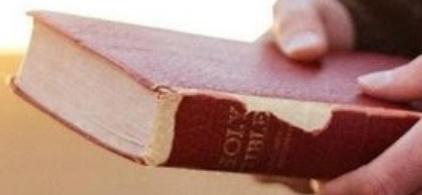




worldoutreach
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES FIVE

MODULE FIVE: COUNSELLING SKILLS



Outline Session 1-4

1. Introduction, foundations, aims and step 1 of Methodology
2. Basic Methodology of Christian Counselling Step 2
3. Basic Methodology of Christian Counselling Step 3-4
4. Basic Methodology of Christian Counselling Step 5 and Summary

SESSION ONE: INTRODUCTION, FOUNDATIONS, AIMS AND STEP 1 OF METHODOLOGY

This outline and the lectures are based on notes provided by Geoff Dean from Teen Challenge.

INTRODUCTION

The context of this module is '*Christian*' counselling, not non-Christian or secular counselling and '*Pastoral*' counselling, not professional counselling.

FOUNDATIONS

There are three foundations for this methodology:

1. All human problems have a divine solution
2. The reason that we, as believers, have problems is that we have not responded to a given circumstance in the way God has prescribed in his Word
3. The goal of Christian counselling is best expressed in Col 3: 9,10

OBJECTIVES IN CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING

1. Pinpoint the root problem
2. Effectively introduce what the Bible says about their problem in such a way that the person can accept what we are saying and understand God's evaluation of the situation
3. Motivate (through various means) the person to act on the biblical perspective
4. Our aim is to disciple them, not make them dependent upon us

A BASIC METHODOLOGY FOR CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING

STEP ONE: LISTENING

If we have trained ourselves to listen, we should be able to discern three different kinds of speech.

1. The words the person is saying
2. The words they are holding back - i.e. the words they are not saying
3. The words one cannot utter that lie in the depths of their spirit - i.e. the words their spirit is saying

Benefits of *focused listening*

- Improve rapport with the person, it encourages respect
- Improves our counselling skill itself
- Saves time, because the person doesn't have to repeat
- Avoids confusion

Practical tips for effective listening

From best-selling author, Madelyn Burley-Allen, 'Listening: The Forgotten Skill':

- **Be attentive**
- **Be interested in the other's needs**
- **Listen from the "okay" listening mode**
 - Be a sounding board
 - Don't ask a lot of questions
 - Act like a mirror, reflect back what you think the other is feeling and/or saying
 - Don't use the stock phrases because they discount the person's feelings and may undermine their confidence in you
- **Don't let the other person "hook" you**
- **Indicate you are listening by:**
 - Encouragement
 - Non-committal acknowledgement
 - Brief expressions such as: "Hmm", "Uh-huh", "I see", "Right", "Oh", "Interesting"
 - Non-verbal acknowledgement, such as: head nodding, facial expression, body expression that is relaxed and open, eye contact
 - Door openers
- **Ground rules**
 - Don't interrupt
 - Don't take the subject off in another direction
 - Don't interrogate
 - Don't teach or preach
 - Do reflect back to the sender what you observe and how you believe the speaker feels

Listening is difficult and does take time, but the returns justify the efforts.

SESSION TWO: A BASIC METHODOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING STEP 2

STEP TWO: INTERPRETING

Interpreting is putting things in their right place, or sifting through the levels of complexity to the conflict areas.

Getting the person to talk is not usually the problem, but getting them to talk about the right thing is.

That is why listening is very important.

This type of focused listening just mentioned (in Step One) is needed in getting to the conflict areas, and is being able to understand the facts of the situation in order to interpret them and fit them into place.

Here are some ideas to help interpret what the person is saying to us.

A. Don't be subjective

Subjectivity is one of the main reasons people are bad listeners. We must set aside our own biases, prejudices and conclusions and let the Holy Spirit instruct us. The way we feel about a person, or a type of person, or their problem, can influence our ability to listen.

