

QUESTION AND ANSWERS ON THE NEED FOR LAY COUNSELING MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Q. What is Biblical counseling?

A. The Bible defines counseling with the Greek words "noutheteo" which means to admonish, rebuke, reprove, exhort; and "parakaleo" which means to comfort, support and encourage with great patience and instruction (2 Timothy 4:2).

Q. What is the Biblical basis for counseling?

A. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Timothy -3: 16). Isaiah proclaimed the coming of Jesus as the "Wonderful Counselor" (Isa. 9:6). Jesus pronounced his counseling to 'set free the downtrodden' (Luke 4: 18). Down-trodden translated from the Greek means the bruised, oppressed, depressed, broken, crushed or shattered.

Q. Does the Bible discuss the kinds of problems which need counseling?

A. Yes, life's daily living problems are outlined as deeds of the flesh or sins of the world in Galatians 5: 19-21. There are many references to Biblical people with these problems: Adam had a blame shifting problem; Cain was given to violence and murder, Noah had a drinking problem; Amon committed rape and incest; David struggled with adultery, murder and anger (after he walked with the Lord for years); Haman was a deceitful manipulator; Jezebel was plain mean; Moses had a temper problem; Abraham had a lying problem; King Saul was consumed with jealousy; Sarah suffered from pessimism and laughed at God; Thomas had bouts of doubt; Peter was impulsive, impetuous, loud, quick to anger, and spoke harshly; Nadab and Abihu had an attitude about following God's instructions; Gehazi was dishonest; and Simon was greedy!

Q. Are there examples of behavioral counseling in the Bible?

A. Yes, in fact, there are many examples of counseling situations involving God, Jesus and other counselors appointed by God:

- God counseled Cain about his anger and fallen countenance (Gen. 4:6-7).
- Jethro counseled Moses for workaholicism (Ex 18: 13-23).
- Nathan counseled David to repent of adultery, murder and other sins (2 Sam. 2:1-14).
- Jesus counseled Martha about worry (Luke 10:40-42).
- Paul urged the brethren to encourage one another, build up one another.. live in peace ... admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. (I Thess. 5: 11-14).

Q. Why do Christians need counseling today?

A. Counseling is necessary today as in Christ's time because people disobey God (I John 1: 8 and 2:4); they love the world (I John 2: 15); they want their own way (James 4:1-12); they choose the deeds of the flesh instead the way of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 13-23). Life on earth is vanity (Ecc. 1: 1-4). Hurting Christians are admonished to seek wisdom through counsel (Prov. 19:20-21) and to know the will of God through circumstances and counsel (Prov. 24:6).

Q. Why is there a need to counsel in the Church?

A. When Jesus returned to Heaven, He empowered the disciples, through the Holy Spirit to continue His ministry on earth (Acts 1:8). Therefore, it is essential that Church counsel. God's hurting people "to ensure that Christians are not taken captive through false teaching, philosophy and empty deception according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Q. What are the selection requirements of Lay Counselors?

A. That Lay Counselors possess Spiritual gifts of discernment, mercy, prayer, teaching and exhortation. They are ambassadors for Christ (2 Col. 5: 17-20). They have experienced a life-changing (sinful behavior) experience themselves and have been restored by God to help others (Psalm 51:1-17). Numerous Bible verses reference the responsibility of Christians to become equipped to counsel/help one another and to share one another's burdens (Gal. 6:1-9, Heb. 13: 15-17, Col. 1 :28, 1 Thess. 5: 14, Eph.4:11-16).

Q. What do counselors do?

A. They bear burdens of others in the church (Gal. 6:1-9). They comfort the hurting. They help the down-trodden, the angry, the prideful to take responsibility for their behavior, to repent, and to forgive. They urge sinners to be reconciled to God, self and others. They share the gospel and disciple for accountability (2 Tim. 3: 15 – 4:1-5).

Q. How do they counsel?

A. They counsel with great love and patience after the model of Jesus. They reprove, point out worldly behavior. They correct and guide their counselees away from sinful behavior, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes. They teach Godly thoughts, feelings and behavior which yield fruits of the Spirit. They pray with and for those with whom they share burdens.

