

# Counselor's Toolbox

The inerrant Bible is the Standard of all faith and practice.  
The Scriptures, therefore, are the basis, and contain the criteria  
by which the counselor is to make every judgment.

## Putting the Joy back into Life

- Autobiographical Therapy** - typing a book of legacies for your children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren about your heritage, ancestors, childhood, youth, turning points, spiritual development, courtship, family experiences, travels, work, habits, life quotes, and accomplishments.
- Bibliotherapy** - doing Bible studies which apply the Bible to specific problems, especially the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.
- Book Therapy** - reading a chapter in a Christian book and writing a summary of how you think God wants you to apply it to your situation.
- Cassette Therapy** - listening to cassette messages dealing with the issues you are facing and writing out how you think God wants you to apply it to your situation.
- Color Therapy** - surround yourself with bright, cheerful colors. Avoid drab, somber colors. Dress to celebrate life not to go to a funeral.
- Creation Therapy** - take a few moments each day to reflect on the wonders of creation including your own.
- Forgiveness Therapy** - gaining freedom from resentment by following the teachings of Christ and practicing resentment reducers, including practicing biblical reconciliation
- Friend Therapy** - being a friend to someone who needs encouragement with cards, letters, phone calls, and/or visits. Helping others is a key for finding personal healing of past emotional hurts.
- Grandparent Therapy** - recording or writing down and passing on to your children and grandchildren in proverbs and short stories the wisdom you have gathered over the years to encourage them to make right decisions.
- Hymn Therapy** - read through the hymns of an old hymnal as well as some praise courses..
- Music Therapy** - daily listening to uplifting Christian music. Avoid sad country western and mad rock'n'roll.
- Prayer Therapy** - studying Bible prayers and involvement in spiritual warfare for your children, grandchildren and God's kingdom. Join MOPs.
- Radio Therapy** - listening to specific Christian radio programs on a daily basis and recording a summary or application of each message.
- Reflection Therapy** - Bible meditation/reflection on specific topics relating to the promises of God and your situation. Spend 20 to 30 minutes applying a passage to your life situation.
- School Therapy** - attend at least one college course per year with a friend and learn something new.
- Seminar Therapy** - attend a good seminar with a friend every three or four months on issues you are interested in.
- Sermon Therapy** - taking notes during sermons including what God specifically said to you and what you intend to do about it.
- Teletherapy** - watching a specific TV program (such as Touched by an Angel) and taking notes including what was said and what you intend to do about it. Limit TV viewing to one hour per day or less.
- Thanksgiving Therapy** - count your blessings, write them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.
- Verse Therapy** - psychocybernetics -- reading a verse dealing with your situation 100 times a day for 30 days.
- Video Therapy** - watching specific Christian videos and taking notes including what God specifically said to you and how you think God wants you to apply it to your situation.
- Walk Therapy** - walk three times a week with a friend and discuss what you are learning.

### Ten Step Method of Biblical Counseling

1. **DETERMINE TIME:** Ask, How long do we have?
  
2. **LISTEN:** Ask the counselee, "Why don't you tell me about your situation?"
  
3. **CLARIFY THE SITUATION:** Ask, "Just what did you mean?" or "Tell me more about..."
  
4. **INVESTIGATE:** Ask, "What other people have you talked with about this matter?" and "What have you done about it?"
  
5. **INTRODUCE RESPONSIBILITY:** Ask, "Where have you failed?"
  
6. **MODEL RESPONSIBILITY:** Share an experience you have had and what you did.
  
7. **REVIEW ALTERNATIVES:** Ask, "What could you do?"
  
8. **EXPLORE OUTCOMES:** Ask, "What are the probable outcomes of each alternative?"
  
9. **SUPPLY INFORMATION:** List Bible passages and Christian books that would be good for the counselee to read.
  
10. **PROVIDE CLOSURE:** Record homework assignments for this week and then pray with the counselee.

