



EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS  
• EAST AFRICA •

## **BIBLICAL COUNSELING: A Practical Workshop**

by

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Biblical Counseling is an important part of a pastor's responsibilities. This manual presents the basics of Biblical Counseling, as presented at ECLEA Biblical Counseling workshops. It covers the most important aspects of Biblical Counseling in a practical way: the goal and nature of Biblical Counseling; the nature of God and people; the characteristics and activities of biblical counselors; and a strategy for a short-term counseling relationship. The focus of this manual is on the skills of a biblical counselor: attending skills and communication skills: understanding; listening; and empathy. Specific problems that are frequently encountered in counseling are discussed, as are problems that often arise, and suggestions for personal soul care. Case studies and counseling forms are attached to assist the biblical counselor.

**INTRODUCTION:** Thank you for attending this Biblical Counseling workshop sponsored by Equipping Church Leaders – East Africa (ECLEA). The presenter, Frank Cummings, PhD, has carefully prepared the following workshop materials to equip you with the basics of biblical counseling. It is my heart's desire and prayer that God be glorified during our time together and that you be richly blessed in your counseling ministry. While all of us are getting the same material, please note that people vary greatly in: (a) how they learn; (b) what they learn; and (c) when they learn. Thus, I hope you will be patient with me (as we plan on covering a lot of material over the next two days) and each other.

Finally, some personal or private issues may arise as we process this material. You are under **no obligation to disclose any personal information** to others, but the Lord may be encouraging you to seek out a mentor or counselor to help you become a more effective instrument of God's will as a counselor. None of us is perfect, but we strive to press on toward the goal of becoming more like Jesus Christ.

**There are three types of counseling:**

1. **Informal counseling.**

- a. *Informal counseling is counseling “as you go”—e.g., a chance meeting, talking with a parishioner after church, or some other meeting with a client, usually on a one-time basis, that does not rise to the level of formal counseling. It is usually “one time” ADVICE GIVING.*
- b. *Examples of informal counseling include: simple guidance (such as finding God's will regarding a certain decision); temporary situations (such as how to handle a misunderstanding, disagreement or conflict with someone at home, school, work or in the neighborhood); answering theological questions; teaching (and modeling for) one's children about God, life, and relationships; prayer requests; and follow-up.*

2. **Formal counseling.**

- a. *Formal counseling is a regularly-scheduled series of counseling sessions with the client which deal with a significant issue in the client's life. Most of the following discussion concerning the nature of the counseling process deals with formal counseling.*
- b. *Examples of formal counseling include: pre-engagement (vs. pre-marital) counseling; marriages in trouble; accountability/encouragement/prayer for someone in a vulnerable stage regarding a specific temptation (drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc.); parent(s)/teen(s) in conflict; dealing with a client's significant life issues such as shame, guilt, grief, depression, stress, worry, fear, anger, or unforgiveness.*

3. **Crisis counseling.**

- a. *Crisis counseling is the unplanned, unscheduled dealing with a major crisis in a person's life. It may take place anywhere the crisis is occurring, such as a home, a hospital, or even over the telephone.*
- b. *Examples of crisis counseling include: threat of suicide; sudden severe accident, illness, or death; domestic violence; teenager in trouble (pregnant, drugs and/or alcohol abuse, criminal behavior, or arrest); spouse threatens to leave after discovering an affair, pornography, etc.*

*For purposes of this workshop, we are only going to deal with the **FORMAL** counseling process.*

**WHAT IS BIBLICAL COUNSELING?** What is the goal and nature of biblical counseling? At the beginning of any endeavor, there has to be a purpose or goal to achieve. The Bible states that “without a vision, the people perish” (**Prov 29:18**). In fact, today you arrived at this workshop having planned out your day, and perhaps, your entire week. In a similar manner, any discussion about “biblical counseling” requires us to define the concept of biblical counseling as well as its nature and goal. We will turn our attention toward these concepts.

The phrase “biblical counseling” assumes that biblically-based themes or ideas are involved in a counseling relationship. Let’s explore what these concepts mean to us personally. Now, complete **Exercise Worksheet #1** (below), filling in items A-E on the worksheet below. You will have 12 minutes to complete items A-E, then we will process your responses as a group.

**EXERCISE WORKSHEET #1: Goal and Nature of Biblical Counseling**

Please complete the following *individually*:

A. Biblical counseling is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

B. I am \_\_\_\_\_ percent confident in the above statement.

C. The following scripture verses support my belief about Biblical counseling:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |

D. Biblical counseling is NOT: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

E. I am \_\_\_\_\_ percent confident in my ability to counsel others.

**GROUP PROCESS:** Now, gather into your small groups and discuss your answers noted above.

**SUMMARY:** Biblical counseling is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

based upon these scriptures:

_____	_____
_____	_____

**Some suggested verses:** 1Kings 22:5; Ps 1:1; Ps 27; Ps 23; Ps 43:3; Ps 73:24; Ps 119:1-16, 105, 130; Prov 1:17; Prov 3:5-6; Prov 15:22; Prov 16:24; Prov 18:4; Prov 19:21; Prov 20:5, 18; Prov 24:6-8; Isa 28:29; Isa 30:21; Hos 4:6; 6:3; John 8:30-32; Rom 13:4; Eph 3:14-21; Eph 4:1-3, 11-32; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Thess 5:11, 14; 2 Thess 3:14; 1 Tim 1:2-4; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 12:14-15; Jas 4:7.

**In sum:** Three goals of biblical counseling are:

1. Bringing the believer into alignment with the Word; and
2. Teaching him or her how to fish rather than giving him or her a fish (i.e., advice giving); and
3. Fostering a believer's spiritual maturity "God's Way, Every Day."

## **THE GOAL AND NATURE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING**

**A. *The basis of biblical counseling.*** The main difference between secular and biblical counseling is simple: a biblical counselor uses the Bible, not a scientific or philosophical theory, as **the source of truth**. The biblical counseling process should uncover the client's main issue and find out what the Bible says about it. Even if the Bible is silent on a "specific" issue, there may be a general biblical principle to follow.

**B. *Counseling is a relationship:*** At its most basic level, counseling is a dynamic *relationship*. Understanding that is *key*, and the keys to any successful relationship are *understanding* and *trust*.

**C. *Counseling is a specific kind of relationship.***

1. A counseling relationship is an agreement between two or more people to enter into a relationship whereby one (the counselor, you) applies special skills to assist the other (the client) in the resolution of a personal or interpersonal problem. While the initial goal of pastoral counseling is the facilitation of spiritual growth, the ultimate goal of the biblical counselor is to help the client become mature in Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6; James 1:4; 1 John 4:12 and 17).
2. Counseling empowers the client by "teaching him or her how to fish" in contrast to "giving him or her a fish" (or advice). **Advice giving is not sustainable and, therefore, should be avoided.**

**D. *A healthy counseling relationship requires boundaries.***

1. A counseling relationship has a clear purpose, is time-limited, and has boundaries. Boundaries must be established at the outset of the counseling relationship. Boundaries provide focus for the relationship and create an atmosphere where the client will feel safe enough to expose their vulnerabilities. While the counselor and client need to discuss boundaries, it is the counselor who *is responsible for establishing and maintaining* the boundaries. Boundaries include the following:
  - (a) Defined purpose. While the immediate purpose is to respond to the needs of the client and to help resolve the client's problem; the ultimate purpose is to help the client become mature in Jesus Christ.
  - (b) Focus and Time-Limited: It is important in the first session of what may be a series of counseling sessions to clearly understand what the specific problem is, to articulate it, and to make sure that the client agrees with your understanding of the problem. The chances of successful resolution of a problem are increased if the counselor keeps the focus of the counseling on the specific problem that was described and agreed to at the beginning of the counseling relationship. After the series of counseling sessions dealing with the first problem has ended, additional counseling sessions may be needed to deal with other problems.
  - (c) Know Your Limits! The counselor has been sought out *in a professional capacity* because of his/her perceived special knowledge and expertise. Consequently, it is vital for you, the counselor, to *know your limits*. If the client wants more than you are competent to give, you are not helping the client by going beyond your skill level.
  - (d) Consistent, predictable guidelines. The counselor needs to make sure the client understands *where* the counseling sessions will occur; *when* the counseling sessions will occur; *how long* each counseling session will last; *the number of times* you will meet; and *what will happen* at the counseling sessions.

## **GOD'S DEMONSTRATION OF COUNSELING SKILLS**

**A. *The Ideal: God and Creation.*** God created the world for His pleasure. God told Adam that he was “free” (**Gen 2:16**) to roam the Garden of Eden, but God also provided a warning against behaving in a manner that would cause death. God created man in his image and found man a suitable helper, woman. Both man and woman had an idyllic relationship with the Creator and had everything they ever needed. Life was AWESOME!

**B. *The Fall.*** Then came the Fall. Satan challenged God’s warning given to Adam, then repeated to Eve, stating, “*You will not surely die ... for your eyes will be opened and you will be like God!*” (**Gen 3:4-5**). So, sin entered into the world, and the relationship between God and man changed forever. Not only did death enter the world, but so did the knowledge of good and evil (v. 22). God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and provided a flaming sword (v. 24) to guard against Adam and Eve returning to eat from the tree of life and, thus, offering them eternal life (v. 22). It might sound cruel, but God disallowed a quick and easy fix for man’s disobedience or sin. Adam and Eve had the best counselor in the world, and they failed to heed His advice. But, that is the nature of free will. They simply had a choice, and so do we (and our clients). But, all is not lost (as we will eat from the tree of life in the New Jerusalem – **Rev 22:1-2**)!!

**C. *The Redemption Story.*** God made a way for sinful man to find his way back to God. His only (Acts 4:12) provision was His Son, Jesus Christ. “*Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” (**John 3:16**). A little further on in the same gospel, Jesus stated that He was “*The way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” (**John 14:6**). Thus, if we believe in the One whom God had sent, we are justified. But, from the time we are saved until our death, we are being sanctified. Biblical counseling is part of the process of sanctification – making us more like Christ. The bible is a tool in the sanctification process (**John 17:17**), and sometimes that process involves trials (**Ps 119:71**) so that we might learn more about the Word. Thus, being saved does not mean we will escape trials, pain, suffering, disease, malice, hatred, death, persecution – all the result of living in a fallen world. Some clients either act or think otherwise. Indeed, we are in the process of being sanctified.

**CHARACTERISTICS AND ACTIVITIES OF A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR:** *Not all Pastors, or even Christians, should be counselors. What does it take to be an effective counselor?*

### ***A. Characteristics of an effective Biblical counselor.***

Each of the following should characterize the biblical counselor:

1. Realistic self-appraisal—The counselor must have confidence but also a sense of one’s own limitations. The person needs to be able to recognize his personal strengths and weaknesses, his gifts and the areas in which he struggles (see **Matt 7:1-5; Gal 6:1-2**).
2. Realistic expectations—Although God can work miracles, we cannot. Further, even a miracle by God is by definition something extraordinary, not to be expected on a routine or frequent basis. A prime function of a counselor is to help people adjust to what challenges them in order to enable them to continue on their “ordinary life” journey. Therefore, the counselor *cannot* promise that after counseling their lives “will be like the problem or trauma never happened.”
3. Positive regard—The counselor must see the value in human beings. This quality enables the counselor to walk alongside and serve them, not “fix” them.
4. Genuineness—The counselor is a model of Christ, and is a witness all the time. To be “genuine” is something we *are*; it is very hard to fake. Demonstrating honesty, authenticity, genuineness, along with the effort to develop and show understanding, shows the client that he is valued (as Jesus did).

### ***B. Scriptural activities of a biblical counselor.***

In every counseling relationship, the counselor will engage in or demonstrate several, if not all, of the following:

1. Love. You are offering your clients the opportunity to be loved, and known, and to have their needs responded to by someone who cares. You are representing Christ to them, so it is important to manifest that.
2. Admonish. You will have to correct, confront, highlight, and bring to your clients’ attention things that they do not see. This may be uncomfortable; however, it helps to address the problem that has been identified. Use the Word of God to correct unbiblical beliefs, opinions, and actions that the client has, and point the client in the direction of change. As a last resort, if the person claims to be a Christian but is in an

unrepentant state of sin, you may have to move from counseling to church discipline (**Matt 18:15-17**).

3. Pray for one another. You should pray for the clients before, during, and after you see them.

4. Encourage. You need to help your clients build on the good choices you are helping them to make. Yet, the counselor also has an obligation to *accurately* reflect the world to the client.

5. Help one another; carry one another's burdens. In Christ, there are no Lone Rangers (**Gal 6:2**). Your "coming alongside" the client itself helps to lift the burden from the client's shoulders. The client sees that you are concerned about him and have his best interests at heart. He sees that you are trying to *understand* what has happened to him and what it is like to be him, and what it's like to have gone through what he has gone through. Also, sometimes others have more wisdom or experience in a particular area of struggle than do you (**Prov 11:14; 15:22; 24:6**), so it is a good idea to refer to a different counselor when necessary.

6. Confession of sins. This releases a burden, releases shame, and begins the process of restoring relationships. Confession also opens up the path of forgiveness. Some people have a great sense of their own sin; they need to hear the message of God's grace, and the hope that can bring. Others are proud and self-righteous, not seeing or accepting their own sins and sinfulness; they need to be warned by God's law. A good maxim to follow is: "law to the proud; grace to the humble."

7. Test reality; discern. You must help your clients understand what is real and what is not real. Further, discerning has a moral quality—it goes beyond reality to what is good and right (i.e., what *should* be). This aspect of discernment is based on the standard of God's Word, via the Holy Spirit, the ability to see the other person as God sees him (just as Jesus saw the woman at the well in **John 4**—he saw her both as how she really was *and* how she could be).

8. Exhortation. You will have to give direction to your clients: challenge them; "light a fire under them"; build them up; describe the "building" (i.e., the new lifestyle) you and your client are in the process of building.

9. Teach. Teaching is always occurring; however, counseling sessions are not intended to be a lecture by the counselor to the client. Teach, convict, correct, train in righteousness (**2 Tim 3:16**) as needed. Much of counseling involves helping the clients to identify *choices* and the potential *consequences* of their actions. In this regard, helping them to identify their *motivations* is important (the ultimate motivation should be love: to God and to one's neighbor). This concept will (hopefully) be clearly illustrated over the course of the next few days as we practice basic counseling skills. The goal is that the client's false ideas, attitudes, opinions, motivations, etc., will be replaced with biblically-based ideas, attitudes, opinions, motivations, etc.

10. Give hope (Ps 46:1; Rom 8:18, 28; 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 4:15-16; 13:5). Often clients see no way out of their problems. Their frame of reference is focused on themselves and their problems. As counselor, you can see the "bigger picture." You also can see things through biblical eyes. Consequently, you can provide hope that they are unable find on their own.

11. Listen Carefully. Avoid the rush to judgment, especially siding with one party (**Prov 18:13, 15, 17**).

**THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE**. Most of your clients will be members of your church or, at the very least, regular attendees. Even though you may be familiar with the client, the formal counseling experience generally starts several days or weeks prior to the actual intake or initial interview.

**A. Counseling Is Part of Preaching**. We believe that counseling is really part of the pastoral or shepherding process. Most people struggle with love, acceptance, sadness, worry, sexual issues, fear, grief, anger, shame, aggression, stress, and forgiveness (self and others) at some point in their lives. Each of these issues can, and should, be addressed from the pulpit.

**B. Self-Selection**. Clients, and potential clients, eventually decide that they need someone to talk to and select the person to whom they wish to reveal their concerns. Sometimes clients want to talk to the pastor because they won't feel rejected or ashamed if they revealed their concerns, problems, or issues to one another.

**C. Initial Relief**. Many clients dread having to take the first step and ask for help, to contact someone about starting counseling. But, once they make the initial step (i.e., to call and set up an appointment), it is not unusual for a client to experience a sense of relief.

**D. Interim Period**. Once a client makes an appointment, there may be a few days or weeks before their first appointment. Sometimes the client's problem resolves itself, and they no longer need to talk to someone about

it. Second, the client may have developed their own coping strategy and, thus, no longer need counseling.

