

**Biblical Counseling: What to Expect**  
**(Counselor Identity and Other Beliefs About the Helping Professions)**

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### **Biblical Counseling: What to Expect**

The thesis of this essay is to reflect upon my beliefs about the helping professions; homing in on the practice of Biblical counseling. I will first define the role/job of a professional, then address the 3 most important things a counselor does (and does not do) during a counseling session, and finally, share my thoughts on the client population that I project the most success.

#### **What is a Professional Helper**

I define a professional helper as someone who gets paid for assisting someone else. A lot of the times, it is because the person being helped is unable to do their task or reach their objective on their own. However, it can also be because they can do it, but it would take a lot longer or it might be a lot messier than if someone else came alongside and gave them a hand.

In the helping professions, counseling in particular—whether the person being helped is a patient (someone who is ill and is in critical need of external support/care/attention performed on them), a client (someone who defines/dictates the problem and objective, but entrusts the process to an expert), or a counselee (someone who cannot see the situation or way out clearly, and needs an experienced person to advise them)—the helper is inherently gifted, formally educated, or specially trained to remediate negative issues and perhaps even foster positive growth for others.

This professional definition is not only affirming but authorizing. (It is an interesting departure from the common use of the word “helper,” which has a pejorative twist to it—think Santa’s little helpers.) From a Biblical counseling perspective, we can note that Eve was referred to as Adam’s “ezer,” a.k.a. helper or helpmeet. But the same term is used nearly a couple dozen times in the Old Testament for Israel’s battlefield allies or for God Himself as He personally came to Israel’s aid. So how do I define a professional helper from a Biblical perspective? Someone who comes to the aid of another who is struggling and not only walks alongside them,

but fights to win the spiritual war (and therefore everything in the world that stems from that, including physical issues or relational challenges) alongside them (Prov. 11:14; 20:18; 24:6).

### **3 Most Important Things Counselors Should Do**

As defined above, Biblical Counselors must do three things if they are to be successful: understand the person, simplify and clarify what is complex, and bring him/her into the alignment with God's truth. First, in order to understand the person, it is imperative to humbly engage with him/her through attentive listening and wise discerning of the person in all of their intricacies. Other times, it is not just through listening, but also observing what they are not saying verbally, but are presenting in the here-and-now of the therapeutic relationship; i.e., mannerisms, non-verbal cues, etc. Second, it is necessary to help a person take a step back from their issues, cut through the clutter of confusion (from themselves) and deception (from the enemy/world), and see themselves and their situations clearly. Biblical counselors must draw out the heat of the situation by highlighting what the person desires now, what they remember from their initiating circumstances, how they were affected, and what wonderful or wretched consequences arose from their moral responses. This gives the counselee a clearer view of what is percolating from his/her heart, what the experiential pieces their lives have fragmented into, what allegiances they have formed with God or the enemy to cope, and what condition their body/brain and soul is currently in. Third, Biblical counselors can then lovingly pursue the counselee as not only a paying client or fellow human being, but as a brother/sister-in-the-faith. This means reinterpreting scenarios by revealing who God is, who the counselee is in relation to Him, and what that grace-filled relationship entails in terms of the power, love, and a self-controlled sound mind coming from the Holy Spirit as Counselor (2 Tim. 1:7); all the while lovingly praying as the counselee's part is revealed in God's glorious story as it unfolds.

### **3 Most Important Counselors Should Not Do**

Whether a counselor is a secular counselor (who either begins interpreting everything through a behavioral, biological, cognitive, existential, humanistic, psychodynamic, or socio-cultural lens immediately) or a Biblical counselor (who forgets to rely on the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27-28)), it is too often that counselors make assumptions about the counselee and jump to quick conclusions (even if a counselor takes the time to listen to the person, they can still have preconceived notions and are tempted to take shortcuts in diagnosing the disorder). Ticking the boxes off the DSM-5 criteria can be poor taste when so many disorders have overlapping symptoms and risk factors, but presuming a Biblical profile just because there are surface level commonalities can be downright vile. For example, referring to Job when people are grieving or telling a person who is experiencing chronic pain that the Apostle Paul had a thorn and still was the greatest missionary of all time, is not exhibiting the compassion that we are called to.

Having made a diagnosis, some counselors also err on the side of being ambiguous about the plan or path forward—which does not give any comfort to those who need specific hope. All too often, secular counselors reach for medication management as the default, even when many psychological treatments have shown to be more effective immediately or in the long run. Either way, simply dulling the biological factors neglects to do away with the psychological issues and leaves relational issues unresolved. In the same way, Biblical counselors who send counsees off with “two verses and call me in the morning” are doing a disservice to those they are serving. Whether driven by compassion fatigue, counter-transference, or arrogant over-estimation of one’s capabilities, we need to combat this predilection for quick fixes.

Finally, the view that our brain and body-based issues are autonomous and out of reach of the Almighty Creator who not designed us but sustains us by the power of His Word is

inconsistent with my faith as a follower of Jesus. Christians who profess faith in the Author of Life would be well-served by reconciling our counseling methods with a Biblical worldview. Is it a matter of self-actualization or maturing to the fullness of Christ? Do we strive to have our counselees make compromise for happy marriages or be sanctified for holy matrimony? Are we aiming for counselees being restored to who they were before the event that changed their lives or for them to be redeemed despite their past because of the new life that has been predestined? Are the attachments (or lack thereof) they made with their earthly parents determinative or is the union with their Heavenly Father through Christ paramount? This is a true test of our theology.

### **Who I Am Called to Counsel**

Given the nature of Biblical counseling, any human created by God would have a high potential of success that is only determined by God's willingness and purpose. On one hand, as Jesus responded to a man who questioned his willingness to heal him, the answer is a simple affirmative (cf. Matt. 8:3). On the other hand, the lack of faith of non-Christians (and some nominal Christians) present a refusal to accept God's miraculous comfort and healing and growth, indicating relatively limited (but not impossible (cf. Mark 6:5)) success.

The client population that God has called me to serve is that of the families of pastors and other leaders in the church. Again, success in the worldly sense is never guaranteed (cf. Prov. 19:21), but one would expect that pastors and other leaders would gravitate to those who have also been trained in seminary and know the deeper promises of God and the context in which they manifest. Theoretically, without fear of condemnation, they would be more willing to disclose their struggles and make genuine efforts to align themselves with God's intended design for His people and world. Beyond that, their families would benefit from a Biblical voice who can speak God's truth in ways that are unbiased (Gal 6:1-3) and have their best interests in mind.