## MINISTRY OF SERVICE

Christ summarized His way of life in two commands: love God and love your neighbor (Mt 22:34-40). He taught and demonstrated that greatness comes through serving others (Mk 10:35-45). Service to other people is the characteristic mark of Christian disciples. Every disciple will find ways to serve other people. As you seek your ministry of service, you will want to study DISCIPLESHIP, Persons, Neighbor Love, and Church, Servants. You will want to study the Summaries and Histories on Discipleship and on Christian Ethics as well as scanning the index under these two topics for specific ministry focus possibilities. When you understand the nature of Christian ministry, you can sense God's leadership to ministry, and you can minister more effectively.

### Guide to Service in Christ's Name

Service involves self-sacrifice, the investing of oneself and one's resources in behalf of another person, an ideal, or a cause at personal expense. A true service is that done by a servant for a master without thought or recognition or reward. Service in Christ's name means I am the servant and Christ the Master. It implies participation in God's mission in the world He created and loves. Service in Christ's name addresses concrete realities of crucial human need.

Service for Christ gives concrete expression to Christian redemption in a world enslaved to sin. The way of the true believer is practicing justice in business and politics, showing mercy to debtors and needy individuals, and living humbly before God with family and neighbors (Mic 6:6-8). Awareness of the majesty and mission of God leads to humble service for our Lord, whose example we follow and whose character we seek to imitate.

Too often religious people have lives not characterized by goodness, faith without justice, and worship without humaneness. Their lives with God are compartmentalized at church on Sunday, being kept separate from their daily relationships and responsibilities. They preoccupy themselves with external expressions of religion but refuse to practice compassion in real life settings. We still need the impatience and courage of Amos who decried Israel's assemblies and deplored her offerings, seeking instead that people hate evil, love good, practice justice, and seek righteousness (5:14-24). Religious people are called to ministry as well as meditation. Ministry that matters must occur in communities where we live, in relationships where we share, in responsibilities that we assume, and in daily decisions we make.

God demonstrated the true meaning of service in His Son. Rather than write a creed for persons to recite, He set before us the life of Jesus, who came in the form of a servant. We may argue statements of theology, but we can only obey God's ultimate statement about service—the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. Jesus demonstrated humble caring without controlling the outcome. Such is the vulnerability of true compassion. The cross dramatizes a great reversal of human ambition showing in its shame and scandal God's ultimate gesture of love for wayward, lost humanity.

Jesus' imagery of the vine and branches in Jn 15 reminds us that the direction of the Christian life comes from within and moves outward. Nurtured in God's self-giving love (Greek *agape*), disciples naturally express care for each other and for all people, because Christ died for all sinners. Christ expects disciples to express this kind of love He demonstrated to us (Jn 13:34-35). The love Christ demonstrated and command is inclusive. It includes the poor, the handicapped, the socially outcast, both sexes, and all races. It is based on respect for human personality created in the image of God. It is impartial, embracing all ages, classes, and conditions of persons.

Service for all people in Christ's self-sacrificing love is the task of a disciple. How can you become involved and develop this humble spirit? The following guide is a starting point.

**1. Commit yourself to get involved.**

Servants are not born. They develop as they commit themselves to service and as they serve. What begins as willingness to help with a person, project, or cause often leads to intense involvement in which the life of service demonstrates faith.

**2. Develop a caring image of yourself.** Ask God to help you truly love all people as your neighbors. Healthy caregivers are basically secure, though not naïve people. Servant people believe their world will be a better place because they have been a part of it. They do not lose their way despite the awesome darkness of personal pain and social trauma. Carers recognize their own limits and seek mutually satisfying and constructive relationships with other people.

**3. Develop basic goals for serving others.** Such aims include striving to:

- a. Free people from human bondage, insecurity, and evil.
- b. Relieve pain and restore human functions in illness, accident, or disaster.
- c. Enable persons to rely on available care networks.
- d. Change social structures that are damaging to persons.
- e. Heal, sustain, guide, and reconcile persons to life.
- f. Create opportunities for persons to live useful lives.

