

Good mental health

Helping others find help through God

The need for good Christian advice

No one has all the answers. Frequently God used other people to give advice encourage and rebuke. Very rarely did He send angels or other divine means to do this. In the church, we are clearly commanded that the body of Christ strengthens itself.

Romans 15:14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself so that you too will not be tempted.

Breaking down a counselling session

Gather data

Ask specific questions and listen to get to the root of the problem

Define the problem

It helps to repeat back in your own words what they see the problem being. "Just so I understand, what you are concerned about is..."

Be careful of defining too quickly or overlaying your story onto theirs.

We must analyse the data gathered during the inventory phase so that we can understand it from a biblical viewpoint. And we must decide what should be done about the problem according to Scripture. (in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counselling, 231)

Involve yourself

There needs to be a level of trust between you and the person you are helping. Don't just back away if you don't know that person well enough. Get involved make efforts to do so.

(in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counselling, 174) Counsellors cannot allow themselves to become exclusively problem-oriented. Rather, they need to be person-oriented.

Give hope

Heb 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

To give hope throughout your time with the person you are helping especially early on because, usually when people come to you, they have tried everybody else and they have no hope.

Do not give false hope and correct false hope when it is present by teaching truths that inspire true hope. God absolute power in our circumstances, or the promise of eternity for example

Provide instruction

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Instruction is a general term with several meanings. Overall it is giving information that is meant to instigate change or initiate action.

If it is a sin issue instruction can take the form of warning and loving rebuke

If it is relational, or emotional instruction can be to bring about a change of mind or simply encouragement in truth.

Give homework

It is imperative that you give people homework. Give more than verses.

It doesn't have to be on the nose but if change is the goal there must be some level of commitment.

Homework must be measurable and quantifiable

Other frameworks that can be used

Four Phases of Counselling (from Paul Tripp, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands):

Welcome - Build a relationship of understanding and trust with the counselee while building the counselee's hope in God. (331)

Understand - Gather data that moves toward the heart... Gain first-hand knowledge and refocus attention on what matters. (331, 334)

Confront and comfort - Help counselees to see themselves biblically and to embrace God's promises. (337)

Action - Assist the counselee to apply the truths learned about God, self, and others to the specifics of his living situation, making biblical corrections and instituting new biblical habits (343).

Three questions to ask (from Joel James, a reference guide for biblical counsellors)

What is the problem – defining the issues, by gathering data and getting involved

What does God say about the problem – interpreting the facts understanding the issue from a biblical perspective

What does God say to do about the problem – giving guidance and encouragement based on the biblically interpreted data?