### **A STRATEGY FOR A SHORT-TERM COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP.**

Strategic pastoral counseling is a brief, structured counseling approach that is explicitly Christian. It uses research-based counseling practices without sacrificing pastoral ministry ideals. The term *strategic* emphasizes the fact that this approach to counseling is highly focused and time-limited. The term *pastoral* points to the fact that it is offered by a representative of the Christian church who is accountable to the church.

#### ***A few characteristics of Strategic Pastoral Counseling.***

1. **Brief and Time-Limited.** We suggest a **maximum of five counseling sessions**. However, the total number may or may not be fixed in advance. Yet, the client must understand that the number of counseling sessions will be few; not unlimited. It is important to know that **nearly 90%** of most problems or issues can be resolved in five sessions or less.

The brief nature of strategic pastoral counseling tends to keep both the client and the counselor focused and directed. This aspect of the counseling model requires four key things:

- a. **The counselor must be active and directive.** Among other things, the counselor must keep the relationship centered on dealing with the agreed-upon focus and problem.
  - b. **The counseling relationship must be a partnership.** Both parties must work together in the same direction, which involves agreeing on the nature of the central problem and agreeing on the goals for change. No partnership means no change! Remember: Never work harder than your client does.
  - c. **Counseling must concentrate on one central and specific problem.** Focusing on one problem is necessary because the number of counseling sessions is limited. The counselor must help the client to clarify his primary concern, and that concern must not be too vague (e.g., “I’m dissatisfied with life”).
  - d. **Time limitation must be maintained.** This helps the client come to the counseling sessions prepared to work. Holding to the five session limit does *not* mean that sessions should be every week; sessions every two or three weeks are more helpful. Additional series of sessions may be necessary to deal with other problems in the client’s life.
2. **Structured.** Each counseling session has a clear focus and builds on the previous ones in contributing to accomplishing the overall goal. The counselor is responsible for maintaining the structure and focus.
3. **Homework-based.** Homework helps maintain momentum between sessions. Homework may include: (A) bibliotherapy (readings of books, articles, and/or Scripture that the client does on his own, interacts with, and reports on at the next session); (B) behavioral rehearsal (practicing new behavioral skills); (C) journaling; (D) having the client share with others things he has explored and learned in counseling; (E) having the client report what was and was not helpful to him.

### **WHOLISTIC APPROACH: Clients are Multidimensional**

All people consist of at least six aspects or facets. These six aspects affect all facets of their being and all of their relationships (i.e., the person’s relationship with himself, his relationship with other people, and his relationship with God). Those aspects are as follows:

1. **Spiritual.** People ask and struggle with such basic life issues as, “Is this all there is to life?” People deal with their “inner selves” (i.e., “who I ‘really am’”). People strive for a relationship with the supernatural beyond the self/something beyond humanity.
  - a. People seeking to fill their “inner void” may turn to drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, “workaholicism,” money, or other things, without realizing that what they are really seeking is the fulfillment, love, acceptance, security, and significance that come only through a saving, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
  - b. *“Transcending the self” is important in dealing with people who are hurting or having problems.* Counselors can help clients see that their reality is not limited to themselves or the things of this world. Instead, there is a great and loving Heavenly Father who has created them, sustains them, and provides supernatural resources for them to deal with all of the issues of their lives. Further, the Heavenly Father revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ, and the clients can enter into a fulfilling relationship with the Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ.
2. **Physical.** The client’s *diet* and the amount of *sleep* and *exercise* he gets are all important factors which may contribute to problems in other areas of his life. When properly regulated, such physical factors may lead to an improved mental or emotional state, which will help to resolve problems in other areas of his life.

Further, although depression is often thought of simply as an emotional state or condition, it may be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, or may be a side effect of medication. Likewise, hallucinations or strange beliefs may not be caused by “mental illness,” but may be the result of a reaction to medication or a brain tumor.

**3. Social.** We all respond to the social world (other people; relationships). We all have social needs. As will be discussed later, all people are searching for *security* and *significance*. Their searching for security and significance outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ may lead to a host of inappropriate thoughts and behaviors.

a. *One characteristic of a client’s social aspect, however, is that the client often will want to “put on his best face” in front of you.* As **Jer 17:9** says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” Consequently, the client may want to convince you that the decisions he has already made are *right*. He may be seeking counseling in order to obtain the affirmation that comes from having a sympathetic person lend a sympathetic ear to his problems and then to tell him that he is not to blame, etc.

b. *There are really two kinds of people in the world: redeemed sinners and unredeemed sinners.* Even Christians (i.e., redeemed sinners) have the power of indwelling sin at work within them. Consequently, Christians may be just as likely as non-Christians to merely seek affirmation in going to counseling, rather than seeking to change and seeking resolution of their problem. In such cases, if you the counselor can help the client to see his sinfulness, that can lead to humility and change. Then you, the counselor, can help lead the client to make the positive changes necessary in his life for his overall wellbeing.

**4. Cognitive.** We all *think*. We all have *beliefs*. We all can symbolically represent things in our minds and have non-physical ideas which influence us powerfully. We can all think and have beliefs and ideas beyond our own personal experiences. It is therefore an important role of a Biblical counselor to help the client recognize when his thoughts, beliefs, and ideas are non-Biblical and unbiblical—and replace those thoughts, beliefs, and ideas with *truth* (i.e., Biblically-based conceptions of reality).

**5. Behavioral.** We all act in and influence the world in which we live. Our actions both are caused and influenced by the other aspects of our being, and they tend to reinforce particular beliefs and emotions we may have. They may reinforce our spiritual state and social relationships. This is particularly true with respect to habitual behaviors on our part. Further, our actions change our circumstances and our world. Our actions have consequences for ourselves and others; many of those consequences may be unintended—nevertheless, they all affect us.

**6. Emotional (or, Affective capacity).** We all feel things. Emotions themselves are more than just “feelings”; they are whole-body experiences that involve our brain, neurons, neuro-chemicals, muscles, hormones, and gut (Worthington 2003: 30-45). Emotions are physical and subjective reactions that assist us in coping with the internal and external events and circumstances of our lives. Our emotions are not merely reactions to short-term, external events, but also to long term conditions (e.g., a marriage or a job you don’t like; or a long-term fear of apologizing). Our emotions affect our behaviors, often more so than our beliefs; they can grip us even when we know that they are irrational. Just as our emotions affect our behavior, affect us physically, and affect us in many other ways, our emotions can help us change our beliefs.

Changing our beliefs and behavior can change our emotions.

**INITIAL/INTAKE SESSION.** During the intake session, it is best to start with the client’s presenting problem. Explore their presenting concern as much as possible. We typically keep intake appointments to one hour; that should be enough time to understand a client’s main concern, associated strengths and weaknesses, as well as develop an action plan. Prior to commencing any kind of counseling relationship, it is important to establish some important guidelines for the process. We like to use a Statement of Understanding form (see below and a copy is provided in the Appendix of this manual) that clients should review, initial, and sign prior to beginning the intake session.



## **INTAKE ASSESSMENT**

Client: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_  
Intake Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

### **CHIEF CONCERN (in own client's own words):**

### **CLIENT STRENGTHS:**

#### **SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

- Church attendance/life
- Quiet time
- Bible Study

#### **MEDICAL HISTORY:**

- Significant medical problems/diagnoses:
- Client's doctor is:
- Date of last visit/physical with doctor:
- CURRENT medications (names/dosages):
- Sleep or Appetite Pattern:
- Sexual health

#### **RELATIONSHIPS:**

- Current family/significant other/children
- Family of Origin
- Mentors/friends

#### **COGNITIVE/MENTAL:**

- Automatic negative thoughts
- Fast/slow thought process
- Memory

#### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE: Alcohol, drugs**

#### **BEHAVIORAL:**

- Typical Day
- Fun activities
- Rewarding/unrewarding activities

#### **EMOTIONAL:**

- Strong negative emotions? Time, place, event
- Positive emotions? Time, place, event
- Highs/lows/cycles

### **WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM COUNSELING?**

### **AGREED UPON TREATMENT FOCUS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Counselor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **DAY TWO: SKILL BUILDING**

**WELCOME BACK!** We covered a lot of material in our first day together. We'll start today with a brief question or comment segment.

**COUNSELING SKILLS: Effective Communication Skills Within the Counseling Relationship.** Earlier in this workshop, we discussed some of the traits of a biblical counselor. As you may know, **not everyone has the gift of counseling**; however, most pastors are *believed* to possess the gift. How do you know if you have the “gift?” They will most likely have an innate ability to exhibit the following four skills: ATTENDING, UNDERSTANDING, LISTENING, and EMPATHY.

### **1. ATTENDING SKILLS**

#### **a. The basics of attending: An acronym: SOLER**

1. **S:** (Square): Clients know you are interested if you face them squarely and lean slightly forward, have an expressive face, and use facilitative, encouraging gestures. A natural, relaxed body style that is your own is more likely to be effective, but be prepared to adapt and flex according to the individual with whom you are talking.
2. **O:** (Open Stance). While we may face our clients, we must avoid the closed body posture. Uncrossed or open arms and legs is body language for being open to what the client has to say; crossed indicates a lessened involvement.
3. **L:** (Lean Forward). Leaning forward indicates an interest in what the client is saying. Lying back or to the side suggests disinterest.
4. **E:** (Eye contact). If you are going to talk to people, look at them. However, there may be some cultural differences about making eye contact. Important: don't stare at the client.
5. **R:** (Relax). The more relaxed you are, the client will feel more comfortable. Make an effort to be relatively relaxed while listening. Set the client at ease.

#### **b. Verbal Style:** Your vocal tone and speech rate also indicate how you feel about another person. What you emphasize is very important. A response like, “So you WISH your parents would go to hell” places the focus on the word “wish,” not the strong emotion of hate or the eternal demise (i.e., damnation) of another soul. Awareness of your voice and of the changes in others' vocal qualities will enhance your skills in attending to their stories.

i. **Focus—Verbal Tracking:** The client has come to you with a topic of concern. Don't change the subject! Stick with the client's story. However, some clients change topics when they do not feel comfortable.

a. **Selective attention** is a type of verbal tracking that counselors need to be especially aware of. We tend to listen to some things and ignore others. For example, if you look for demons, you can find a demon around every corner!

b. Be alert to your own **pattern of responses**. It is important that no issue get lost, but it is equally important not to attack everything at once, as confusion will result.

ii. **Focus—Validate the Client:** Non-verbal approval as their story is told. Head nods, smiles, concerns, and so on.

- c. **Client History:** Was the client raised in a controlling family? Have they been assaulted, disregarded, hated, sexualized, loved unconditionally, or are they very dependent? If so, meeting in an isolated, dark room/office is not helpful, and may be harmful.
- d. **NO DISTRACTIONS:** No intrusions, cell phones, children, e-mail, and so on.
- e. **The Usefulness of Silence:** Even though counseling is a talking profession, sometimes the most useful thing you can do as a helper is to support your client silently. Sometimes the best support may be simply being with the person and not saying a word.
- f. **Prayer:** Rather than talk through an issue, it is sometimes very appropriate to silently pray for the client, you, and this situation.

**In sum:** Attending behaviors are an important element in the counseling experience, both for the client and the counselor. Helpful counselors attend to the client's verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Unhelpful counselors talk about themselves, are easily distracted, tell clients what they are feeling, and are simply rude. Unhelpful counseling techniques are not in the image of God and, therefore, do not reflect His glory.

**GROUP PROCESS:** Break into small groups and practice your attending skills.

## **2. UNDERSTANDING SKILLS (or “Getting the Client’s Story”)**

**a. *It has been said that “communication is the lifeblood of a relationship.”*** Only by understanding the other person and what is important to him or her, can we begin to “connect” with that other person. True “connection” with another person involves *feeling* as well as just *intellectual understanding*. Only by understanding the client’s need, from the client’s reference point (i.e., what is important to them), can we begin to “connect” with the other person. It takes at least the following two things for *genuine communication* to occur:

1. *Time*—It takes time to get to know a person. Getting to know the client enables the barriers of genuine communication to be overcome.
2. *Trust*—The barriers to genuine communication will not be overcome unless there is trust between the two parties. No one wants to be hurt. Things said in confidence, secrets that are exposed, must remain confidential (unless there is a sufficient reason to the contrary, i.e., to prevent someone from being harmed or because the law requires divulging certain information). Nothing can so harm a relationship as to betray a trust. You may ask, “How is trust built?” Trust is formed in a relationship when a risk is handled well. Some people have a very difficult time trusting others, themselves, and even God. In some respects, they have experienced a time in their life when someone did not respond in a helpful or meaningful way when they were vulnerable.

**b. *There are different levels of communication that get progressively deeper and more intimate.*** As a counselor you need to be aware of the level at which the client is communicating. The client may avoid moving to deeper levels of communication because of fear of exposing his inner self, shame, avoiding the pain that comes from uncovering hurtful events or memories, or because he doesn’t really trust you yet. One of your most important roles as counselor is to facilitate open, truthful, deep communication with your client. The levels of communication are the following (from the client to the counselor):

1. *Cliché*—This is really “non-sharing.” It is the least transparent mode of “communication,” and is safely used with the largest number of people.
2. *Fact*—Sharing what you know is slightly less opaque and typically is done with slightly fewer people.
3. *Opinion*—Sharing what you think or believe becomes more personal. Therefore, it is more transparent and people tend to become more selective with whom they share their opinions.
4. *Emotion*—Sharing what you feel is approaching transparency, and is generally done with a much smaller group of people.

**c. *To communicate Understanding well, you need to determine:*** 1. *what* you want to say; 2. *how* you want to say it (tone of voice, volume, with excitement, sadness, conviction, disappointment, encouragement, etc.); 3. *why* you want to say it (to express love or affection, anger, to help, hurt, or embarrass the other person, to make him aware of his need, etc.); and 4. *when* you want to say it. How and when you say something can be as important as *what* you say and *why* you say it. In fact, saying something in an inappropriate way or at an inappropriate time can cause the other person to misinterpret what you are saying and why you said it.

**d. *Understanding includes both the content of what the other person is telling you and his or her feelings.*** Remember that communication is both *verbal* (what we say) and *nonverbal* (tone of voice, body language, gestures, facial expressions, etc.). When the verbal and nonverbal do not agree, people tend to believe the *nonverbal*. As a counselor you need to be aware of the nonverbal aspects of how the client is communicating. The nonverbal communication may be more important than what the client is actually saying and may, in fact, belie what he is saying.

**e. *NEVER work harder than the client does.*** Some people want you to do all the work!

**GROUP PROCESS:** Break into small groups and practice your understanding skills.

## **3. LISTENING SKILLS (or “Writing a Script about the Client’s Story”)**

**a. *Many people want nothing more than for someone to care enough to listen to them.*** To take the time to listen and pay attention to someone is to show that you value what that person has to say. It shows that you value the person, himself or herself.

**b. *Listening well is a skill that can be learned.*** Many people are, in fact, poor listeners. Poor listening

stifles communication and fosters misunderstanding. The *attitude* of a good listener should demonstrate: (1) an attitude that the client's comments are top priority; give focused attention—prove you care by suspending all other activities; and (2) an attitude of acceptance and willingness to understand.

**c. Active or Reflective listening** is the single most useful and important listening skill. In active listening, we are genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting - or what the message means. and We are active in checking out our understanding before we respond with our own message. We restate or paraphrase our understanding of their message and state it back to the sender for verification. This verification or feedback process is what distinguishes active listening and makes it effective.