**4. Understand the nature of service as illustrated by Jesus in Matthew 25:**

- a. Service is done as a natural part of the Christian life, not as a special action to which special attention is called and for which special reward is expected.
- b. Opportunities for service come in the everyday experiences and need of ordinary people—feeding the hungry, providing drink for the thirsty, hosting strangers, sharing clothing, and visiting prisoners.
- c. Care is an intentional, conscious spirit and act. To care is to pay attention to people and their needs in a spirit of love and in concrete actions.
- d. To help the needy is to serve Christ, for He identifies with people in need.
- e. Compassion is vulnerable to humanity's cry, wherever and whenever it comes. A disciple cares without controlling the outcome in the person's life, leaving kingdom consequences and ultimate judgment in God's hands.

**5. Serve in Christ's name.**

- a. Obey God's call to care; show mercy to others; practice generosity in the use of resources; exercise your spiritual gift(s) as a member of Christ's body (Ro 12:1-2). Know that your service is personal obedience in light of God's sacrificial love.
- b. Identify a specific ministry of service. Recognize your spiritual gift and use it. For help, see "Guide to Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts" (p. 1796). Decide practical, continuing ways you can utilize your gift in the local church. Giving money for mission causes may be the simplest place to begin. You will want to do this more. Can you relieve tension in your church, family, or community by improving communication, practicing forgiveness, or preventing conflict in daily relations? Should you ease a loved one's burden by sharing household duties or releasing a spouse from one-sided parenting tasks?
- c. Meet needs among ordinary people in ways that do not require public recognition and credit. Look not for the spectacular crisis but for hurting folks living near you. You will discover persons seeking financial guidance, facing an unwanted pregnancy, recovering from spouse abuse, needing proper diet, or requiring transportation to a medical center. You will find friendless people seeking counsel from someone who will listen in love.
- d. Do small deeds with resources at hand. Instead of discarding weekly newsmagazines, for example, take them to the local jail or prison so inmates can stay informed and interested in life outside the walls. Volunteer to care for grandchildren while parents take a much-needed holiday. Join with Bible study group members to provide transportation for a church member

forced to travel across country because of the death of a love one. Provide clothing for a family whom calamity has struck. Make friends with newcomers to your neighborhood, and show them where goods and services are available locally. Provide care for an international family in your city, helping members secure job training, employment, education for children, proper housing, and involvement in a circle of mutual care and support. The opportunities are endless. Find a small deed you can do, and do it.

- e. Learn to use networks of care. Most urban areas have organizations for providing care to special groups. These range from Alcoholics Anonymous to shelters for abused spouses, from volunteers serving in hospitals to chaplaincy ministries in prisons, from mental health facilities to local colleges and universities. Secure a community resource directory from a local community service agency. Be prepared to direct people in need to agencies and professionally trained people with resources to meet their needs. As you direct people to others, do not neglect them. Their greatest need may continue to be one friend who cares and listens. The little thing done for a person in Christ's name may be the most helpful act of service you can perform (Mt 10:42).
- f. Have both compassion and courage. You will need them to care enough to risk involvement in the lives of angry, deprived, or hurting persons. When people cry for help, they are often hurt, confused, even unlovable. You may have to gain instruction from some church, hospital, or welfare group about wise ways of caring. Some people take advantage of well meaning but naïve, tenderhearted helpers. Work together with persons with more skills and experience than you have. Learn what is truly healthy and helpful for people in need. Learn what assistance can actually damage the mental health and personality of those persons. Learn when you can help most by referring the person to professionally-trained people.
- g. Decide how much time you can spend in a regular, ongoing service ministry. Schedule yourself accordingly. Commit that time to the ministry, and protect this time slot against all other interference. Unless you dedicate specific times and resources for service, you will discover you seldom serve well depending only on spontaneous opportunities.
- h. Relate your ministry to the body of Christ. Your spiritual ministry gift will likely be used in unpaid, nonprofessional, volunteer projects. Some caregivers, however, feel called to religious or service occupations requiring specialized education and, in some instances, ordination. In either case, you will want the church involved in your service ministry. In consultation with church leaders, you may decide a special commissioning service is appropriate. You may seek church approval of your work, church space to carry out your work, or church resources to support your service project. You will certainly want to inform the church of your involvement in Christian service and ask them to pray for your work. You will want to identify the appropriate stage of your ministry at which you will inform the people you serve that your service is done in Christ's name. This should be done as early as possible. The aim of service is to magnify Christ as well as help others. You help them most when they find the strength of faith. You will not want to control the persons you serve by demanding faith as a requirement for receiving your service.  
You will want to pray to God that the love you express in service will mirror Christ's love and lead people to seek the Source of that love. Identity with Christ is an essential part of Christian service.
- i. Know that you will require commitment to Christ as you work, prudence in the tasks you attempt, and companionship on the journey of faith. The joy of obedience and the excitement of living usefully will be yours day-by-day. Lives you bless will go on to bless others. One day you will hear your Lord's "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt 25:21).

