a peer. As we have noted there is almost an endless list of the kinds of counseling available today. As with most things in our lives, the government has tried to take over the “counseling business” by requiring those who counsel professionally to have a license issued by them. This license is granted after meeting certain educational requirements; the minimum being a master’s degree with a number of approved supervision hours; plus license by a recognized secular licensing board. I travelled this route for my M.A. in Marriage, Family and Children Counseling (MFCC) degree, from a fully accredited college. But I chose to abandon the core philosophy of this program when I moved to the doctorate level. My thesis was on “Cognitive Biblical Therapy.” I am a biblical counselor, seeking God’s approval in ministering through the word.

In the nightmare maze of counseling the questions that must be answered are: What is a good counselor? Who determines the answers to this question? How do we determine when a counselor and his or her counseling has been successful? Is there a valid place for God’s word to give us counsel? If Jesus were counseling today in a modern office, how would He counsel?

I believe biblical counseling is more effective as a source for counseling people with life issues than is the human philosophy secular counseling tied to. But what is effective biblical counseling? The answer depends on the biblical counselor.

Biblical counseling, in order to be effective, is done by a biblical counselor. Now isn’t that an amazing truth? This means that a biblical counselor is a person, either male or female, who is a Christian and is (1) knowledgeable of the word of God, (2) believes the word of God, (3) has applied the word of God to his or her life, (4) shares the word of God with others in an effort to help them face and handle the challenges of life, and is a (5) teacher. These five core qualities are based on the following Scriptures:

1. 2 Peter 1:3: *...His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by glory and virtue."*
2. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
3. Psalm 119:50: *This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has given me life. (Read the entire 119th Psalm).*

WHAT IS A GOOD BIBLICAL COUNSELOR?

In one sense we might say a good biblical counselor is a faithful Christians. But this is not enough to fully document the basic attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, feelings, etc. needed in the biblical counselor's personal life. Unfortunately what qualified one as a "faithful Christian" in the minds of many, is faithful church attendance and involvement in a few good works. These are essential but do not cover the other qualities that contribute to helping a person become an effective biblical counselor.

Effective counseling involved two major things: (1) what the counselor SAYS, and (2) what the counselor DOES. With the behavior of the counselor being the most influential. "What you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you are saying," is true when applied to a biblical counselor (Or any counselor).

50 QUALITIES OF A GOOD BIBLICAL COUNSELOR

After we affirm that the qualities of a good biblical counselor include being a (1) faithful Christians and (2) being effective in helping people; there are a number of underlying qualities that contribute to these two essential qualities. Study dosely the following qualities. Be sure to study the Scripture references :

1. A good biblical counselor is a positive listener (James 1:19, 20).
2. A good biblical counselor speaks the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
3. A good biblical counselor has the attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:4-9).
4. A good biblical counselor has worked on solving his own issues (Romans 2:17-24).
5. A good biblical counselor is not arbitrary in judging others (Matthew 7:1-6; James 2:1-4).
6. A good biblical counselor helps the other person understand the nature of sin (James 1:13-17).
7. A good biblical counselor helps the other person see the role thinking plays in behavior (Mark 7:20-27).

8. A good biblical counselor helps the other person develop a positive thinking agenda (Philippians 2:7-10).
9. A good biblical counselor is a dedicated person of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
10. A good biblical counselor helps a person discover the truth and how to apply it (John 8:32; Proverbs 23:23).
11. A good biblical counselor does not take sides in an issue. The challenge is to share what the Bible has said about the issue with all persons involved.
12. A good biblical counselor does not project his/her own prejudices or preferences on to the other person. He refrains from being bias (Which is very difficult).
13. A good biblical counselor knows when to refer the other person to a medical professional for help.
14. A good biblical counselor knows his or her own limitations and will not try to fake it.
15. A good biblical counselor will avoid secular and manipulative approaches to helping.
16. A good biblical counselor is a true "burden bearer" (Galatians 6:1, 2).
17. A good biblical counselor is a servant of all—a mutual servant with the counselee.
18. A good biblical counselor will treat others like Jesus would treat them.
19. A good biblical counselor knows and practices the virtues of love in 1 Corinthians 13.
20. A good biblical counselor, while he/she may not agree with them, respects the values and beliefs of others.
21. A good biblical counselor doesn't tell you only what you want to hear.
22. A good biblical counselor helps others develop a behavior plan for changing.
23. A good biblical counselor understands his/her role as a Bible teacher.
24. A good biblical counselor will never advise someone to do something contrary to God's word.
25. A good biblical counselor understands he/she is accountable to God (Hebrews 9:27).
26. A good biblical counselor knows how to build Christian rapport with others.
27. A good biblical counselor will not use slang, jargon, or "psychobabble".
28. A good biblical counselor will not spend too much time digging up the past.
29. A good biblical counselor will help a person develop skills needed to change or correct a problem.
30. A good biblical counselor will teach others how to develop and sustain a spiritual relationship with God (Ephesians 3:20, 21).
31. A good biblical counselor will make work assignments to be completed between sessions.
32. A good biblical counselor will not drag counseling on and on; the goal is as few sessions as possible.
33. A good biblical counselor recognizes the importance of maintaining confidentiality relative to what has been shared.

34. A good biblical counselor does not have a superior, holier than thou, or haughty attitude.
35. A good biblical counselor will help others think about problems in light of God's word.
36. A good biblical counselor will be careful not to become emotionally or physically involved with the counselee.
37. A good biblical counselor works WITH and FOR the other person's welfare.
38. A good biblical counselor builds people up, not break them down.
39. A good biblical counselor knows when he can no longer help.
40. A good biblical counselor helps others figure out solutions on their own.
41. A good biblical counselor clearly defines how he/she can and cannot help the other person. They know their limitations.
42. A good biblical counselor will have the skills to help the other person know when the counseling has been successful or not.
43. A good biblical counselor will not engage in agreeing with the other person in transferring blame to family, others, etc. for their actions. James 1:13-17.
44. A good biblical counselor will not initiate touches (i.e. hugs) of the other person, without consent.
45. A good biblical counselor will not dominate the discussion by talking about self and revealing intimate details from his or her life.
46. A good biblical counselor will not use coarse or vulgar language in any discussion.
47. A good biblical counselor makes no apologies for what God's word says on a subject.
48. A good biblical counselor is not contentious or too confrontational with anyone.
49. The good biblical counselor does all to glorify God, not self or others (Ephesians 3:21).
50. The good biblical counselor is continually in prayer for self and others. He is a lifelong learner of God's word.

Giving advice to other is eternally serious. This is why those of us who counsel others from God's word need to be aware of and sensitive to practice those qualities that help us be good helpers. Please don't think I am opposed to "formal training" for counselors; I'm not. I simply advocate a sound true the word of God approach, which is called biblical counseling.

APPLICATION EXERCISE

1. Why is the role of the biblical counselor been ridiculed by some?
2. How could it be possible for a biblical counselor to be negligent?
3. What has been your concept of biblical counseling and biblical counselors?
4. Write a minimum of 50 words about each of the 50 qualities of a good biblical counselor.
5. What have you gained from this lesson?
6. How will you intentionally use this study in your personal life and ministry?