To listen effectively, we must be actively involved in the communication process and not just listen passively. There are three techniques that may be used as an active listener:

(1) Reflecting back—A good technique to aid your understanding of the other person is to “reflect back” what the other person says to you. This helps to clarify, both for yourself and for the other person, exactly what you understand the other person to be saying as he is proceeding through his or her narrative of events. When reflecting back what the other person has said, it is usually important to paraphrase and use your own words in verbalizing your understanding of the message. Parroting back the words verbatim is annoying and does not ensure accurate understanding of the message. Depending on the purpose of the interaction and your understanding of what is relevant, you could reflect back the other person's: account of the facts; thoughts and beliefs; feelings and emotions; wants, needs, or motivation; or hopes and expectations. Further, you can “reflects back” by making summary statements, such as: “You're feeling \_\_\_\_\_”; “As I understand it \_\_\_\_\_”; “\_\_\_\_\_ is that right?” etc. This may prompt the other person either to agree with your summary or to say something like, “no, what I mean is \_\_\_\_\_” Either way, the goal of mutual understanding is furthered.

(2) Clarifying questions—Listen with an attitude of clarification. That helps one to understand the meaning of the message. You can ask such clarifying questions as: “Are you telling me that \_\_\_\_\_?” and “What did you mean when you said \_\_\_\_\_?”

(3) Summary questions—You want to know what is most important to the other person, what the real intent of the client's perhaps lengthy and convoluted message may be. You can ask summary questions such as these to help learn this: “Of all that you just said, what do you most want me to understand?” and “What do you need from me most right now?”

**d. Additional tips for good, active listening:**

(1) Don't respond to just the meaning of the words; look for the feelings or intent beyond the words. The dictionary or surface meaning of the words may not be the message the other person really wants to communicate.

(2) Inhibit your impulse to immediately answer questions. Sometimes people ask questions when they really want to express themselves and are not open to hearing an answer.

(c) If you are confused and know you do not understand, either tell the person you don't understand and ask him or her to say it another way, or use your best guess. If you are incorrect, the person will realize it and will likely attempt to correct your misunderstanding.

**In sum**, become a more effective listener. Listening to and acknowledging other people may seem deceptively simple, but doing it well, particularly when disagreements arise, takes true talent. As with any skill, listening well takes plenty of practice, so practice the active listening techniques and make them part of your communication skills.

**GROUP PROCESS:** Break into small groups and practice your listening skills.

**4. EMPATHY SKILLS** (or “Putting Yourself in the Client's Shoes” or acting out their movie role)

**a. Empathy has been described this way, especially as it relates to communication:** “Empathizing is about tuning into the other person's thoughts and feelings, whatever these may be.” It is about effortlessly putting yourself into another's shoes, sensitively negotiating an interaction with another person so as not to hurt or offend them in any way, caring about another's feelings.

- Empathizing leads you to search a client's tone of voice and to scan people's faces, especially their eyes, to pick up on how they might be feeling or what they might be thinking.
- Empathy also makes real communication possible. Talking at a person is not real

communication; it is a monologue. Real conversation is sensitive to *this* listener at *this* time. *In sum*, empathy is putting yourself in the other person's shoes without really being them.

**b. There are different levels of empathetic responses.** For example, if the client is having a conflict with his father, different levels of empathic statements (counselor to client) might be:

Level 1—"It will all work out in the end." This response really misses the client's situation. It is merely a denial or reassurance. There is certainly no recognition of the client's feelings and shows little or no explicit recognition of the content of the problem.

Level 2—"You're having a bad time with your dad." Here, the counselor has highlighted at least a general awareness of the *content* of the client's message, but the counselor has ignored the client's feelings.

Level 3—"You're feeling discouraged because you're not getting along with your dad." Here, the counselor exhibits greater understanding of both the specific content and the feelings of the client's message. This opens up the possibility of further discussion.

Level 4—"You're feeling discouraged because of your dad's harshness; you want him to let up on you." Here, the counselor manifests understanding of the specific problem, and the client's feelings, and identifies the deficit or need (i.e., what the client would like to see happen to solve the deficit or meet the need).

**GROUP PROCESS:** Break into small groups and practice your empathy skills.

## **EMOTIONAL ISSUES AND INTRA-PERSONAL PROBLEMS: A SAMPLER**

### **A. Grief and Depression.**

#### **1. Definitions.**

a. *Grief*. Grief is an expected reaction to a loss. Grief helps us to adjust to what has been lost and helps us live in the present. It modifies our expectations and requires us to release "what was" in order to experience "what is now." Grieving is *not* for the purpose of forgetting, but for *reformulating* our lives.

b. *Depression*. Clinical depression is a mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life for an extended period of time. Like grief, depression involves the *entire body*, not just the emotions. Depressive symptoms are present for the majority of every day *for at least 2 weeks*, occurring together during the same time frame, and causing a level of distress or impairment that interferes with important aspects of daily life, e.g., work, self-care, and social activities. Although grief is the natural, expected reaction to a loss, depression can be associated with different conditions or have a number of causes, including:

(1) Unresolved grief or anger. Grief and anger take a toll on the person. Depression may be "anger turned inward." Unforgiveness may lead to depression and, ultimately, to suicide.

(2) Sleep disturbance. Medication or excessive caffeine use may lead to depression by chronically disrupting one's sleep.

(3) Biological factors. There may be a genetic component to depression. A family history of depression may reveal this. Further, people who have had untreated depression as children tend to have spontaneous depressions as adults. Depression may be the result of *bipolar disorder* in which the person oscillates between a "high" or "manic" phase and a "low" or "depressed" phase. Bipolar disorder may be hereditary and medication is essential if it is to be cured.

(4) Physiological vulnerability. Some people have a lower threshold for responding to stress. Further, depression is a sense of *depletion*, of "running on empty." The body is not producing enough of certain neurotransmitters. When that is adjusted through medication, the depression lifts.

(5) Multiple losses. When a person is dealing with multiple losses simultaneously or over a short period of time, his susceptibility to depression may increase. Loss of employment, menopause in women, and other "changes of life" may enhance the risk for a depressive episode.

(6) Perfectionistic, rigid, or highly dependent people are more vulnerable to depression.

(7) Illness and disease tend to bring on depression. Further, someone who is depressed tends to have a depressed immune system which, in turn, affects physical healing. Consequently, illness and depression tend to be interactive.

## 2. Helping the grieving and depressed.

### a. *Helping the grieving.*

(1) The purposes of grieving are to: (A) *Accept the reality of the loss* (i.e., to come to grips with what the loss means and what are the implications of the loss for our life); (B) *Experience the pain that comes with the loss* (Pain changes us; it gives us a new openness and helps us to develop new expectations as we begin to see what is no longer present in our lives); (C) *Adjust to the environment* (As we rebuild our understanding based on our new realities, we begin to make the changes that are necessary—most people who have experienced great loss tend to see the relatively greater importance of relationships and the lesser importance of things); (D) *Emotionally relocate* the object of the loss (i.e., the deceased, the job that one lost, etc.) and move on with life.

(2) Suggestions for counselors.

#### (A) *Things to do.*

(i) Accept the person's feelings, concerns, and actions. Further, let yourself be vulnerable—share how you felt when you went through a similar loss. Our primary goal is not to make the person feel better or to take away the pain but to facilitate his adjustment to the loss.

(ii) Listen to the person, even (or especially) as he retells details or stories you may have heard before. Listen as he expresses feelings such as anger, shame, remorse, yearning, and fear. People tend to reject our answers, but value our presence, our listening, and our recognition of their experiences.

(iii) Grief is a process—be aware of when to respond verbally or just be present with the client.

Grief generally has five stages:

Stage I: Shock or disbelief

Stage II: Anger

Stage III: Bargaining

Stage IV: Depression or sadness

Stage V: Acceptance

(vi) Provide social support and promote interaction—be aware of the difficulty for the one grieving to go out in public, especially if the person is grieving the death of a loved one; invite the person to participate in activities that were enjoyable before the death.

(v) Because grief shatters our understanding and assumptions concerning the world, reality may no longer make sense. This often results in anger with God. The person's idea of God is often insufficient to account for things. We need to listen and can ask the person, "Have you talked to God about this?" We can pray with and for the person. We can ask the person what he would like us to say, and can then pray in his presence.

#### (B) *Things to avoid.*

(1) Do not withdraw from the one who is grieving; sadly, this has become all too common in today's world.

(2) Do not compare, evaluate, or judge.

(3) Avoid saying such things as: "I know just how you feel"; "Be strong"; "God wanted [the deceased] with him"; "You'll get over it soon"; "There is someone else out there for you." All such statements make the person feel like you are relating to him as an object rather than as an individual.

### b. *Helping the depressed.*

(1) Consider networking with other caregivers, including doctors. A medical evaluation is important, especially since depression can be the result of a primary physical problem (about 40% of depression is linked to physical illness). Anti-depressant medication helps people get back to their "baseline." Further, research indicates that severe depression is best treated with a combination of medication and counseling therapy.

(2) The comments above about helping the grieving also apply to helping the depressed.

(3) Additional suggestions for dealing with those who are in depression.

(A) *Listening and being present are very important.* Clients with depression tend to have a negative perception of themselves, their present environment, and the future.

(B) *A client journal.* We can let them know that their inappropriate thoughts, or feelings, or behaviors are "their depression talking." Having the person keep an "events journal" will help the client to see what has been happening in his life and how he has been evaluating it.

(C) *Encourage the depressed person to do the things he should be doing, even though he doesn't*

*want to do them.* Particularly important is helping him to remain active in positive social environments. Encourage the person to eat properly and get plenty of rest and exercise.

(D) *Involve the family around the person.* However, let the family know that they are not to assume all of the responsibility, but they should help the person assume responsibility himself.

(E) *Pray for the depressed person.* At the heart of depression is that the person is without hope. He has negative interpretation of life and feels that the situation will never change. Therefore, it is important throughout the counseling process, to *give him hope*. Yet, be mindful that the client may not see God at all because of the depression. Help the person return to the Word of God.

### 3. Suicide.

#### a. *Causes.*

(1) Suicide is almost always results from spiritual depression. Suicide is viewed by the person as a very practical problem solving option—when there is no other way out of an unrelenting, painful, dark state with no end in sight. In a sense, suicide is seen as the best way to find deliverance from pain, hurt, and/or suffering. The prophet Jonah is a good example of this.

(2) Ironically, suicide is often attempted as the person starts to come out of the depression. In the depths of depression the person recognizes suicide as an option; as they start to get better he begins to think, “I’m not totally helpless; I just have to get a few things in order and then I’m out of here.” He might even become enthusiastic about the idea since, in his mind, he has now “regained control of his life.”

(3) Because suicide is seen as a way to solve the problem of depression, a counselor needs to let the person know: (A) *suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem;* and (B) *most persons considering suicide truly WANT to get rid of “a” problem, but not end their life.* For example, a person struggling with chronic pain, loneliness, or sexual sin might consider suicide as “a way” to end their struggle. However, if they can manage or eventually gain victory over their particular problem, they no longer desire to kill themselves, but focus on solving their problems.

#### b. *Risk Factors.*

Not everyone gives signs of suicide. There is no one pattern. Males tend to commit suicide when younger or older; females more frequently when they are middle aged. In both cases drug or alcohol involvement is prominent because it affects their judgment. Among the more significant risk factors are the following:

(1) Depression—many of the cognitive disorders of the elderly are really the result of depression, not disease.

(2) Significant loss—isolation, loss of support, and loss of purpose are important risk factors. Men in particular tend to lose social connections with age, and lose their perceived “identity” or purpose when they no longer are able to work, since many men’s identity and purpose are highly related to their jobs.

(3) Family history of suicide, or the suicide of a close friend.

(4) Personal or family history of mental illness.

(5) Family violence, a history of abuse, or violence done against the person.

(6) Prior suicide attempt.

(7) History of involvement with the law.

(8) Firearms in the home (for men).

(9) Alcohol or drug abuse.

#### c. *Dealing with someone who is contemplating suicide.*

(1) Take any comments regarding suicide seriously.

(2) Develop a plan. Don’t make promises to keep the matter secret (in fact, you should let elders or others know [the body of Christ needs to help people out of the “dark places” in their lives, and point them to Christ]; get the family to take concrete actions to be with and engage the person).

(3) In “emergency” situations, or if the person calls you on the telephone: (A) Assess what is the immediate danger—e.g., ask the person “How would you do that?” (you need to find out what method the person is contemplating and how lethal it is). If you hear the word “gun,” instruct the person to put the gun down immediately/safely. (B) Have the person commit to not take impulsive action while you are talking. Talk about how to solve the problem. Have the person go to be with someone. Also, have the person agree to take some concrete action *tomorrow* (e.g., come to my office; call a physician). (C) When you have a sense that the immediate danger has passed, talk clearly and with confidence. Someone is more likely to go along with what you say “if” you are clear, confident, and have authority. Have the person get someone else in the house (or arrange for this yourself).

(4) In non-emergency situations when someone is contemplating suicide: (A) *Don't be afraid to talk about the subject*—you won't be suggesting something that they haven't already thought of. Ask such things as: "Do you every think about hurting yourself or others?" "Have you thought about how you would do it?" "Have you ever tried this before?" "If so, what happened?" At this point, you are in a "problem-solving" mode, not a "moralistic" mode. (B) *Make sure the person recognizes the irreversibility of death.* Many younger people really do not consider this—especially their own death. (C) *Find out "what part" of their life they want to get rid of.* Usually, a suicidal person does not want all aspects of themselves to die. Instead, they want to get rid of a portion of their existence, assuming that they will feel better (or others will be better off). (D) *If the client asks whether he will go to heaven when he dies*—he may be looking for your *consent* to commit suicide. You might say, "That's in God's hands; if you will go to heaven, I don't know." Remember, the person is attempting a permanent solution to a temporary problem. You need to understand, and find out from the client, *why* he is asking the question. (E) *When someone who is grieving another person's suicide asks whether that person went to heaven*—you need to talk openly about what happened. The survivors often feel a sense of guilt (i.e., "I could have done something to prevent it"), as well as sadness, anger, and shame. Point out that our faith is not in the person, or what he has done, but in Jesus Christ. Only God knows the person's heart; we do not. We do not know what happened in the person's last moments—for the thief on the cross it was not too late. Make sure to identify what the person asking the question can do to know that he has eternal life—get back to what God's Word has said, and point the person to Christ. Pray fervently for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

### **GROUP PROCESS: Asking someone about Guilt, Shame, and Depression**

In your small groups, take turns asking each other the following questions: [Note: the other person doesn't have to answer the question. The goal is just to ask the question.]

1. Has there ever been a time that you felt guilty about something? Tell me about that.
2. Have you ever felt ashamed? What was happening at the time?
3. Did you ever want to hide from God or blame someone else for a problem? Tell me more.
4. At some time in their lives, most people feel distant from God. Have you ever experienced that? If so, when was that?
5. Some Christians feel a need to be "perfect" to please themselves, others, or God. What does that mean to you?
6. When you sinned against someone, how did that affect your relationship with them?
7. Has anyone ever sinned against you? If so, how did that affect your relationship with them?
8. Have you ever felt unloved? What was that like?
9. Have you ever been betrayed?
10. Have you ever attempted to restore a broken relationship? When was that?
11. How are you getting along with your wife?
12. Under what circumstances have you come close to hitting your child?
13. Sometimes people feel down, sad, or depressed. Have you ever felt that way?
14. Depression can trigger thoughts about harming themselves. Have you ever *thought* about killing yourself?
15. Have you ever *tried* to kill yourself?
16. Do you have any guns or knives in your home?
17. Have you ever lost anyone close to you? Tell me about that.