### Guide to Counseling For Laity

Disciples live in a troubled world and must deal with troubles in their own lives. The counsel of a Christian friend often proves helpful. The following guide helps disciples listen and respond as counselors to troubled friends. The guide does not produce professional counselors who can solve all problems. Before using the guide, you need to commit yourself to admitting your limits. When you become too emotionally involved in the situation, when you see personality conflicts and problems arise beyond your understanding, and when you see need for extended counseling, lead the person to recognize the need for a professional counselor. Your best help as a counseling friend may be to lead the fellow disciple to a professional counselor. Before you agree to counsel with another person, you will need to have a basic understanding of the biblical teaching about human personality and human sin. Study notes and Scripture on Humanity, Worth, Spiritual Nature, Intellectual Nature, Psychological Nature; SIN, Individual Choice, Hypocrisy, Selfishness, Pride, Alienation, Estrangement, You may want to study specific areas in the doctrine of Family.

1. **Counseling is a biblical activity (Jer. 18:18; 1 Ch 27:32-33).**
  - a. The wise gave counsel as priests gave religious instruction and prophets preached the word of God. The wise generally worked in royal courts and gained respect as they helped others with problems (2 Sa 15:32-37; 16:15-23).
  - b. The Book of Proverbs contains much of the counsel wise men gave to troubled people. The Proverbs collected by Solomon show wise men dealt with a wide variety of personal, business, and family problems.
  - c. David served as counselor for the troubled Saul (1 Sa 16:14-23). Their relationship show some important qualities of counseling. The person being counseled develops strong feelings or emotional bonds towards the counselor. These may be friendly or hostile, or they may change from one to the other as did Saul's. In counseling a person may transfer hostile feelings felt for another person or even hostile feelings towards oneself to the counselor. David accepted these feelings of Saul without retaliation. Any person being counseled has the right to feel confidence in the counselor, to reveal confidential information or feelings, and to trust confidence will not be violated.
  - d. Biblical examples encourage modern Christians to use God's gifts to counsel other persons. Disciples seek to "carry each other's burdens" (Gal 6:2). We feel responsible to help another believer struggle with a problem. We also feel responsible to refer the struggling disciple to others with more training and skills in counseling than we have when such referral is needed.
2. **Counseling often involves the use of important questions,** following the method often used by Jesus.
  - a. A two-question method may be all that is necessary. This involves asking (1) "What does your situation seem to be?", listening intently to the answer in which the other person recounts personal difficulties and problems being faced, and then asking (2) "What do you think you should do about it?" This method lets the other person examine the situation and discover possible solutions. Many people's problems can be solved by this method. Often if this method does not work, time for referral to a more experienced counselor is in order.
  - b. Questions should make the counselee feel the importance of the now, provoking a sense that this is a special moment.
  - c. Open questions invite the counselee to express ideas on a variety of subjects through the use of six key words: what, why, when, how, where, and who. You might ask, "How do you think your husband should go about handling this problem? What have you done about getting this matter under control? Why is this relationship so important to you? When do you plan to put your plan into action? How do your daughter's attitudes look to you?"