Avoid bias. Don't judge by appearance. In other words, don't make up your mind about the quality of a person by their race, clothes, hairstyle, posture, or a hundred other irrelevant variables.

Also, beware of treating person A as you did person B, even though they may have had the same problem.

Each person is uniquely different, each has differing factors in their lives, each is motivated and responds in a different way.

Remember, the way we feel about a person, or their problem, influences our ability to listen.

B. Discipline our mind - don't let our thoughts wander all over the place.

Unless we learn to concentrate on what is being said to us and follow a person's train of thought, then how can we hope to understand the person's problem? Difference between the speed of speech to the speed of thought.

C. Avoid distractions and interference

People cannot listen if they cannot hear. Interference comes in all kinds of ways (e.g. room temperature, an uncomfortable chair, an offensive odour, screaming kids, other people within ear-shot, etc.) Likewise, ensure that we, as the listeners, are in a good emotional state to listen.

People cannot always choose where they want to listen, but try to minimise disruption and distractions by doing all within one's power to overcome interference.

D. Listen with patience

Allow sufficient time for the person to present their thoughts without interrupting or challenging them.

E. Listen with focus

How can we more effectively sift through the ocean of information which is being conveyed to get down to the conflict areas? In other words, what should we listen for, ask about, or concentrate on, in order to effectively "interpret":

- a. Listen for central themes and key phrases** (what do they always come back to)
- b. Listen for negative feelings**, such as bitterness, resentment, anger, anxiety, coarseness, greed, or moodiness.
- c. Listen with empathy** - enter into the feeling with others
- d. Seek for the gifts of the Holy Spirit**

SESSION THREE: A BASIC METHODOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING STEPS 3 & 4

STEP THREE: PINPOINT THE ROOT PROBLEM

There are several levels to a problem, and there may be many entanglements before we, as pastoral counsellors, feel that we have arrived at the real problem. Like an iceberg, what we see isn't the full dimension of the problem. Only about 10% of an iceberg is visible on the surface. So, it takes time and skill to pinpoint the root problem below the surface.

As Christians we know that the general root cause of any problem is that the person has not responded to the problem in the way God has revealed in Scriptures.

Briefly, what are the levels of complexity?

A. First problem presented (Presentation or surface problem)

The counsellor asks, 'Why are you here'? This is what they tell us they are speaking to us about. This is normally the SURFACE problem, and the EFFECT of the real root problem.

B. Cause or causes of presentation problem (surface cause)

In probing further, the counsellor asks, 'What has happened, or what have you done to bring this about'? This is looking at 'why' they have the presentation problem. Included in this could be negative habits, patterns and responses to any number of sets of circumstances.

C. Long-standing patterns of response

The counsellor is trying to determine, 'How do you normally respond'?

Digging below the surface (presentation) problem, this level looks at long-standing and deep-seated habits, patterns (including thought patterns) and responses not just to a circumstance, but to their life in general.

This deals with ROOT PROBLEMS (as distinct from the root cause).

D. Root cause

In getting to the deepest level of human problems, the counsellor asks, 'How have you failed to obey God and his Word'? The other question the counsellor must determine is what influences effect the person (i.e. demonic, psychological, emotional).

Root problems are caused by the sinful tendency of humanity, it is the rejection of God's divine lifestyle. It is a failure to deal with issues in the way God has prescribed in His Word. Consequently, habitual response patterns and wrong thought patterns complicate the person like vines on a tropical tree.

This condition is described in Ephesians 2 as the '*old nature*' which, according to Col 3:9-10 we are to put off, because it is: dead to God (2:1), dominated by Satan (2:2) and

deceived and driven by the *'passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature'* (2:3).

As can be seen, there may be many entanglements before the pastoral counsellor feels they have arrived at the real root cause.

As skill levels and spiritual discerning are sharpened, the Christian counsellor will probably see the problem (root cause) long before the person ever will, but the pastoral counsellor and counselee should discover it TOGETHER.

Our aim, at this point, is to help the person see and to answer their own problem.