### **B. Stress, Worry, and Fear.**

#### **1. Stress.**

- a. *Life involves constant demands for adaptation and change.* Life without stress is death. Indeed, in the absence of all stress and stimulation, people lose contact with reality and create their own stimulation (e.g., psychosis).
- b. *External variables and stressors tend to affect people very little.* Instead, it is the thought life about that very situation that causes most stress. Our internal processing largely determines whether we view an external stressor as positive ("eustress") or negative ("distress"). In other words, it is how we think about something that triggers our stress. Examples are Adam, Eve, Moses, Abraham, David, and so on.
- c. *We are not merely "stimulus-response mechanisms."* Rather, we are constantly discerning and



appraising things. Thus, the process of reacting to a stressor is: Stressor (stimulus)=>Appraisal=>Response. In our appraisal of stimuli we are constantly, subconsciously, asking ourselves such questions as: (1) “What is this?” (i.e., Is this a good, positive thing? Is it a bad, negative thing? Or is it benign or irrelevant to me?); (2) “Can I cope with this?” (i.e., What does it take to cope with this stimulus? Do I have the skill and resources to cope with this?); and (3) “What are the consequences?” (i.e., If this goes bad, will I still be OK?). Distress is *not inherent* in a stimulus. Rather, it is *our internal processing and appraisal* of events that determines our responses.

d. *We can change “negatives” into “opportunities.”* We can analyze things so as to bring our appraisal into conscious awareness. We can show ourselves that a “negative” really will not have catastrophic consequences, and it may present us with a good opportunity. By doing this, we can then change our *emotional response* to stimuli (e.g., the emotion of fear can be changed to anticipation). In doing this we must not equate “pleasant” with “good” and “unpleasant” with “bad.” We need to help our clients understand that lots of unpleasant experiences have good dimensions. For example, with respect to Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (**2 Cor 12:7-10**), his prayer was not answered and the “thorn” was not taken away. Nevertheless, Paul concluded that *God’s glory was increased* in Paul’s weakness. Further, we must help our clients identify the opportunities that are present in their circumstances.

## 2. Worry and Fear.

a. *All people struggle with worry and fear from time to time.* We need to avoid rushing to judgment about the causes of people’s fears. What may seem irrational or insignificant to one person may be a major issue of enslavement to someone else.

b. *Fear is fixating on anything that threatens to destroy (or what we think will destroy) us or some significant aspect of our life.* Anxiety involves a tension or uneasiness, but the tension or uneasiness is there without our knowing why we are feeling that way. At the core of either feeling is an attitude of distress. Either feeling draws our attention away from God, and it gives more power to the object of our fear than it deserves, and more power to it than to the power of God. As counselors we need to help redirect people back to fixing on God. I believe that fear is “taking on a responsibility that God never intended for you/me to have.” Asking clients about their perception of the responsibility is important in understanding their fear(s).

c. *There are both healthy fears (e.g., fear of fire, heights, poisonous snakes, and God’s awesome majesty and power), and unhealthy fears,* such as: (1) fear of death (only faith in Christ delivers us from the fear of death); (2) fear of losing a loved one (again, ultimately that is a matter of God’s control and our trust, or lack of trust, in God); (3) fear of “not being able to control” a situation (and the related concept that “If only I had done X, I could have prevented Y from happening”); (4) fear of failure (we all fail at various things, and God is constantly trying to let us know that we are, indeed, helpless and therefore should put our trust in *Him* [see, **John 15:5**]); fear of people (we often replace God with people, and end up fearing what others think, rather than what God thinks).

d. *As counselors, we should help people identify the sources of their fears and re-appraise their situations* (as previously discussed in the section on stress). Further, because, at its root, fear is a drawing away from God and fixing on something else, we need to help our clients renew their relationship with the One who loves them and is sovereign over all of their experiences. We need to be clear about the causes of people’s fears: fear is a reality in a fallen, sinful world; deception may be involved (i.e., the person simply may be believing things that are not true)—people tend to base their beliefs on their upbringing, their environment, and on traumatic events, rather than on the Word of God. An attitude of fear is basically sinful because it is fixing attention away from God and exhibits a lack of trust in God. Therefore, the person needs to be gradually confronted concerning his fears with biblical truth. The client should be directed back to God and to finding his satisfaction in God (as **1 John 4:18** says, “perfect love casts out fear”). God’s sovereignty over our circumstances, and His having ordained that even fearful things exist in our lives, can be a source of great comfort and strength.

## **GROUP PROCESS: Asking someone about Stress and Worry**

In your small groups, take turns asking each other the following: [Note: the other person doesn’t have to answer the question. The goal is just to ask the questions.]

1. Has there ever been a time that you felt stressed out? Tell me about that.
2. All people experience some level of stress in their lives. What is your stress level today? (**Offer them to respond with a range from 0 to 10**).

3. Did you ever get a thought in your head you can't get rid of? Tell me more.
4. Some Christians feel that worry is taking on a responsibility that God never intended for them to have. What do you think God expects of you?
5. Do you have any worries or fears? Most people are afraid of one thing, like I am afraid of heights.
6. Have you ever experienced any trauma in your life like a car crash, rape, robbery, or arson?
7. Many people have concerns about money. How are you doing financially?
8. Lots of bad things happen to people. What is the worst or most traumatic thing that has happened in your life?

### C. Anger.

#### 1. There are two basic types of anger:

- a. *Primary anger*—when you perceive something as wrong and are angry about it (e.g., when you have been betrayed or see an injustice being done). For example, in **John 2:13-16** Jesus expressed his great anger at how the temple was being profaned by the moneychangers.
  - (1) When we *don't* have anger toward hypocrisy, evil, injustice, and other wrongdoing, we can “lose our saltiness” (**Matt 5:13**). Yet, it is possible to be angry and not sin (**Eph 4:26**).
  - (2) Usually people have been so hurt by the *misuse* of anger that anger is viewed as bad in and of itself. It is *not true* that we need to suppress all anger. In fact, all of us get angry and it is not possible to suppress all anger. We are emotional beings. If we can't express healthy anger, we can't express healthy passion.
  - (3) We are responsible for *how we use* and *express* our anger. Anger needs to be expressed for the right reason and in the right way. Anger should not be used to manipulate others. We need to remember that we can *control* the expression of our anger, rather than being controlled by it. Jesus demonstrated great congruence between his thinking and his feeling.
- b. *Secondary anger*—when anger is used as a defense against other emotions (e.g., when the lie you told has been exposed and you are angry about it [i.e., anger is used as a defense against the sense of shame]). To a large extent anger is an emotion of frustration (someone or something has kept us from having or achieving something we desire). For example, in **Gen 3:12** Adam used anger in blaming Eve as a defense against his shame; in **Gen 39:13-18** Potiphar's wife used her accusation against Joseph as a defense against her shame at being rejected and to re-establish herself as a person of authority.
  - (1) Men tend to use anger as a defense against inadequacy, fear, unmet expectations, shame, loneliness, and sadness (i.e., the *vulnerable* emotions). A man who is “always angry” usually indicates that he is using anger as a defense against some vulnerability.
  - (2) Anger is used as a defense because it is *empowering* and *energizing*.
  - (3) Anger stays with us *until we resolve the problem that triggered the anger* (i.e., if anger is the way we try to cope with fear, we have to face the fear).

#### 2. Dealing with anger.

- a. *Angry people are loners.* They have a decreased ability to empathize with others. They develop a small world, centered around themselves. They tend to see others as defective. Many angry people tend to deny their anger or say, “That's just the way I am.” They are often not aware that the way they express anger can be learned, and they are often unaware of the effect that their anger has on others. The person needs to see that his loved ones, and other people in general, have other legitimate agendas and priorities than he does.
- b. *As counselors we need to ask the angry person, “How is this affecting you?”* Angry people need to recognize the adverse consequences of their anger to themselves. Their anger is both *ineffective* and is preventing them from having the happy life they desire. We are designed to process things very quickly. Consequently, Paul said to “not let the sun go down on your anger” (**Eph 4:26**). By following that instruction people will avoid the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual effects that harboring anger has on us.
- c. *As counselors we need to find out:* (1) where anger most frequently occurs (e.g., family, work, with certain people, in which contexts); (2) what the person gets angry about (“Why was that so significant to you that you responded in anger?”); (3) how the person expresses his anger (the two main methods are *explosion* [raising the voice; throwing things; violence] and *implosion* [the “silent treatment”; self-condemnation]); (4) the length of time that anger expresses itself (it may be transient or prolonged); (5) how the expressed anger affects their significant relationships; and (6) whether the person is angry with God (the core of being angry with God is the belief that God is somehow unjust in what he does). The

person needs to be helped to redirect the anger away from God and toward sin (since it is God who has the *answers* to his problems).

d. *Techniques to help a client deal with his anger.*

- (1) Have the client keep an “anger journal” in which he describes the situations that make him angry, the intensity of his anger, how he expresses it, and the consequences of his behavior. Help him to see that what he is angry about is either a moral issue, is simply a matter of preference (in which case he needs to learn to accept that things are not the way he would prefer them to be, but that his anger is doing nothing except harming himself), or is a defense against something else going on in his life.
- (2) The client needs to come to understand that anger is caused by something *inside himself* that needs to change, not just by external circumstances. He needs to recognize that his angry responses are sinful to God and hurtful to his loved ones.
- (3) Help the client articulate his values and expectations and think ahead to likely situations and how he should respond. As people come to see that they have different options to deal with a situation, they will experience a flexibility and self-control that they did not have before.

**GROUP PROCESS: Asking someone about Anger**

In your small groups, take turns asking each other the following: [Note: the other person doesn’t have to answer the question. The goal is just to ask the question.]

1. Our bodies are prepared to be angry about nine times each day. When was the last time you were angry?
2. Have you ever noticed a pattern to your anger?
3. Is there someone, someplace, or situation that usually triggers your angry feelings?
4. Has your anger ever surprised you?
5. Some people are good at expressing their anger, others are not. How do you usually express angry feelings?
6. Unexpressed anger usually triggers depression. Have you ever felt depressed?
7. How long do your angry feelings last?
8. How often do you get angry? Do you usually lash out at others, or hold it in?
9. Have you ever been mad at God?
10. Some people think that Christians shouldn’t be angry. Do you?
11. Have you ever witnessed a Christian express their anger?
12. How have you expressed your anger in a healthy way?
13. Unrealistic anger is usually the result of harboring unrealistic expectations. Do you clearly express your hopes and expectations to others? Do they agree with you or accept them?

**FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION.**

Unforgiveness is at the heart of most inter-personal relationship problems, and also behind many intra-personal emotional, psychological, and even physical problems. In the Lord’s Prayer (**Matt 6:9-15**) the only portion of the Prayer which *Jesus specifically emphasized and commented on* is the portion of the prayer regarding *forgiveness*. Further, Christ makes it absolutely clear that *God’s* forgiveness of *us* is directly related to *our* forgiveness of *others*: God *will* forgive us if we forgive others; but God *will not* forgive us if we do not forgive others. Consequently, the issues of forgiveness and reconciliation for counseling cannot be overstated.<sup>1</sup>

***A. Forgiveness described: Forgiveness is a form of grace—it is the pardoning of a debt.***

Forgiveness is:

1. Acknowledging that a wrong has occurred;
2. Recognizing that the wrong created an obligation for repayment; and
3. Voluntarily choosing to release the offender from that obligation and cover the loss yourself (Jeffress, 2000: 49; see also, Willard, 1997: 262, “We forgive someone of a wrong they have done us when we decide that we will not make them suffer for it in any way.”).

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<sup>1</sup>A more comprehensive version of “Forgiveness and Reconciliation” is posted on the “Resources” page at ECLEA’s website: [www.eclea.net](http://www.eclea.net). Those sections that should be of the most practical benefit for counselors who are helping their clients achieve forgiveness and reconciliation have been reproduced here.

## B. *Unforgiveness and the Benefits of Choosing to Forgive:*

1. Unforgiveness occurs when: (A) a transgression occurs; (B) we perceive that transgression as a hurt or offense; (C) the hurt stimulates the “hot” (immediate) emotions of anger and fear (of being hurt again); (D) over time we mentally replay and dwell on (i.e., ruminate on) the transgression, the transgressor and their motives, and the consequences of the transgression; (E) this leads to unforgiveness, which includes the “cold” (delayed, long-term) emotions of resentment, bitterness, residual anger, residual fear, hostility, and stress. Emotions themselves are more than just “feelings”; they are whole-body experiences that involve our brain, neurons, neurochemicals, muscles, hormones, and gut.
2. By contrast, forgiveness IS the acknowledgement that you have been wronged plus the volitional choice to pardon the debt and bear the loss “with Christ.” Forgiveness is a conscious act that realizes being wrongfully hurt by someone penetrates to our core. Forgiveness substitutes strong negative emotions (i.e., hate, anger, fear, resentment, bitterness, residual anger, residual fear, hostility, and stress) – all are products of unforgiveness, by *choosing* unselfish love, empathy, and compassion for the wrongdoer.<sup>2</sup> (Worthington 2003: 44-45). This is Christ-like forgiveness!
3. When we forgive, we release the desire to seek revenge against the offender. Clearly, forgiveness replaces evil with good (Gen 50:20). Forgiveness replaces thoughts that dwell on the wrong, and thoughts that wish harm on the offender, and replace them with thoughts that wish the offender *well*. Thus, forgiveness truly is a *gift of Grace* that embodies love and freedom (our freedom from the enslavement of hatred, anger, fear, evil thoughts, living in the past, dwelling on wrongs and hurts). We recognize that the offender does not have a right to these gifts (just as *we* had no right to *God’s* forgiveness). Whether the offender receives the gift of forgiveness is another matter.
4. Biblical forgiveness is a paradox (something like “it is more blessed to give than to receive” [Acts 20:35] or “whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also” [Matt 5:39-42; Luke 6:29-30]). With forgiveness we recognize that: (A) an offense occurred that was wrong and unfair and always will be wrong and unfair; (B) we have a moral right to be angry; but (C) we are voluntarily giving up that “right” as an act of mercy and love, a gift to an undeserving offender, in obedience to Christ. Thus the paradox: to be free of anger and resentment, give the person who hurt you the gift of forgiveness and free yourself.

## C. *Forgiveness is the obligation of the forgiven.*

1. “Throughout the Bible there seems to be an inseparable link between receiving and granting forgiveness” (Jeffress 2000: 57). That is why both Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9-15) and Paul (Eph 4:32) command us to forgive.
2. Our purpose in this life is “to become conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29), to “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48). Since forgiveness goes to the very heart of the Father’s and Christ’s nature and mission, our forgiveness is an important mark of our *sanctification*; it is a sign of the Holy Spirit’s working in us to conform us into the image of Christ and perfect us.
3. Thus, forgiveness is more than merely a simple “obligation,” but involves the basic focus of one’s life—i.e., whether or not one is essentially focused on God and living to please him and be like him.
  - a. *This applies equally to forgiveness and reconciliation*, as Sande observes: “Focusing on God is the key to resolving conflict constructively. When we remember his mercy and draw on his strength, we invariably see things more clearly and respond to conflict more wisely. At the same time, we can show others that there really is a God and that he delights in helping us do things we could never do on our own.” (Sande 2004: 20)
  - b. *Sande describes practical tips for keeping one’s focus on the Lord*: “One of the best ways to keep your focus on the Lord is to continually ask yourself these questions: How can I please and honor God in this situation? In particular, how can I bring praise to Jesus by showing that he has saved me and is changing me? Seeking to please and honor God is a powerful compass for life, especially when we are faced with difficult challenges. Jesus himself was guided by these

<sup>2</sup> Worthington indicates that there are really two types of forgiveness (or, perhaps better stated, two aspects of forgiveness): (1) *forgiveness as a decision* (“decisional forgiveness”—the “pardoning of a debt”); and (2) *forgiveness as emotional replacement* (“emotional forgiveness”) (Worthington, 2003: Ch. 2). Smedes puts it similarly; the fundamentals of forgiveness involve three stages: “[1] We rediscover the humanity of the person who hurt us. [2] We surrender our right to get even. [3] We revise our feelings toward the person we forgive” (Smedes 1996: 6-12).

goals [see **John 5:30; 8:29; 17:4**]. . .

When displaying the riches of God’s love and pleasing him is more important than holding onto worldly things and pleasing yourself, it becomes increasingly natural to respond to conflict graciously, wisely, and with self-control. This approach brings glory to God and sets the stage for effective peacemaking.” (Sande 2004: 34)

#### **D. Forgiveness is necessary for our own wellbeing.**

1. Forgiveness is often the only way to settle a debt. As Jeffress points out, in Jesus’ parable, “The slave owed a debt that he could not possibly repay in a thousand lifetimes. So what alternative to forgiveness did the king have?” (Jeffress 2000: 51). Punishing and torturing the offender would not result in the repayment of *even one cent* of the debt. In fact, most such “debts” we are owed are really *worthless*: the offender may have died; he may have moved away; he may not care about us at all. Further, most offenders cannot repay their debt in any case: What payments can be made when your reputation is slandered by lies? Or your marriage betrayed by adultery? Or innocence stolen by rape? The fact is that only forgiveness can free *you* from the worthless debt you hold.

