

GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

#10 A Counseling Toolbox | Psalm 119:25-32 & Luke 17:5-10

Handle problems with biblical principles.

We want our problems fixed. Now. But there are no shortcuts! These principles provide biblical frameworks for working through many situational problems.

- 1. Healing takes time, and becoming strong takes effort.** But small changes usually produce immediate results! Usually within only a few weeks—sometimes even days—there are measurable results, both for physical changes and spiritual choices. See Galatians 6:6-10 and Hebrews 12:7-17.
- 2. Exercise keeps things healthy.** Several passages relate the management of our bodies to spiritual exercise. See Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, 10:31, 1 Timothy 4:8, and 3 John 1:2.
- 3. Gardening enables the right things to grow well.** Amos 9:14 parallels Israel's spiritual restoration with healthy gardens. Isaiah 53 tells of salvation through the Messiah, and God uses a beautiful garden to describe His magnificent work! Psalm 1 would also be a very practical passage for spiritual growth.
- 4. Find inner strength for outside problems.** Many times the “problem” is not actually the problem. Psalms 27 and 84 describe the need for God's help in facing problems with people and circumstances.

What counselling looks like...

Sessions 2, 4, and 9 dealt specifically with counseling. The following steps will eventually become natural.

- 1. Gather data** — You will have to ask difficult questions. Don't only inquire about the “others”
- 2. Define the problem** — Diagnosis can be very difficult, and should not be done until there has been sufficient gathering of information. It's easy to jump to conclusions. Be patient, and ask God for wisdom.
- 3. Involve yourself** — You are becoming their emotional and spiritual guide. They many choose not to follow! But at least you are offering to lead them somewhere good; to help them walk with God.
- 4. Offer hope in God** — People want hope and they try to find it anywhere. Make sure you point them to God!
- 5. Provide instruction from God's Word** — Be careful to not guide others with only your opinion. Counsel should be founded on Christ's commands and biblical principles.
- 6. Give homework** — Unless you are in a formal counseling session, this “homework” would simply be recommendations by a friend. Offer to walk with them. Suggest steps to take. Be willing to disciple.

Duty and discipline are not bad things.

Spiritual disciplines do not make one spiritual, but they are good and necessary for spiritual living. The story in Luke 17:5-10 illustrates that we increase our faith by doing our duty.

- 1. Insist upon obedience to what God has already said.** People want to hear God speak into their lives and fix their problems. But for most cases, God has already spoken. Very early on in the “counseling” process you will know whether or not the individual really wants help by observing how they respond to what God has already said. See James 4:1-10 and 1 Peter 5:5-11.
- 2. Help people to read the Bible.** The Bible can be very intimidating for someone who is unsaved or new to Christ. Give them some verses that have been special to you. Agree to read the same book together. Great places to start are Matthew 5-7, the book of James, Philipians.
- 3. Teach people how to pray.** De-mystify prayer. Tell them how you pray. Explain that prayer is just talking to God. Direct them to good Bible prayers in Matthew 6:8-15, Ephesians 3:14-21, Luke 18:9-14, and Romans 8:26-30.
- 4. Engage them in the body of Christ.** Spiritual life becomes strong only within the body of Christ. Communicate that we do not simply “attend” church; we are the church. Ideas of worship, fellowship, responsibility, spiritual growth and understanding all come through the life of the church.