It's helpful at times to restate some of the person's problem, to clarify, modify, or re-define certain things to assist in this process. Try to summarise as concisely and accurately as possible:

- (a) the problem itself,
- (b) their responses and patterns and
- (c) the root cause

Through the counselling process the person should arrive at the conclusion we desire.

STEP FOUR: INTRODUCE THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The fourth step is to introduce what the Bible says about their problem. How? Here are FOUR key words in how to do so.

A. Mediation

Counselling is mediatorial in the sense that we are assuming the role of a middle person.

On the one hand, we learn to listen on the human level to what the person is saying.

But, then, we learn to listen on the Divine level to what the Lord is saying to either:

- (a) the person or
- (b) about the problem itself (which, more often than not, will be what the Scriptures say).

Jesus, conversing with the woman at the well, is the perfect representation of this process.

He listened to what she was saying, while simultaneously listening to the Holy Spirit's knowledge about this woman and her "real" need and conflict area.

Once we and the person understand their problem and what God says about their problem, our RESPONSIBILITY as counsellors is to help the person know and respond to God's Word, or, in difficult words, deal with their problem in the way God prescribes. This involves introducing what the Bible says about their problem.

B. Motivation

As was stated before, the key problem in Christian counselling is creating a WILLINGNESS for the person to put into practice what God says about their problem. This involves motivating the person to act upon what the Bible says.

To motivate them, we have to find out what makes them tick. Why do they do what they do? What causes them to push their 'self-motivate' button, to be a self-starter?

This is why the person must see their problem for themselves before you can start mutually working through the resolution process. They must see, understand, and recognise their responsibility before God for themselves.

Before anybody will do anything about changing themselves, they must, firstly, see their need too.

C. Identification

The problem of Christian people being unwilling or unmotivated to change can be overcome to a degree by the counsellor sharing similar conflicts.

Rather than just telling the person what to do, or simply leaving them to fend for themselves, and to maximise the relevance of what is being suggested, and to heighten the person's motivation to want to put into practice, sharing similar problems that we have worked through will do immeasurable good.

Through this "sensitive self-revelation" we must meet the person on the same level as we are - human and weak but in the process of becoming strong by the working of the Holy Spirit in us, our humanness must come through.

SESSION THREE: A BASIC METHODOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING STEPS 4 (cont.) and 5

Last time, we didn't quite finish step four: Introduce the Biblical Perspective. As we unpacked this step, we looked at four key words in how to do so: A. Mediation, B. Motivation and C. Identification. Now to the fourth and final sub-point:

D. Communication

The desire to tell people how they should handle their problems is not an acceptable substitute for guiding them to a DISCOVERY of how to handle it through Jesus.

Jesus often led a questioner to answer his own question - to answer it as posed in a way he had not thought before, such as we see in the conversation between Jesus and the Lawyer in Luke 10:25-37.

Pastoral counsellors would be encouraged to learn the art of asking questions that will lead the person to the conclusion you want them to.

STEP FIVE: APPLICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The counsellor should bring the person to a point of decision or application. Then, give them something to do. Show them clearly what needs to be done.

Depending on the level of their faith, work out **MUTUALLY AGREED**, recognisable, measurable and achievable goals.

Arrange **ACCOUNTABILITY** when the whole situation can be appraised and any action necessary can be taken.

The relationship that the counsellor has with the person is a continuing one. He or she helps the person realise that the person is not alone – God is with them – and through prayer, honest encouragement and caring by the counsellor – God demonstrates his continuing love to this person.

This must not be a dependency relationship, where the person depends upon the counsellor and not on God.

Of course, pray with them, committing everything, in detail, to the Lord.

Here are some quick pointers:

- Never say, "ring me any time". Set clear times for contact
- Don't see time wasters, attention seekers or scroungers
- With sexual issues, the rule is men with men, ladies with ladies, unless there is a mature person of the same gender as the person being counselled present
- Never go out of your depth. If necessary, refer the person on to someone more experienced or qualified

- Lastly, depend upon the Holy Spirit, who is revealed as the Spirit of Counsel, to help you