2. Forgiveness frees us from being in bondage to our past and to the offender. Forgiveness frees us to get on with our lives. Forgiveness sets us free from invisible, but very real, chains that bind us to our past—past wrongs, hurt, and evil—chains that prevent us from living in joy, and peace, and freedom. **Heb 12:1-2** tells us that we are to “lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us,” and to “run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.” Unforgiveness prevents us from doing that, because unforgiveness itself is both an encumbrance and a sin, and keeps our focus on a wrong and an injury rather than on Jesus. Forgiveness frees us to be able to run our race unchained and to fix our eyes upon Jesus.

3. Forgiveness frees us from needless suffering.

a. *Unforgiveness can consume you.* Ruminating on the wrong done to you, nursing a grudge, is like picking at an open wound, refusing to let it heal. Continuing to ruminate about the offense or wallowing in self-pity, hateful thoughts, and fantasies of revenge, do absolutely no harm to the other person, and do us absolutely no good! In fact, they only make us miserable. Such thoughts “shrink our soul” (so to speak), and make us more *unlike Christ* rather than drawing us closer to Christ. Indeed, since we really can never “get even” anyway, unforgiveness, ruminating on the hurt, and nursing a grudge perversely take their worst toll on the spirits of the people *who have already suffered the most*. Although hatred may give us a form of “instant energy,” in the long run it turns its power against the hater (i.e., the person who refuses to forgive.)

b. *Additionally, studies show that chronic unforgiveness is associated with:* increased heart problems, increased blood pressure, increased nervous system arousal, and possibly immune system problems. On the other hand, forgiveness is associated with decreased psychological problems, decreased levels of anger, and increased emotional maturity (McCullough 2000: 43-55; Witvliet, et al., 2001: 117-23; Enright 2001: 45-67).

4. Unforgiveness adversely affects our relationships with others and with God. Sin, including the sin of unforgiveness, separates us from God (**Isa 1:10-15; 59:1-2; Mic 3:4**). By making us sour, hardened people, who focus on ourselves and the wrongs done to us, unforgiveness likewise separates us from other people. As social beings, we were meant to be “connected” to one another.

5. Forgiveness fits faulty people like us. No one is innocent; all are guilty. We are also offenders. In the “real world” forgiveness is a way of life—when you hurt a close friend through an improper remark or act (and we all do that), our close friends typically will take the hurt and let it go. Thus, cancelling the debt and letting it go is a way of life. Life would be unbearable if people did not regularly forgive.

6. Unforgiveness is a choice, just as forgiveness is a choice. We tend to be selective in who we forgive and what we forgive: we forgive only “little” hurts, and only those inflicted by people we are close to. However, Jesus did not give us the option to be selective in the hurts, or the people, we are to forgive. He said that we are to forgive “up to seventy times seven” (which is Jesus’ symbolic way of saying an “infinity” of times, not just 490 times) (**Matt 18:22**). In fact, as part of a new covenant, Jesus states we are to love our *enemies*, not just those who love us (**Matt 5:38-48**)! Jesus is very tough on sinners (like us) who refuse to forgive other sinners, because we are *all* sinners. Smedes, commenting on Jesus’ parable in **Matt 18**, puts it well: “He [Jesus] is tough because the incongruity of sinners refusing to forgive sinners boggles God’s mind. He cannot cope with it; there is no honest way to put up with it. So

he says: if you want forgiving from God and you cannot forgive someone who needs a little forgiving from you, forget about the forgiveness you want. Take away the eloquence of King James English and you get Jesus saying something like this: if you refuse to forgive other people when you expect to be forgiven, you can go to hell.” (Smedes 1984: 150)

**E. *Forgiveness cannot be “earned” by repentance, but Godly forgiveness demonstrates the power, freedom, respect, and love found in Jesus Christ.***

1. Many think that “if a person who wrongs us does not repent, he doesn’t deserve to be forgiven.” Smedes profoundly answers this, as follows: “Of course, he does not *deserve* to be forgiven. Nobody does.” (Smedes 1984: 90-91)
2. There is always a deficit between what the offender owes the person they hurt, and what they are able to pay. Even the sincere repentance of a rapist will not restore lost innocence. The sincere repentance of a murderer will not restore a life. The sincere repentance of one who has put out your eye will not restore your sight. Repentance does not “even the scales.”
3. You can never make anyone repent anyway. The offender may be dead, or gone, unable to repent, unaware that he has offended you, or simply doesn’t care. Godly forgiveness takes that into account. It does not make your forgiving someone dependent on a repentance that is beyond your control.
4. Godly forgiveness is a testament to the power of true love. It places you in the position of deciding to grant or withhold forgiveness yourself. To require that the offender first repent before you forgive him shackles you to him. Perversely, that makes you dependent on the one who hurt you. To require that the offender first repent before you forgive him gives the offender the power to control your heart, mind, and will.
5. Godly forgiveness frees you from the power Satan gave to the offender. It frees you from your enslavement to the past, to evil, to hurt, and to wrong. It frees you from your state of dependency. It enables you to heal and move on with your life.
6. Godly forgiveness shows compassion to the other person. To forgive the other person without requiring that he repent demonstrates that you view him as someone *capable* of changing. It might actually motivate him to change.
7. Godly forgiveness is a high expression of love. As was discussed earlier, one of the key “hot emotions” that leads to unforgiveness is fear. Yet the Bible says that, “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). As Jeffress states: “if repentance is a requirement to granting forgiveness then that means that we must confront every person who wrongs us before we can genuinely forgive him. . . . But do we really want to spend our lives demanding repentance from everyone around us? Aren’t we ensuring that people will run for the hills when they see us coming if we’re always needing to “talk about a personal matter”? And more importantly, doesn’t such a confrontational lifestyle contradict the essence of Christian love, a love that ‘keeps no record of wrongs’ (1 Corinthians 13:5, NIV).” (Jeffress 2000: 80)

**F. *Seek the forgiveness of others.***

1. If we truly see and understand our own neediness and sinfulness, the amount and depth of God’s forgiveness of us, and our continual need for His forgiveness of our ongoing sins, we should naturally be motivated to seek the forgiveness of other people whom we have wronged and hurt. In fact, our seeking the forgiveness *from* others is probably one of the best motivations for extending forgiveness *to* others. After all, how can we withhold forgiving other people when we not only go to God, but *to other people*, for forgiveness?
2. Seeking forgiveness is the first step toward reconciliation (the mending of a relationship broken by a transgression). Seeking forgiveness should be done soon after you have offended someone—that way, there is less time for the other person to “harden” against you, and for the whole-body, emotional state of unforgiveness to form in the other person.
3. Seeking to be forgiven involves a series of steps:
  - a. Determine that you need to ask for forgiveness.
    - (1) Just as we only “forgive” the bad acts (including speech) of those who have wronged us, so we are only to seek forgiveness from those whom we have wronged by our words or conduct. Merely *thinking* hurtful, lustful, or other wrong thoughts about someone does not and should not warrant our seeking forgiveness from that person. Sande points out, “Whether a sin should be confessed to other people as well as to God

depends on whether it was a ‘heart sin’ or a ‘social sin.’ A heart sin takes place only in your thoughts and does not directly affect others. Therefore, it needs to be confessed only to God” (Sande 2004: 127).

(2) In determining whether we need to seek forgiveness we should not deny our guilt or pretend that what we did wasn’t all that harmful. We should consider such things as: (A) Are we ashamed of what we did? (B) Do we feel remorse for what we did? (C) Do we go over and over the event in our mind (perhaps trying to justify it)? (D) Do we compare our self with the person we hurt (perhaps saying to our self, “He’s just as bad as I am—or worse!”)? (E) Have we lied to cover up what we did because of shame? (F) How has our life been changed because of what we did (even in such “subtle” ways as making us more “calloused” or “harder”)? (G) Do we yearn to be free from the shame and guilt of our offense? (H) Have we confessed our sin to God and experienced his forgiveness (in which case, we should likewise seek forgiveness from the actual person we wronged)?

(3) The case of a wrong against someone who is unaware of your actions (such as an adulterous relationship you had with someone, although your spouse is unaware of it) can be trickier. Jeffress suggests at least three questions to ask in such a case: (A) *Is restitution necessary?* If the other party has suffered a loss, but doesn’t know exactly who caused the loss, it is your obligation not only to apologize and seek forgiveness, but also to make good the loss; indeed, making good the loss demonstrates the sincerity of your apology and desire for forgiveness. (B) *What are the chances your offense will be discovered?* An affair thirty years ago may never come to light in your marriage now, whereas a relationship six months ago likely will come to your spouse’s attention, and hearing the news from someone else would be more hurtful than hearing it from you. (C) *Will your confession help or hurt the other party?* He adds, “This is the bottom-line issue. Sometimes our desire to ‘confess’ can be very self-centered. While we may feel relieved after unloading our garbage on our spouse, he or she may be devastated. Sometimes sacrificial love entails our willingness to bear our own burdens instead of asking someone else to share the load” (Jeffress 2000: 158-59).

b. *Ask for forgiveness.*

(1) Remember that “requesting forgiveness is asking the person you’ve wronged to do something: to release you from your obligation” (Ibid.: 161). Consequently, requesting a personal meeting is the preferred method of communication—speaking in person with the other person enables him or her to hear the tone of our voice, see our facial expressions, gauge our body language, and ask follow-up questions, all (or many) of which are prevented or inhibited by speaking by telephone or by letter.<sup>3</sup> Further, meeting in person helps to show the seriousness of the occasion, and thereby demonstrates the sincerity of your desire for forgiveness. That is especially true if, because of the distance you have to travel or other circumstances, it will cost you something to meet in person. As Jeffress points out, “The time and sacrifice required for such an effort may seem high, but it is negligible compared to the joy of a clear conscience” (Ibid.).

(2) Asking for forgiveness involves more than just saying a perfunctory, “I’m sorry.” It includes accepting the pain of humiliation which occurs when we admit that we were in the wrong. That may be especially acute where someone of relative authority and power (e.g., a husband, parent, or employer) has to humble himself and ask for forgiveness from someone of relative dependency or subordination (e.g., a wife, child, or employee). Nevertheless, “If we want to be free, we must accept the pain associated with this humiliation” (Enright 2001: 254).

(3) Jeffress identifies four aspects of asking someone to forgive you: (A) *Refuse to blame others.* Even if a third party, or even the person from whom you are seeking forgiveness, is largely responsible for the conflict, you need to concentrate on *your own*

<sup>3</sup>There may be specific or unique mechanisms in particular cultures or societies for arranging forgiveness meetings, such as the use of extended family members, village elders, clan or tribal leaders, church leaders, or others as “go-betweens” or facilitators. The church has a role it could play or develop in bringing about forgiveness.

offense. (B) *Identify the wrong you've committed.* Don't try to minimize what you've done or speak only in general terms. The other person is already aware of what you've done; now he or she wants to know that *you* are fully aware of it. (C) *Acknowledge the hurt you've caused.* The other person wants to know that you understand the pain he or she has suffered because of your actions. Your acknowledging that (or even saying that you "can't imagine the hurt [or grief, or embarrassment] this may have caused you") will make the other person much more likely to forgive you. (D) *Ask the other person to forgive you.* You should not simply confess the wrong you have done, but end your discussion by asking the other person to voluntarily release you from the debt you have incurred to him as a result of your offense. **REMEMBER:** You cannot demand forgiveness; nor can you not imply that the other person should forgive you for his own benefit. Instead, Jeffress suggests asking for forgiveness by saying something like: "I realize that I've wronged you by \_\_\_\_\_. I'll do my best to see that I never do this again, though I realize there's nothing I can do to erase the deep pain I've caused you. What I did was wrong, and I can blame no one but myself. I'm coming to you today asking if you could find it in your heart to forgive me for what I've done." (Jeffress 2000: 163)

(4) Chapman and Thomas follow a similar, five-step, format for apologizing and requesting forgiveness: (A) Express *regret* (e.g., "I am sorry."); (B) Accept *responsibility* (e.g., "I was wrong."); (C) Make *restitution* (e.g., "What can I do to make it right?"); (D) Genuinely *repent* (e.g., "I'll try not to do that again."); and (E) *Request* forgiveness (e.g., "Will you please forgive me?") (Chapman and Thomas 2006: *passim*).

(5) It may be that the person from whom we seek forgiveness is dead, no longer available, or refuses to speak with us. Or, the person may either respond to our request for forgiveness ambivalently, negatively, or even with hostility. Although that is unfortunate, if we have truly, and sincerely, done all we could to regret and accept responsibility for what we did, have made restitution, repented (changed our ways), and sought forgiveness and closure, we can nevertheless have the clear conscience of "knowing that neither God nor any other person can accuse you of a wrong you have never attempted to make right" (Jeffress 2000: 164).

(6) Enright suggests that, as a result of our offense and our seeking forgiveness, we should: (A) look for meaning in our failures and mistakes (our successes rarely teach us as much as our failures); (B) recognize that we are stronger because of what we have experienced (because of the courage it takes to admit a wrong and face the person we have harmed, we will be stronger and more able to face future failures without fear); (C) realize that we are not alone (i.e., we may need support to go through this process,<sup>4</sup> and we realize that we are like other people—we thereby may no longer be so prideful or disdainful of others); (D) make the decision, and take the necessary steps, to not repeat the offense; and (E) experience the freedom from guilt, remorse, and shame that confession of sin and accepting forgiveness bring. All of these things should draw us closer to Christ and make us more Christ-like in the future.

### G. When the offender seeks forgiveness.

1. When an offender seeks forgiveness, telling them "I forgive you" should be done with care; it is NOT always appropriate or necessary. Doing so can be used as a weapon against the offender, or may be done too soon, causing the offender to react defensively and add new injuries to the old. Further, one must be careful in situations where you are going to the other person to express your forgiveness of them might expose you to the risk of physical harm or violence from that person.
2. Smedes suggests that, before forgiving, you should: (A) think (come to as much clarity as you can about what happened); (B) evaluate the situation; (C) talk with a friend or counselor; (D) feel (be able to understand exactly what you are feeling and why); and (E) pray (forgiving is a tough act to perform—

<sup>4</sup> Because forgiveness is central to Christianity, the church should see part of its role as supporting and facilitating the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Indeed, research indicates that "people receiving support from friends in church groups report being able to forgive more than church people who do not participate in groups" (Worthington 2003: 70).



we need to be honest with God, admit our need for his help, ask for it, and use it when it comes). Then, once you've decided to tell the other person that you have forgiven him or her, you should: (A) take your time; (B) size up the risk; (C) wait for a signal; (D) do it obliquely (talk about other things first; listen for a while; do it almost as an afterthought); (E) do it after you have begun the conversation by honestly, and with conviction, wishing the other person well; (F) don't claim holy motives; (G) improvise; (H) make it short; (I) keep it light; and (J) give the other person time (change the subject if he is not yet ready to talk about it; let him think about it; let him go at his own pace) (Smedes 1984: 138-39, 145-46). Overall, though, it has to be a Spirit-led, genuine forgiveness for purposes of restoring the relationship.