Q. What is the vision/mission of the Lay Counseling Ministry in the local church?

A. The vision is to complete men in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:28-29) by carrying out the mission of:

1. Equipping men of God to counsel others to build unity (Eph. 4: 12).
2. Helping hurting (down-trodden) people know God's will and to submit to the Spirit to handle their daily living problems (Prov. 24:6).
3. Admonishing the unruly, encourage the downtrodden, and instruct the ignorant (1 Thes. 5:14).
4. Building spiritual maturity on faith and sound doctrine (I Tim. 4:6).

Q. What is the Theory of Biblical Counseling Psychology?

A. To be changed from selfish (worldly) attitudes, emotions and behavior to the positive attitude of Christ, healthy emotions, and godly behavior by the renewing of the mind. Romans 12:2.

Q. What is the Procedure/Methodology for Renewing the Mind?

A. To learn to think like Christ on things that are excellent and worthy of praise instead of leading with emotions of the world. (Phil. 4:6-9).

Q. How does a lay Counseling Ministry fit in with the church's mission?

A. The lay counseling is about nurturing church members through Evangelism, helping, and discipleship. The lay counseling ministry assimilates members as counselors who help others in hundreds of counseling hours each month. Lay Counseling is an excellent outreach evangelism tool in the local community.

Q. What kind of counseling services are available through a Lay Counseling Ministry?

A. Individual, Family, Marriage, Pre-marital Counseling and Special Needs "Focus" Groups on Lifestyle Addictions, Single Parenting, Wounded Heart, Addictive Life *Styles*, Healthy Relationships, Nutritional Counseling, Career Transition, Grief, etc.

Q. Where are lay counseling sessions held?

A. Since counseling is personal and confidential private office space must be available at all times to accommodate the hundreds of counseling session hours handled by the counseling ministry. It is important that counseling sessions take place on campus to ensure reverence and control of the counselor/counselee relationships.

Q. Are fees charged for lay counseling services?

A. No, Biblical-based lay counseling is a helping prescribed in God's Word, and the lay counselors serve as volunteers without pay. At times love offerings and special gifts are made to the counseling ministry in appreciation for counseling services. A counseling ministry is led by a small volunteer or paid staff consisting of a Director, a Coordinator, and Receptionist/Secretary.

Q. How is a Lay Counseling Ministry funded?

A. Funding may come from the church's general budget, special contributions to the ministry, contributions from counselees, seminars, and various fund raisers.

Q. How are lay counselors selected?

A. A felt call to ministry as a result of a life changing experience, together with *Spiritual gifts* of discernment, exhortation/teaching, mercy and intercession.

Q. How are lay counselors trained?

A. They are certified as Lay counselors after completing a two-semester seminary level training offered by Reconciliation Counseling Resource Center, Inc. The first semester covers the Biblical basis for counseling, counseling theory, methodology and techniques. The second semester is a practicum of life's every day problems of relational society including role play and supervised counseling practice.

Q. Why do we need to train lay counselors every year?

A. Lay counselors are asked to commit to one year as a volunteer counselor in exchange for the training which is of value to the relational wellbeing beyond the scope of the counseling ministry (Gal. 6:1-9) in fellowship groups, discipleship, and evangelism. Because counseling is a very stressful ministry, a fresh team of counselors is needed each year to meet the needs of God's hurting people.

Q. How are lay counselors supervised, and who has oversight responsibilities for the lay counseling ministry?

A. Lay counselors are supervised by the Director or lead counselors, with advanced credentials, who supervise between six and eight lay counselors each. Supervision includes technical counseling support and a review of case loads of each counselor. The Lead Counselors are supervised by the Director of Counseling, who is accountable to the Session Committee on Counseling and the MMT. The Coordinator of Counseling is responsible for assessing the needs of counselees and matching them with appropriate Lay Counselors.

Q. What is the policy on opposite sex counseling?

A. Because counseling is very personal and private, the Lay Counseling Ministry, uses same sex counseling or team counseling concept. Men counsel men, women counsel women, and couples counsel couples to offer a male/female role perspective. In rare situations where opposite sex counseling is necessary due to emergencies/crises, the door of the counseling office is to be left ajar.

Q. How do I refer someone for counseling?

A. Request the person who wishes counseling to call the church counseling office or a number designated for counseling services which can be attended confidentially. The Director and/or Coordinator of Counseling assess the person's or family's counseling needs and matches them with a lay counselor or counseling team. Referrals from within the church are given priority. Referrals by clergy and other professional helpers may be given priority to “walk-in” clients from the broader church community.