- d. The best questions focus on feelings rather than on facts. They help people verbalize emotional reactions, opinions, and ideas. Never ask a question that can be answered simply yes or no unless you have a follow-up question ready. Instead of “Do you like...?”, ask “How do you feel about...?” This may evoke feelings and ideas, thus stimulating further discussion. Stimulate conversation by asking: “Have you any ideas on the subject? Would you explain this to me? What is your reaction? What is your opinion?”
3. **Questions should have a purpose.** Questions should encourage the counselee to examine the troubled situation from all angles and search for workable solutions. To ask purposeful, effective questions;
- a. Take every possible chance to ask a searching question; then keep quiet, and listen to the response carefully.
- b. Questions that come close to the other person's interest get the best answers, provided the questioner's interested listening encourages the answer.
- c. Be prepared to wait. Sometimes a long silence can be more rewarding than another question.
- d. The quality of an answer depends on the quality of the attention given by the questioner.
- e. Questions that deal with a person's feelings are more provocative than those that deal with facts.

**The Ten-Step Plan can be used effectively for more complex counseling situations.**

An important question propels each step of the plan. Most counseling situations the average disciple becomes involved in are brief counseling sessions involving only one meeting. The session may appear to bog down. The Ten Step Plan is designed to keep the interview moving in a progressive step-by-step order. Slavishly following the guide is not necessary. Some of the steps and questions will not be necessary or applicable to certain cases. Adapt the plan to each situation.

**1. Where can we talk? And How long do we have?**

If the session is to get off to a good start, both parties need to have some understanding about the direction of the counseling and how long the session is going to last. Biblical wise men met people in the city gate, the heart of commerce and activity. This shows specially prepared settings are not essential for counseling. The special setting is one of the least significant aspects of a counseling experience, though some privacy is desirable. The time agreement should help prevent either party from appearing anxious about previous commitments. Extensions of time should be scheduled. Untrained disciples should not become involved in long-term, several-session counseling without calling in the assistance of a pastor or other trained Christian counselor.

**2. Why don't you tell me about it?**

Rapport is essential to a counseling relationship. It may be defined as a comfortable and unconstrained relationship of mutual confidence that comes to exist between two people. Rapport can be built through the capacity to listen, to give assurance of confidentiality, and to make personal interest and concern clearly understood. As an individual relates personal history and you listen intently, the person has the feeling you are no longer just another individual but an insider with whom confidence can be shared. Jesus continually emphasized the importance of listening (Mk 4:9; 8:18). Certain techniques and actions assure the other person of your personal interest and concern:

- Smile. If you are going to build strong relationship with persons you counsel, you need to begin with a smile.

- Open posture. Your posture conveys strong messages non-verbally to people you counsel. Crossed arms indicate defense, defiance, and withdrawal. Crossed legs and/or a swinging foot indicate boredom. To show you are open-minded and receptive to what the other person wants to say, sit in a relaxed and attentive manner which directs all attention to the other person.
- Lean forward. Leaning back in a chair with both hands clasped behind the back of your neck communicates that you feel superior to the other person. Do everything possible to avoid communicating the wrong message. Lean toward the other person in an attitude of interest.
- Touch. Touch conveys a message that cannot be verbalized. Many people feel they are outcasts from our society just as did the lepers of Jesus' day. His concerned touch reassured the lepers of inclusion in Jesus' larger family. Your touch will show the person you counsel your acceptance and sense of family relationship under God.
- Eye contact. Attention is the great reward we humans can give each other. Attention begins with looking. Fix your eyes on the other person in an interested coaxing manner that helps the person respond, but do not give the impression you are staring.
- Nod. A slight movement of the head has awesome possibilities. A counselor who sits like a bump on a log will not accomplish very much. You must move. A nodding head is a valuable asset for building a relationship with another person.

These techniques help you build rapport. Building rapport through listening, creating confidence, and expressing personal interest is the heart of the counseling process. It helps the other person break out of isolation, put perplexing troubles into words, express emotions, and develop a warm feeling toward you, a fellow-disciple.

### **3. Just what do you mean?**

A major aim of counseling is to bring clarity to the troubled situation. The person who seeks counseling may be under extreme stress. Stressed people often experience great difficulty in expressing themselves. They stumble around trying to find how to describe their difficulty (ies). They often utter a confused stream of language which may prove coherent but not logically clear. As a counselor, you need to ask gently but firmly, "Will you please explain what you mean when you say you want to get out of it," or "will you please explain what this relationship has to do with your wife's brother?"