3. Most appropriate cases of actually saying the words of forgiveness to the other person fall into the following circumstances:

- a. *The offender has apologized and asked for forgiveness.* The offender may be ready to hear those important words before you are ready to give them. Remember, forgiveness cannot be forced—it is your free act. Your honest response may be, “I want to forgive you, but give me some time, Okay?”
- b. *The offender has neither apologized nor asked for forgiveness, but guilt has been established beyond a reasonable doubt.* Do NOT offer the offender forgiveness before the offender apologizes. In doing so, you eliminate the need for God to work in the offender's life. Remember, you can still walk away from the situation knowing that you have done all that was possible.
- c. *The relationship between you and the offender has been broken, and both sides are angry.* By *apologizing* first, which can lead the other party to express their sorrow, can open the door for you to offer forgiveness.
- d. *The offense happened a long time ago, and the offender is no longer a part of your life.* The opportunity may not arise to express forgiveness to the offender if that person is dead, or no longer available for other reasons. Nevertheless, you can express your forgiveness symbolically (as indicated earlier), or express your forgiveness to a member of the offender's family, clan, tribe, or church, or use family, clan, tribe, or church, or other intermediaries to initiate a forgiveness meeting.
- e. *The offender has no idea that you are even offended.* One must bring up old issues tactfully; as was noted earlier, you must consider whether bringing up the issues will cause more harm or more good to the other person as well as to yourself.
- f. *Sometimes it isn't possible.* Reconciliation is not always possible, especially with those who are “spear throwers” and “destroyers” (Lutzer 2007).

**H. Reconciliation described: reconciliation is the restoration of a relationship.**

*Forgiveness* is one person's moral response to another person's injustice; *reconciliation* is two people coming together to restore a relationship whose trust was broken (i.e., abolishing the moral hindrance to fellowship). “It takes one person to forgive. It takes two to be reunited. Forgiving happens inside the wounded person. Reunion happens in a relationship between people. We can forgive who never says he is sorry. We cannot be truly reunited unless he is honestly sorry. We can forgive *even if* we do not trust the person who wronged us once not to wrong us again. Reconciliation can happen only if we can trust the person who wronged us once not to wrong us again. Put simply: Forgiving has no strings attached. Reconciliation has several strings attached.” (Smedes 1996: 27)

**I. Why reconciliation is pragmatically important.**

1. Reconciliation is a witness of God's power, and demonstrates our obedience to the most important commandment Christ gave us on the night before his crucifixion.

- a. *On his last night on earth before he was crucified, Jesus said this:* “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (**John 13:34-35**)
- b. Without reconciliation we fail to show the world the *single most important evidence* of our being Christ's disciples.

2. Reconciliation empowers us to resist the attacks of the enemy.

- a. *Negatively*, the failure for believers to reconcile divides and isolates them, thus making them easy prey for the enemy's attacks.

- b. *Positively*, believers living peacefully and in harmony with each other possess the unity of a mighty army, able to succeed in the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged (**Eph 6:12**), so that the gates of hell shall not be able to overpower the church (**Matt 16:18**).
3. Our living harmoniously with, and blessing, others will result in God's blessing us (1 Pet 3:8-9):  
“<sup>8</sup>To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; <sup>9</sup>not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”

**J. Reconciliation does not occur instantaneously, but takes time and requires a number of stages.**

Jeffress describes four stages in the reconciliation process (Jeffress 2000: 115-23):

1. Repentance—Although one can forgive a person who never admits that he caused an injury, in most cases reconciliation of a relationship will require willingness to admit the wrongs done and acknowledging the pain caused, so that interpersonal, relational healing can occur and the relationship can be set on a new, stronger foundation.
2. Restitution—Trying to restore that which was taken from, or broken in, a relationship demonstrates the sincerity of one's repentance and earnestness of the desire to achieve relational wholeness. Restitution helps to “level the playing field,” so that both parties can begin to renew their relationship on an even basis (see Sande, 2004: Appendix C, “Principles of Restitution”).
3. Rehabilitation—In order to reestablish a relationship with someone who has wronged us it is important to have assurance that our offender has truly changed so that we aren't victimized again. That is why genuine repentance is evidenced by changed behavior.
4. Rebuilding of Trust—Often many people may be needed to help restore a relationship (see **Gal 6:1**). Changed attitudes will result in changed words and deeds toward the other person; eventually, the other person will see our sincerity. It may take longer to reestablish broken trust than it took to establish a trusting relationship in the first place. By God's grace, however, and the mutual acts of both parties, it can happen.

**GROUP PROCESS: Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

**A. Recall a Time When You Needed Forgiveness.** Think back to a time in your past when you hurt someone or did something wrong, and you needed forgiveness, and you were *granted* that forgiveness. This might be an incident from your childhood, a time when you were in high school or college, a time in your marriage or relationship, or an incident in some other relationship. It might involve a need for forgiveness from a person or from God. What matters is that you had done something wrong and felt badly about it and that you were forgiven. **After recalling the event (which you do not need to disclose), in your small group, answer the following questions:**

1. What did it feel like to be in trouble, to lose face, to lose respect or self-respect, and to need forgiveness?
2. What does it feel like in your stomach? How did your palms feel? Other parts of the body?
3. What would you call the emotions that you experienced as you realized that you had sinned and needed forgiveness?
4. What did it feel (or would it have felt) like to *ask* the person you hurt for forgiveness, and then how did it feel to *receive* it?

**B. Recall a Time When You Reconciled.** Think back to a time in your past when you were reconciled to someone that you wronged. (Note: this may or may not be the same event described above). **After recalling the event (which you do not need to disclose), in your small group, answer the following questions:**

1. Who made the decision to move toward reconciliation? What was your motive for reconciliation?
2. How did the other person respond to the reconciliation discussion?
3. Was there an effort to detoxify the discussion and stay focused on reconciliation?
4. How did you and the offended person show devotion or love to each other?

**MARRIAGE AND INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

**A. Marriage or family difficulties often are the result of more than one acute problem.**

1. Individuals are best understood through assessing how they interact with the family as a whole. The client is connected to a “living system.” Change in one part of the system will affect the whole (e.g., a

rebellious child may make the mother depressed, or the father angry, which will affect how the husband and wife interact with each other).

2. There are always tensions, for each member of a family, between togetherness and individuality.

a. Healthy families strike a balance between being one's "own person" (i.e., having one's own identity or being disengaged from the others) and remaining connected (enmeshed or engaged) with each other.

b. Unhealthy families tend to move toward one end of the spectrum or the other. Either the members of the family have rigid boundaries between each other, or they are over-involved in trying to ruin each other's life.

(1) Rigid boundaries or disengagement can occur at different levels within a family: i.e., between any of the individuals within the family; between parents and children; or between family members and those outside of the family (e.g., no friends; or no friends are permitted in the house; or no involvement with school).

(2) Over-involvement typically occurs by parents trying to overly control their children's lives. Typically, parents do not relinquish control as the children grow up. Sometimes that pattern lasts even after the children have become adults and have families of their own. This type of "enmeshment" leads to unhealthy dependency, and it may make it hard to form healthy relationships outside of the family.

3. Dysfunctional patterns of behavior and of relating to others can be learned and then passed down through several generations.

**B. *Marriages (and other close relationships) deteriorate in a predictable pattern (Gottman, 2000).***

1. Marriages (and other close, long-term relationships) tend to deteriorate in four predictable steps:

a. *criticism*—first mental, then verbal;

b. *defensiveness*—first mental, then verbal (this is characterized by "snapping back" at the criticizer, and leads to arguments);

c. *contempt*—whereas criticism and defensiveness tend to be specific acts or qualities of the person, contempt is directed at the other person *per se*;

d. *stonewalling or war*—to avoid being hurt the person withdraws and turns his or her heart into a "stone wall," or else open war, designed to hurt the other person (mentally, emotionally, or physically) erupts (Worthington 2003: 227).

2. Research indicates that there is a direct relationship between the strength and happiness of a marriage and the ratio of positive to negative interactions. If a couple has 10, or 7, or even 5 positive interactions to every negative one, they are usually happy. At 5:1, however, an abrupt transformation occurs—above the 5:1 level, people generally see the relationship positively; below that level they generally see the relationship negatively. Further, if a couple has a ratio below 5:1 it is usually not 4:1, but dramatically falls off to 1:1 or even 1:2 (Ibid.: 227-28).

**C. *Marriages (and other close relationships) can be restored.***

1. Counseling should help the marriage partners reverse the process of deterioration.

a. *The counselor should help the clients to consciously work on behaviors, words, and thoughts that move in the direction from stonewalling or war back to contempt; from contempt back to defensiveness; from defensiveness back to criticism; and from criticism back to normalcy.* In doing that we can look for signs that tell us whether the clients are poisoning, rather than detoxifying, the relationship: (1) they bring up past hurts, rather than merely deal with the current hurt; (2) they are overly harsh in reproaching the other person; (3) they attack the person, rather than stick to the issue; (4) they hear bitterness in their voice; (5) they cannot let go of past hurts.

b. *When talking with a couple, the counselor also should ask questions that focus on feelings, behaviors, and thoughts.* Feelings are important, as they often are an expression of thoughts or beliefs. Questions should also be directed to the condition of the couple's spiritual life (those with serious marital problems invariably will have a poor relationship with God).

c. *Self-centeredness is usually apparent in people who are having marriage or other relational problems.* People often meet their self-centered needs by: (1) ignoring the desires of their mate; (2) pouring oneself into one's work or some other endeavor; and (3) putting more and more energy into trying to get the other person to meet one's needs.

d. *The counselor can guide the couple to monitor their own marriage.*

(1) The counselor can help the couple see their wrong motives and strategies by asking one spouse to report “as an objective reporter” how the other spouse is feeling; the counselor then gets the other spouse’s feedback regarding the accuracy of the report, and follows-up by asking “Why do you suppose he/she feels the way he/she does?” This can lead to deep exploration of the relationship.

(2) Couples can discover the ineffectiveness of their motives and strategies by comparing their actions with the principles of the Bible. This is often a good homework assignment. The counselor can use the answers to help identify the unbiblical core beliefs the couple has, and then guide them to biblical principles and how to apply them. Among other things, the counselor can encourage the couple to regularly pray, out loud, with each other and for each other; encouraging them to pray on their knees can help foster an attitude of humility.

2. A marriage can be restored to a healthy, loving relationship through forgiveness and reconciliation, and application of “the five love languages.” “At the core of all marital issues is the struggle to love and forgive. All marital relationships require both love and forgiveness since two sinners are called to live as one” (DiBlasio and Cheong 2007: 4). Additionally, the counselor should help clients who are having relationship problems become aware of and apply what Christian psychologist Gary Chapman calls “the five love languages.” One aspect of counseling homework could be to have the partners in the relationship commit to do one of the “love languages” each day, and keep a journal of what was done, when it was done, and the other person’s reaction. As Chapman says, “There are basically five emotional love languages—five ways that people speak and understand emotional love. . . . Once you identify and learn to speak your spouse’s primary love language, I believe you will have discovered the key to a long-lasting, loving marriage” (Chapman 1995: 15-17). The five love languages are as follows:

a. **WORDS OF AFFIRMATION.** Words that affirm, compliment, build up, and encourage, are one way to express love emotionally. The “emotional climate” of a marriage is enhanced when a husband and wife use affirming words regularly (i.e., something affirming each day).

(1) Set a goal to give your spouse a different complement each day for a month. When we receive affirming words we are far more likely to be motivated to say or do something that our spouse desires. When we look for our spouse’s strengths and tell him or her how much we appreciate those strengths, our spouse is likely to work hard to live up to the reputation we have verbalized.

(2) Words of encouragement require that we empathize with our spouse, learn what is important to him or her, and see the world from his or her point of view. With verbal encouragement we are trying to communicate, “I know. I care. I am with you. How can I help.” To be “encouraging,” however, the spouse must *first desire* what you are encouraging him or her to do. For example: “Some husbands pressure their wives to lose weight. The husband says, “I am encouraging her,” but to the wife it sounds like condemnation. Only when a person wants to lose weight can you give her encouragement. Until she has the desire, your words will fall into the category of preaching. Such words seldom encourage. They are almost always heard as words of judgment, designed to stimulate guilt. They express not love but rejection.” (Ibid.: 44)

(3) To be true words of affirmation, what you say must be said with kindness and tenderness. Further, love makes requests, not demands. “When you make a request of your spouse, you are affirming his or her worth and abilities. . . . When, however, you make demands, you have become not a lover but a tyrant. Your spouse will not feel affirmed but belittled” (Ibid.: 49).

(4) You can give indirect words of affirmation by saying positive things about your spouse when he or she is not present (eventually, someone will tell your spouse, and you will get full credit for love). Also, affirm your spouse in front of others when he or she is present.

b. **SPENDING QUALITY TIME.** “Quality time” refers to giving someone your focused, undivided attention. Quality time can include looking at each other and talking while sitting together, taking a walking, eating together, or simply being with each other, doing something you know the other person likes.

(1) A central aspect of quality time is *togetherness*. Togetherness is not just physical closeness, but *focused attention*. “When I sit on the couch with my wife and give her twenty minutes of my undivided attention and she does the same for me, we are giving each other twenty minutes of life. We will never have those twenty minutes again; we are giving our lives to each other. It is a powerful emotional communicator of love” (Ibid.: 60).

(2) Quality time often includes *quality conversation*—i.e., “sympathetic dialogue where two individuals are sharing their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context” (65). Quality conversation is different from words of affirmation: words of affirmation focus on what we are *saying*; quality conversation focuses on what we are *hearing*.

(3) Quality time can include *quality activities*—i.e., anything in which one or both of you have an interest. The emphasis is not on what you are doing but why you are doing it. “The purpose is to experience something together, to walk away from it feeling, ‘He cares about me. He was willing to do something with me that I enjoy, and he did it with a positive attitude.’ That is love, and for some people it is love’s loudest voice” (Ibid.: 73-74)

c. **RECEIVING GIFTS.** A gift is something tangible that shows you have been thinking of the other person. It doesn’t matter whether it cost money; you can make a gift. What is important is that you have thought of the other person, obtained a gift, and gave that gift as an expression of love.

(1) If receiving gifts is your spouse’s primary love language, being a good gift-giver is an easy love language to learn: Make a list of the gifts your spouse has expressed excitement about receiving over the years (whether those gifts were given by you, or other family members, or friends). The list will give you an idea of the kind of gifts your spouse would enjoy receiving. If necessary, recruit the help of family members who know your spouse for help in selecting good gifts.

(2) Don’t wait for special occasions to give gifts to your spouse. If receiving gifts is his/her primary love language, almost anything will be received as an expression of love. (If he/she has been critical of your gifts in the past, and almost nothing you have given has been acceptable, then receiving gifts is probably not your spouse’s primary love language.)

(3) Your physical presence with your spouse in a time of crisis or other important time can be the most powerful gift you can give to him or her. If your spouse says that he or she would like you to be with him or her for some event, take that request seriously.

d. **ACTS OF SERVICE.** Acts of service are doing those things you know your spouse would like you to do. They can include cooking a meal, setting a table, washing dishes, taking out garbage, changing a baby’s diaper, or cleaning the house. They require thought, planning, time, effort, and energy. You seek to please your spouse by serving him or her. If done with a positive spirit, such acts are acts of love. That is particularly so when the acts of service you do are things that your spouse might normally do (e.g., a husband washing the dishes after a meal to show his appreciation for the meal and his love for his wife).

(1) What we do for each other before marriage is no indication of what we will do after marriage. Before marriage we are carried along by the force of the “in love” obsession. After marriage we revert to being the people we were before we “fell in love.” Therefore, if your spouse’s primary love language is acts of service, he or she may expect you to continue performing acts of service after your marriage. Your spouse may feel unloved if you stop performing acts of service.

(2) Love is a choice that cannot be forced. Criticism and demands for performance drive wedges between people; they do not promote loving acts of service. Your spouse may do what you demand, but it probably will not be an expression of love. Requests are better than demands. Ultimately, however, love is a choice. “Each of us must decide daily to love or not to love our spouses. If we choose to love, then expressing it in the way in which our spouse requests will make our love most effective emotionally” (Ibid.: 107)

(3) Your spouse’s criticism of your behavior provides a clear clue as to his or her

primary love language. “People tend to criticize their spouse most loudly in the area where they themselves have the deepest emotional need. Their criticism is an ineffective way of pleading for love. If we understand that, it may help us process their criticism in a more productive manner” (Ibid.: 107)

(4) You can make a list of all the requests your spouse has made of you over the past few weeks. Look at those requests as indications of what is really important to him or her. Choose to do one each week as an expression of love. Or, you could ask your spouse to make a list of 10 things he or she would like you to do during the next month, and number them in order of importance. Use the list to plan your strategy for a “month of love.” Or, from time-to-time as your spouse, “If I could do one special act of service this week, what would you request?” Your spouse will notice these things. By doing this you will be filling his or her “emotional tank.” Your spouse will be happier, and will, in turn, start acting in ways to make you happier.

e. **PHYSICAL TOUCH**. Physical touch, including holding hands, kissing, embracing, massage, gently stroking the face, and having sexual intercourse, are all powerful ways of communicating emotional love to one’s spouse. For some individuals, physical touch is their primary love language. Without it, they feel unloved. With it, they feel secure in the love of their spouse.

(1) Touch receptors are located throughout the body, so lovingly touching your spouse almost anywhere can be an expression of love. However, some will bring more pleasure to your spouse than others. Your spouse is your best guide. Do not insist on touching him or her in your way and in your time. If your spouse finds some manner of touching uncomfortable or irritating, continuing to do it communicates the opposite of love, and shows that you care little about his or her feelings. Do not make the mistake of believing that the touch that brings pleasure to you will also bring pleasure to your spouse.

(2) Physical touch can be particularly important in times of crisis. It communicates closeness and solidarity with the person who is suffering.

(3) Men and women tend to have different needs for sexual touch. For most wives, the desire to be sexually intimate with their husbands grows out of a sense of being loved by their husbands. If they do not feel loved, they often feel “used” in the sexual context. Men’s desire for sex has a more physiological root—the buildup of sperm cells and seminal fluid in the seminal vesicles: when the seminal vesicles are full, there is a physical push for release. Most spouses need to recognize these differences. However, as Chapman says: “When, in fact, his wife speaks his primary love language and his emotional love tank is full, and he speaks her primary love language and her emotional tank is full, the sexual aspect of their relationship will take care of itself. Most sexual problems in marriage have little to do with physical technique but everything to do with meeting emotional needs.” (Ibid.: 136)

### 3. Additional comments regarding the five love languages.

a. *What makes one person feel loved emotionally (i.e., his or her primary love language) is not always what makes another person feel loved emotionally*. The challenge is to speak each other’s love language. That is important because, in the context of marriage, “if we do not feel loved, our differences are magnified. We come to view each other as a threat to our happiness. We fight for self-worth and significance, and marriage becomes a battlefield rather than a haven” (Ibid.: 154).

b. *You can have more than one love language, although most people tend to have a primary language and a secondary one*. What is your love language? What makes you feel most loved by your spouse? What do you desire above all else? Chapman suggests three ways to discover your own primary love language:

(1) What does your spouse do or fail to do that hurts you most deeply? The opposite of what hurts you most is probably your love language.

(2) What have you most often requested of your spouse? The thing that you have most often requested is likely the thing that would make you feel most loved.

(3) In what way do you regularly express love to your spouse? Your method of expressing love may be an indication that that would also make you feel loved.

- c. *What is your spouse's love language?* Think about the ways in which your spouse has indicated that he or she feels most loved. Apply the above three questions to your spouse. If you still don't know, ask him or her. Discuss the subject. Finding his or her primary love language will be finding the way that most communicates, "I love you."
- d. *Long-lasting emotional love is a choice.* Deep, emotional love can be reborn in a marriage, even after many years of neglect. You can fill your spouse's emotional tank, and he or she can fill yours, once you discover your primary love languages, and consciously begin speaking and acting to communicate love to your spouse through those love languages.

### **EXERCISE WORKSHEET: Identifying Someone's Love Language**

**PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, THAT ARE MOST TRUE ABOUT YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE: (1 = most important, 5 = least important)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel especially loved when people express how grateful they are for me, and for the simple, everyday things I do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel especially loved when a person gives me undivided attention and spends time alone with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel especially loved by someone who brings me gifts and other tangible expressions of love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel especially loved when someone pitches in to help me, perhaps by running errands or taking on my household chores.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel especially loved when a person expresses feelings for me through physical contact.

**FEEDBACK:** It is our prayer that this workshop has been a blessing to you. We would appreciate any feedback you can offer so that we can improve the workshop experience for others.

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## **APPENDIX A – THE PITFALLS OF DOING THERAPY**

Setting and maintaining clear boundaries are important for the success of a counseling relationship. Further, they help to insure that a counseling relationship does not change character (e.g., does not evolve into an improper sexual or manipulative relationship). There are some common pitfalls that may occur in a counseling relationship which are related in part to maintaining proper boundaries:

1. **Limits of responsibility**—each person is responsible for his own feelings, attitudes, choices, behaviors, limits, desires, thoughts, values, talents, abilities, speech. However, many people feel responsible for things that, in fact, they are not responsible for; they may feel guilty for things over which they have no responsibility at all (this is particularly true in cases involving family members and close friends). Helping someone see what he is, and is not, responsible for can be very helpful in freeing him from false burdens, false expectations, and false guilt. A good way of helping people to see the limits of their responsibility is this: (1) *I AM responsible for*: (A) how I treat others, and (B) how I treat myself; (2) *I am NOT responsible for*: (A) how others treat me, (B) how others treat others, and (C) how others treat themselves.
2. **Transference**—“transference” is when the *client* transfers onto the *counselor* feelings or perceptions that pertain to other relationships (real or imagined) that the client has had. In other words, the client projects onto the counselor “baggage” the client has from other relationships. This may become particularly apparent when strong emotions are expressed during the counseling relationship. In such cases, the counselor must remember to maintain clear boundaries, and discern and clarify true reality. The counselor should also have a contingency plan to protect himself from unpredicted violence or from sexual acting out. The counselor should also remember that clients respond to you as the counselor (i.e., to your *role*), not necessarily to you personally. They are responding to an image, not necessarily to you *per se*.
3. **Counter-transference**—“counter-transference” is when the *counselor* transfers or projects onto the *client* “baggage” from other relationship the counselor has had. Thus, the counselor’s thoughts and feelings regarding a client become a significant part of the relationship. This can be extremely harmful, since you then are relating to the client as if he was someone else in your life. The counselor must always monitor himself to make sure that he is aware of his own thoughts, feelings, and reactions, and is aware of the thoughts, feelings, and reactions of the client.

## **APPENDIX B — PERSONAL SOUL CARE**<sup>5</sup>

The Christian life is a journey, not an event. Our primary life-orientation should be God-focused and grace-based. Service to Christ should not take the place of devotion to Christ. We must constantly be aware of our prideful choices and the “tyranny of the urgent” (i.e., all the events of our life which demand our time and attention and end up turning the focus of our life away from the Lord and the things that are most important).

The Christian life is not merely a journey, but a rigorous journey that requires daily discipline, especially the discipline of self-control. We must constantly be on guard against sin—sinful attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds. It is not a matter of “trying harder,” but “trying wiser.”

Counselors as well as clients need to pursue a course of action for personal soul care. Personal soul care should address all six aspects of what constitutes a person (spiritual, physical, social, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional). Doing this will, itself, eliminate many of the problems that give rise to counseling, and will improve the nature and satisfaction of one’s life, and the effectiveness of one’s ministry. Such personal soul care should include the following:

### **1. Physical fitness.**

One should eat a healthful, balanced diet, maintain proper body weight, get sufficient sleep, and

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<sup>5</sup>This appendix is taken largely from the epilogue to Shields, Harry, and Gary Bredfeldt. 2001. *Caring for Souls*. Chicago: Moody, and from Bruenning, David. n.d. *Successful Christian Living*. Neenah, WI: International Christian Assistance; International Children’s Fund, Inc.



exercise regularly. One should maintain healthful habits, which will enable us to live longer and stronger (physically and mentally). This includes such things as: having a physical check-up by a doctor on a regular basis; and eliminating those habits (e.g., smoking, excessive consumption of alcohol and sugar, driving without wearing a shoulder harness or seatbelt) that are known risks. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16**). Jesus also referred to his body as the temple of God (**John 2:19-21**). We are accountable to God for our stewardship of the bodies he has given us.

More generally, we should do such things as: keeping our houses and homes neat and clean; properly dispose of waste products like dung, urine, saliva, etc.; clean yourself (e.g., bathe, brush teeth, hair, hands and nails [especially in Africa and India where most people use fingers rather than spoons to take food into their mouths]); cough or sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve rather than into your hands or into the air (coughing or sneezing into one's hands is actually a prime way to spread germs because the germs are transferred from your hands to everything and everyone you touch); keep yourself out of reach of bedbugs, lice, cockroaches, fleas, and mosquitoes (use mosquito nets); keep bedding clean. In doing these things you will not only help to insure that your own life is healthful, but you will avoid infecting or contaminating those around you. The state of our bodies affects all other aspects of our lives. If our bodies are ill or run down, we cannot function well spiritually, socially, cognitively, behaviorally, or emotionally.

## **2. Redemptive worship.**

Worship is ultimate because God is ultimate. Our worship of God reflects our attitude toward and relationship with God. Worship should be a daily activity, preceded by a specific attitude (that of awareness of God's presence and working in one's life). We should ask God to search our heart daily for sin and for an attitude of discontent.

## **3. Redemptive patience.**

Counselors hope and expect to see positive changes in their clients. Pastors hope and expect to see positive changes in their parishioners. All people hope and expect to see positive changes in their spouses, children, and those with whom they spend time. However, we must not allow our hopes and expectations to become demands for change. God is the one who will bring about change, in his time, not in ours.

## **4. Redemptive friendships.**

We need to cultivate a small group of friends with whom we can be transparent and vulnerable. We need to nurture listening to what others have to say, and hear God speaking to us through others. Further, we need to be people of forgiveness and reconciliation. We need to be quick to apologize and make things right when we do wrong or offend people. By doing that, small hurts will not become big hurts, and we will maintain healthy social lives.

## **5. Redemptive suffering.**

Only in the West do people have the false notion that life should be comfortable, pleasant, filled with happiness, and without suffering. Scripture makes no such promise, and history uniformly testifies against that idea. We need to see God's hand in our suffering, learn from it, and become more Christ-like as a result of it. By doing that, we will be better able to relate, minister to, encourage, and comfort others who are suffering.

## **6. Redemptive reading, study, and meditation.**

We need to take charge of what enters our mind. Most successful people are readers. Are we reading the right books and seeking the right information? Not only the Bible, but good books provide us with important knowledge and inspiration to live successfully and well.

We need to be consistent students of God's Word. As we read we should be asking such questions as: What question is God trying to answer in this passage? What is he saying to me in this passage? What is he saying against me in this passage? How should I apply this passage in my life?

Additionally, we need to be consistent students of ourselves. We regularly need to take the time to assess our lives (all six aspects of what it means to be a person), our priorities, our relationships—then make the changes necessary to bring our lives into harmony with God's Word.

## **7. Redemptive planning.**

It has been truly said that "the person who fails to plan, plans to fail." All people have the same amount of time (24 hours in each day). However, if we don't run the day, the day will run us. If we don't control our

money, our money will control us. If we do not plan our time we will be at the mercy of other people and events. We need to learn to say “no” to some people and things that make demands on us. Major time, and major money, should not be spent on minor things. We need to take charge of what enters our mind. Most successful people are readers. Are we reading the right books and seeking the right information? Most people have no plans to guide them. Planning and goal setting are important. Successful people (not only those successful in business, but those successful in any field, including successful spiritually, relationally, and physically) have plans, then set goals, then consciously act on them and apply them. As we do this we find that it is empowering. As we take greater charge of our lives we find that all aspects of our lives improve.

#### **8. Redemptive prayer.**

Prayer should be an important and regular part of our life (it was for Jesus). As communication goes, so goes the dynamic of a relationship. That is true both for our relationship with God and our relationships with other people. We need to examine those things in our lives that are hindrances to prayer (e.g., sin, doubt, selfishness, failure to demonstrate love to our spouse). We need to set aside the time to pray. Further, prayer is maintaining an open channel of communication with God. Consequently, we must not view prayer merely as talking to God, but need to listen to what God says to us in prayer. Then we must act on what we learn in obedience to God.

**9. Redemptive forgiveness.** Christ has forgiven us a debt of sin and rebellion against him that we could not possibly have paid on our own. Thus, we need to be people of forgiveness and reconciliation. We need to be quick to apologize and make things right when we do wrong or offend people. By doing that, small hurts will not become big hurts, and we will maintain healthy social, personal, and emotional lives. If we do not become people of forgiveness, our minds and lives cannot be freed from the past, we will become bitter, and we can never grow into the kind of people Christ wants us to be.

**10. Redemptive rest and rejuvenation.** Rest, relaxation, and recreation are necessary for mental and physical health. When we are tired and physically run down our minds are not as sharp. Further, if we are spending all of our time on our jobs, our lives get unbalanced and our relationships with our family and friends suffer. Maintaining strong relationships with the people who are closest to us, and taking the time to “recharge our batteries” and reorient our priorities, are important if we are to have alert, well-functioning minds and lives.

### **APPENDIX C—ISSUES FACED BY COUNSELORS** (modified from Corey, 1982)

- *Our anxiety is not necessarily unhelpful or unbiblical:* Counseling is serious business and can have a big impact on our clients. We are also representing Jesus to our clients.
- *Being and disclosing ourselves:* Many counselors often fail to appreciate the value of simply being themselves. A common tendency is for counselors to become passive (i.e., listen, reflect, sit back), but it may not be who we really are.
- *We need not be perfect:* We all make mistakes and are sinners. Our clients know that, but still tend to think we have a better life than they do.
- *Being honest with clients:* We have to face our limitations as counselors. Expressing our limits to clients actually enhances their respect for us.
- *Silence: A threatening experience:* Moments of silence can be refreshing, but also awkward. Silence can have many meanings. Explore that with the client. Remember – God was silent for 400 years!
- *Dealing with demanding clients:* Most counselors want to be needed. But, a demanding client can feel the ego of a hungry counselor.
- *Dealing with uncommitted clients:* The client cancels, no-shows, or unwilling to assume their responsibility in the counseling process. The client’s negative feelings should be processed in the counseling session.
- *Instant results are impossible:* Don’t expect instant results. Once a client decides to be honest and drop their defenses, the most likely will experience more emotional and interpersonal pain, confusion, and panic. We may also never know the results of our counseling, but we need to be faithful anyway.
- *We will not succeed with everyone:* We can’t help everybody! Find your niche.
- *Self-deception in therapy:* Client want help, and counselors want to be helpful. Yet, the power or mystery of believing something that isn’t true can be very unhelpful!
- *The danger of losing ourselves in our clients:* It is common to worry about our clients. Yet, excessive

worry can lead to countertransference feelings.

- *Developing a sense of humor:* It is okay to laugh in the counseling sessions. We can laugh at ourselves too!
- *Establishing realistic goals:* Most clients notice a benefit in the first few sessions. If a client has multiple issues to address, take them in stages. Pace the therapy as the client may not know how to do that.
- *On giving advice:* It is usually not a good idea to give clients advice. Instead, have them develop their own sense of what is true, and to trust their responses.
- *Suggestion and persuasion in therapy:* Pushing an agenda can backfire. Instead, suggesting things to client can demonstrate that you trust them to find their own way.
- *Some realistic cautions:* There is no need to provoke the client into experiencing something. It is best to let the relationship unfold.
- *Developing our own counseling style:* There is no right way to counsel someone.

## **APPENDIX D—BIBLICAL COUNSELING CASE STUDIES**

(1) Two people approach your church asking for financial assistance. One is in debt due to his own irresponsibility and laziness, and has an attitude of entitlement, as if the church owes him help just because you are a church and/or he is a “Christian.” The other is in debt due to no fault of his own, works hard, and has an attitude of humble submission to God and the elders of the church. How would you advise each one?

(2) A young married woman comes to you pregnant as a result of an affair with a neighbor. Her husband has given her a final choice—choose between him and the unborn baby. She has five options:

- (a) Abortion;
- (b) Keep the child but lose her husband who promises to divorce her if she does so;
- (c) Have relatives raise the child;
- (d) Have the birth father raise the child, if he is willing;
- (e) Adoption.