### **4. Where else have you sought counseling?**

Counseling seeks to control the spread of information and the keeping of confidence. The counselor must know how psychologically sophisticated the other person is and how many persons are involved in dealing with problem (s). If the other person has talked with psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists, exercise great caution. Discussions may have developed beyond your ability to help. Encourage the person to let one trained counselor be the leader of the counseling process. Openly admit that you as an amateur are not trained to work in such a process where professional, trained counselors are already involved. If the person has not talked with other persons, this may be a golden opportunity for you to provide the counseling assistance of which you are capable.

### **5. Where have you failed?**

Many individuals in trouble blame other people for their problems. They feel circumstances control their actions and have caused their lives to be bad. No matter how unfortunate the circumstances, blaming others cannot change the situation. Steps to vital solutions come only when troubled persons feel they can take positive actions to change their situation. The Christian gospel offers hope, saying every person has sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Ro 3:23). All people need to acknowledge personal failures before they can really know the experience of salvation through Christ. One way of helping troubled people at this point is to say, "Supposing the other person is 90 percent wrong, could you be 10 percent wrong?" Most people will accept the 10 percent responsibility. Then you can say, Let us talk

about your 10 percent. We may well be able to take some action there. When individuals become responsible and work on their irresponsibilities, they move down a pathway toward mature living. This long sentence of two letter words provides a trustworthy guideline: If it is to be, it is up to me to do it.

#### **6. May I share an experience?**

People need role models, particularly when they face troubles. Jesus showed us an ethic of imitation as He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1-17). He called us to follow His example. As we learn from Jesus' example, so other people will learn from our actions and experiences. Sharing your experiences of dealing with trouble can demonstrate how you want the other person to deal with problems. Often you will want to share biblical examples.

#### **7. What could you do?**

Stress, crises, depression, and anxiety confuse and overwhelm people. They find it difficult to see any options for action. They experience tunnel vision and see only one possible line of action, a line they usually do not like. The counselor's task is to highlight the various options available. This is best done if you can help the other person discover the options. Later the person often confesses, "At the time I felt hedged in with only one way to go."

Of great importance here is to discover the responsibility of a Christian. Help the person ask, "What does the Bible say about this matter?" Together study the scriptural teaching on the subject. The index in the Disciple's Study Bible can help you at this point. This is the distinctive work of Christian counseling. The Bible often will show what the person needs to do in the situation or will open possible alternative actions.

#### **8. What will probably happen?**

Once you have listed possible alternative actions, guide the other person to identify what will probably happen if each action is taken. You may need to provide an objective and unbiased viewpoint as you brainstorm outcomes with the person. The person must be ready to choose a plan of action and accept responsibility for its outcome.

#### **9. Is this what you need to know?**

Counseling is not the pooling of ignorance. Good decisions on the right course of action come from good information. You will want to be prepared to help the person find the information needed to decide how to act. Provide pamphlets, books, articles. If you do not have these or know where to get them, put the person in touch with a professional in the proper field who does have such information. Your pastor may help you in finding proper information.

#### **10. Will we need to meet again?**

The final step for the counselor is in many ways the most important. The counseling session (s) must be closed and the person left responsible to act responsibly. Avoid two traps. Do not dismiss a person needing further help. Do not openly or unconsciously invite the person to become dependent on you and seek your help in every situation that arises. The sweetest word to a counselor's ears should be, "Thank you so much for your help. I feel I can handle this matter now". As you hear these words, leave the door open so the person does not feel cut off or abandoned.

#### **May I pray with you about this?**

You have the opportunity to invoke the blessing of the great Counselor. Close a counseling session with a brief word of prayer following this pattern: "Our Heavenly Father, we commend our discussion into your hands and pray that your Holy Spirit will guide (name) into making the best decision. Give (name) strength to take the actions that will bring glory to your name and blessing into his/her life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen."

As you develop counseling skills, you may find this is the focus of your ministry as a disciple. You may sense that you are fulfilling the commands of Christ, who is the “Wonderful Counselor” (Isa. 9:6). Your counseling ministry will always be dependent on Him and will lead you to other people who are part of God’s team of counselors, able to help in cases you are not equipped to handle.