How do you counsel her?

(3) A wife calls you and tells you that her marriage is in trouble and asks you and your wife to come to her home to counsel her. She tells you that she is verbally and emotionally abused, ordered around like a servant, is forced into sex, and cannot take it any longer. Both she and her husband are professing Christians and members of your church. She is contemplating leaving him, but they have two small children. How do you proceed?

(4) A young couple comes to you because they have a rebellious child, but they disagree on how to discipline her. The husband tends to be more tolerant than the mother, and the child perceives that difference in philosophy in her parents, so she plays one against the other, going to her father for requests because he usually gives in and says, “yes,” but avoiding her mother, even back-talking her and gossiping about her to her father. This has caused a rift in the marriage because the wife resents being viewed by their daughter as the mean disciplinarian while her husband is being viewed by their daughter as on her side; and as her confidant and rescuer. How do you counsel this couple?

(5) You have been called out of a church meeting to proceed immediately to the hospital as one of your members’ infant children has been in a terrible accident. You don’t know how badly the child is injured, or even if the child is alive. But as soon as you arrive at the hospital, you can tell by the looks on the parents face that the child has died. How do you comfort the parents in that next hour, and then how do you go about preparing a funeral for an infant that will bring further comfort to the family?

(6) A single adult in your church is depressed and lonely because she wants to get married desperately, but has not found someone suitable for her. She comes to you with the question, “What should I look for in a husband? What can I do to make myself attractive (outwardly as well as inwardly) to a godly man?”

(7) A godly man in your church shows up one Sunday with a young lady whom you have never met. He introduces her as his fiancée, and would like for you to do their marriage ceremony. What do you say to him?

(8) Two men in your church no longer speak to each other and are clearly bitter enemies, even though they worship in the same church. They have a history of being on opposite sides during church meetings, and debates over philosophy and vision, even doctrine. Both refuse to approach the other for forgiveness and reconciliation because each believes that he is right and the other man wrong. This is becoming a scandal in the church because both men are prominent, long-time members in leadership. How do you handle this?

(9) A client comes to you feeling down, discouraged, and angry. His involvement in the church has diminished during the last year, and says that he “doesn’t see the point of going to church.” He says that he knows God loves him, but does not feel loved. The client reports few friends, although he has had many in the past. He is unmarried and reports little current interest in social relationships. The client says that he “knows that things are not right,” but is unsure what to do. What do you look for when talking to this man?

(10) Parents come to you because they are concerned about their 18 year old son who has begun to dress in odd clothing, dye his hair, and listen to music that the parents don’t like. The parents are concerned about the son, about what this means, and about how this will affect the boy’s future. What sort of things would you try to find out and suggest to the parents?

## **APPENDIX E—BIBLICAL COUNSELING CASE STUDIES: SUGGESTED ANSWERS**

### **(1) Two people approach your church asking for financial assistance.**

Put together a Benevolence Policy beforehand. These kinds of requests are frequent, and you cannot simply give money to everyone who asks, because: (1) there is never enough for everyone; and (2) giving money may not be the best way to help the one asking. Your policy should contain the following:

(a) Purpose of Benevolence (or Mercy Giving)

(b) Guiding principles for givers to deserving needy (Deut. 15:7, 8, 11; Prov. 14:31; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27; Matt. 5:16; 25:31-46; Luke 6:27-38; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; James 1:27; 1 John 3:17).

(c) Warnings for undeserving (lazy, irresponsible) potential recipients (Prov. 10:4; 19:15; 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8; 6:8). This does not mean that you should not help them at all, but it may mean having “strings attached” to your financial help (working around the church; getting on a budget and being accountable to someone for it; finding a job, etc.).

(d) Practical ways of helping financially. The goal is to help people become self-sufficient, not dependent. The deserving needy generally would rather work than accept hand-outs. Therefore, consider the following:

1. Offer them “pay” for doing some useful and needed work around the church.
2. Have a list of government agencies, NGOs, or other ministries or charitable organizations to whom you can refer the person if you are not able to help the person yourself.
3. Have a list of people in your church who may be able to offer employment or other assistance (again, this is something that needs to be set up in advance, but if you get the rest of the church involved you will find that many people have the ability and desire to be part of a network to help the needy).
4. Instead of giving cash, you may wish to take the person shopping for essentials only (milk, bread, fruit, eggs, rice, vegetables, etc.), or pay the person’s bill directly to the vendor or bill collector rather than trust them to do it with the money you give them.
5. Have a program for giving micro-loans so that the person can begin his own business.

(e) Prioritize—church members and regular attendees before strangers or unbelievers (Gal. 6:10).

(f) Don’t make these decisions alone. This is often considered a ministry for the deacons of the church based on the way such needs were met in Acts 6:1-7. See 1 Tim. 3:8-13 for the qualifications for deacons.

### **(2) A young married woman comes to you pregnant as a result of an affair with a neighbor.**

(a) Attempt to get her husband and the father of the unborn child involved in the decision-making process as soon as possible. This does not mean that they all have to be in the same room together as tensions may be running high enough already. But all three have the right and the responsibility to contribute to the decision regarding the future of the child.

(b) Strongly discourage abortion, based on the fact that the unborn child is made in God’s image and was personally knit together by God Himself in its mother’s womb (Ps. 100:3; 139:13-16; Is. 44:24).

(c) Strongly encourage husband and wife to stay together no matter what. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16).

(d) Go through all options, perhaps bringing in someone from an adoption agency to explain the adoption process. You may also need legal advice.

**(3) A wife calls you and tells you that her marriage is in trouble and asks you and your wife to come to her home to counsel her.**

(a) As tempting as it may be to rush right over to comfort her, it is better to make an appointment with her and her husband together (unless it is a true emergency). Get him involved right away because: (1) to solve a marriage problem, both parties need to be involved; and (2) if he finds out that his wife has seen the pastor, or even had him in their home, without his knowledge or consent, he will feel angry and betrayed—and that will then be the issue in his mind more than his troubled marriage that prompted his wife to call in the first place.

(b) Hear both sides, ask questions, and collect data. Discern if evangelism is needed. Give homework. A good first assignment is a “log” list (Matt. 7:1-5): that is, a list of one’s own sins or bad habits that have contributed to the problems in the marriage, each item beginning with the word, “I.” This might be called self-confrontation, or self-examination, or taking ownership of one’s actions and attitudes.

(c) Agree to meet with them again, as a couple as well as man to man, woman to woman, if needed and as long as progress is being made (usually a minimum of three to five one-hour sessions). The woman counselor can either be the pastor’s wife or an older, wiser woman in the church.

(d) Because they are members of the church, there may come a time for the elders to become involved, especially if there is habitual and unrepentant sin that needs to be handled by way of church discipline (Matt. 18:15-17).

**(4) A young couple comes to you because they have a rebellious child, but they disagree on how to discipline her.**

(a) Clearly, first work on the marriage relationship before dealing with their relationship with the daughter, because the marriage is the union of two into one, the one that no one (including children) should be allowed to separate (Matt. 19:6). Their daughter will grow up and leave the home (most likely), but the marriage is for life.

(b) Instruct from Eph. 4:25-32 about the kinds of things they should do to become more united as a couple (speaking the truth in love, reconciling daily, building each other up, forgiving one another).

(c) Homework- “Log” list (see case study #3 above) as well as biblical principles about parenting with the goal of coming to a common philosophy or consensus on how they should parent their daughter together, as a united couple.

**(5) You have been called out of a church meeting to proceed immediately to the hospital as one of your members’ infant has had a terrible accident.**

(a) As for immediate comfort, words are not always necessary, and, in fact, can do more harm than good (such as saying, “It must be God’s will”). Your caring presence and sensitive prayer is usually the best you can do in the midst of such grief. Sometimes the best words, if any are to be spoken, are “I’m so sorry,” or similar. You might also offer to make some calls to loved ones, or to arrange for any immediate practical needs.

(b) In preparing for the funeral, seek to learn as much as possible about the child from the parents—photos, personality traits, and fond memories (from extended family, too). Include as many of these as practical in your funeral message.

(c) Assure the family in your message that their son’s or daughter’s life had purpose and significance.

(d) Assure the family in your message that their son or daughter is in heaven with Jesus (especially for children of believing parents—1 Cor. 7:14; cf. 2 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 19:14).

**(6) A single adult in your church is depressed and lonely because she wants to get married desperately, but has not found someone suitable for her.**

(a) Look for personality traits or poor habit patterns that may have reduced her marriage potential. Ask about her relationship with God (e.g., Is she angry at God?), her history with the opposite sex, her current use of time and money, her thought life, her devotional life, etc.

(b) Ask her what she will do with the rest of her life if she never marries. Does she have any life goals as a single adult?

(c) As for what would make her attractive to a godly man, you might mention traits such as: (1) those found in Prov. 31; (2) a woman who will be a best friend and an encourager to her husband; and (3) a woman who will be committed to her husband, home, and children.

(d) As for what to look for in a husband, you might mention traits such as: (1) those found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 which describe the qualifications of an elder in the church; (2) a man who will be committed to his wife, home, and children; and (3) a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Matt. 22:37-38).

**(7) A godly man in your church shows up one Sunday with a young lady whom you have never met.**

(a) Before setting a date for a wedding, let the church get to know the fiancée better. Let her become involved in the church over the next 6 months so that when the couple gets married, everyone will feel good about it because they will have observed them long enough to know that they both are Christians as well as a good match for each another.

(b) Meet with the couple at least 4 times over the next few months in order to take them through pre-marital counseling which will involve homework.

(c) Let them know that you are not pre-judging the fiancée, but you take the responsibility of marrying people seriously enough to test each couple before agreeing to do their wedding.

**(8) Two men in your church no longer speak to each other and are clearly bitter enemies, even though they worship in the same church.**

(a) Because this is an ongoing public spectacle of sin among leaders, both men should be rebuked publicly by the elders (1 Tim. 5:20). However, the church discipline process of Matt. 18:15-17 should be followed first, but it should not take much time as is the case in more private situations that do not involve leaders of the church. This tense situation needs to be brought to a conclusion one way or the other for the sake of Christ's and the Church's reputation.

(b) Both men should be reminded of the gravity of unforgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15) and exhorted to examine themselves to see if they are truly saved (2 Cor. 13:5).

(c) There may also be a need for a godly mediator from another church to come alongside the elders and the two men as an unbiased set of eyes and ears, to listen to both sides without the history or prejudice that the elders might have, and to give observations and recommendations as needed.

**(9) A client comes to you feeling down, discouraged, and angry.**

(a) Although his initial statement about "why go to church" is, at the formal level, a theological question. His spiritual state could therefore be explored. However, the other information he presents with suggests that the church issue is merely a symptom or manifestation of something else going on in his life.

(b) The fact that he had friends in the past, but has few friends now (and has little interest in social relationships) suggests that some change in his life has occurred. That needs to be explored. It may be that he is simply lonely, and his feeling down, discouraged, angry, and not wanting to go to church are all symptoms of loneliness. A thorough history should bring out what is going on in his life. If that is the case, having him articulate what it is that his friends like about him can help him realize that he is still a worthwhile person.

(c) On the other hand, maybe his presenting concerns are the result of something he has done. His anger, perhaps coupled with unforgiveness, may be the primary problem.

(d) One should carefully consider both what he says and how he presents himself to determine if he is in a state of actual depression. In that regard, carefully raising the issue of whether he has had any suicidal thoughts would be appropriate.

(e) Active and reflective listening, and the use of summary questions and statements, should be able to flesh out his real issue. If his problem is based on a change in his circumstances, you might be able to suggest things he might try. Helping him to get involved or connected with the church could also be useful. Many people would like to become involved but are afraid of volunteering, and want to be recognized. To facilitate that would both help him spiritually and would connect him socially.

**(10) Parents come to you because they are concerned about their 18 year old son who has begun to dress in odd clothing, dye his hair, and listen to music that the parents don't like.**

- (a) A history of what has been going on with the boy will be important. How long has this been going on? Has there been some recent change and, if so, when and why did it occur? What, exactly, are the “odd clothes” the boy is wearing? Are there any other behaviors, besides the hair, clothes, and music that the parents are concerned about? Is the boy in school and, if so, how is he doing? What are his plans? Have there been any changes in his friends? Are his friends wearing similar clothes and dying their hair? What is it, specifically, about the music that the parents don’t like (do they know it well enough to make an informed judgment; is it simply a matter of personal preference)? The behaviors of the son may simply turn out to be matters of changing styles which the boy should grow out of, and therefore not worth too much worrying about.
- (b) On the other hand, one concern is that these may be the outward manifestations of drug use. Consequently, information that you might have concerning the signs and symptoms of drug use might be helpful.
- (c) Another concern is that the boy has fallen in with the “wrong crowd” or is otherwise expressing rebellion against his parents. In either case, the real issue may be the relationship between the parents and their son. Clarifying questions about the relationship, how the parents feel about their son, what their communication with the boy is, are they still treating him like he was 8 even though he is now 18, what their real fears are, etc., will be helpful in discerning what is really going on.
- (d) Since the son is 18 years old, he will be leaving home soon (to go to school, work, or the military). This behavior may simply be a way of beginning to show his independence. If the son otherwise is doing well, you could point out that the boy feels free enough to test some limits with the parents, which is actually a good thing. Being able to maintain a decent relationship is the primary matter. The parents may fear that they are “failures as parents.” However, you could point out that “it is very common for parents to feel like they have failed sometime, but let’s take a look at what you’ve done and how your son is doing” (and then go on to reassure the parents). Pointing out that the son is in the middle of difficult, growing, years can provide reassurance. Exploring the way the parents themselves rebelled or asserted their own independence when they were younger also may put matters into perspective.
- (e) The issue of the sovereignty of God is also important, comforting, and reassuring to parents. Although the parents may “know” that God is sovereign, having that articulated by a counselor can be very helpful.

## **APPENDIX F: CLIENT AGREEMENT**

### **STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that I am entering a short-term counseling relationship with Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. Prior to the intake session, I was informed of the following:

(Initials)

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware that Pastor [YOUR NAME] provides Biblical counseling.

\_\_\_\_\_ I can end the counseling relationship at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_ What I reveal or talk about in counseling may not be considered confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_ Pastor [YOUR NAME] has my permission to contact my spouse, Mary Jane.

\_\_\_\_\_ Most people who enter counseling feel better, but there is no guarantee I will receive a therapeutic benefit (i.e., “feel better”).

\_\_\_\_\_ Each counseling session costs 100 shillings. I am responsible to pay Pastor YOUR NAME prior to each session.

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ has explained the above and I, \_\_\_\_\_, voluntarily agree to participate in the counseling process.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent, Guardian, or witness)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **APPENDIX G: AN INTAKE OUTLINE**

### **INTAKE ASSESSMENT**

Client: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Intake Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Disclosure Notices**

(Initial)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. I asked the Client if they had any questions about anything they signed thus far.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. I informed the Client of the possible risks and benefits of Biblical Counseling.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. I informed the Client of the limits of confidentiality.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. (Other) \_\_\_\_\_

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**CHIEF CONCERN (in own client's own words):**

**CLIENT STRENGTHS:**

**SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

- Church attendance/life
- Quiet time
- Bible Study

**MEDICAL HISTORY:**

- Significant medical problems/diagnoses:
- Client's doctor is:
- Date of last visit/physical with doctor:
- CURRENT medications (names/dosages):
- Sleep or Appetite Pattern:
- Sexual health

**RELATIONSHIPS:**

- Current family/significant other/children
- Family of Origin
- Mentors/friends

**COGNITIVE/MENTAL:**

- Automatic negative thoughts
- Fast/slow thought process
- Memory

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE: Alcohol, drugs**

**BEHAVIORAL:**

- Typical Day
- Fun activities
- Rewarding/unrewarding activities

**EMOTIONAL:**

- Strong negative emotions? Time, place, event
- Positive emotions? Time, place, event
- Highs/lows/cycles

**WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM COUNSELING?**

**AGREED UPON TREATMENT FOCUS:**

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Signature of Counselor

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Date