

Counseling God's Way

I. What Counseling Is

Lesson 1 - Introduction; The LORD as Counselor

By

Bob Hoekstra

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P.O. Box 2848

Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2848

Phone: (877) 600 – 5426

URL: [Living In Christ Ministries](#)

Email: office@livinginchrist.org

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

Lord, we give You thanks for this first convening session of the Counseling God's Way course. I thank You for each one of the lives who will share in this course with us, for You bless, and touch, and teach, and mold, and shape, and speak to all of us. We consecrate this time to Your work in our lives, Your will, Your honor, and for Your glory. We ask You to make it a part of Your great promise when You said You would build Your church. Use these times and use our lives. Lord, we thank You for the Scriptures. We treasure them. They're such a great gift from You. And even more, we treasure the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the One who receives us, guides us into all the truth, and takes the things of Jesus Christ and makes them ours. We ask You to enlighten us, convict us, encourage us, comfort us, sort things out for us, and equip us to do the things that are pleasing in Your sight. We open up to You and cry out for a mighty outpouring of Your Holy Spirit throughout this course. May it be grace upon grace. And as the Word goes forth and we receive it, may there be great grace upon us that we might obtain a great proclamation of the things of the Jesus Christ. We ask this in His mighty name. Amen.

Introduction

Here are a few introductory thoughts to *Counseling God's Way* from the introduction on page one, let's use that, not for just the study in this visit, but for the entire course. The three-fold purpose of this course is number one, to let God counsel us His way. Every believer needs the counsel of God regularly. Don't buy into the thinking of man that counseling is for the weirdoes, the psychotic, or the seriously troubled, and that it is not for us, who are only half weird. Don't buy it. We all need God's counsel regularly. As I have taught on this subject across the country now for a few years and overseas a lot, I have found that the biggest thing God does, as we study this subject of counseling God's way, is that He counsels us! And what greater thing is there than that? What greater thing to ask out of this course but that God would counsel us along the way!

The second purpose of the class is to allow God to equip us a bit to give counsel His way. Another great Biblical truth is that all of us, every Christian, we're all called on to give God's counsel periodically. Don't buy into the humanistic thinking of the world that counseling is just for the human experts. No, we're all called in the kingdom of God. Every Christian is called to be involved in giving and receiving of counsel.

So, because we'll be needing counsel regularly, let's ask the Lord to give us counsel. Because God wants to use us to counsel others periodically, let's ask God to equip us to counsel a bit His way. So the first two general purposes of the course are to let God counsel us a bit, number one; number two is to allow God to equip us a bit to give counsel. And then number three, to have God warn us concerning counseling man's way.

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All of us face that continually. Sometimes we notice it, sometimes we don't. The world has its way to counsel and God has His way to counsel.

The amazing thing that has been going on in the church for some years now is the church is trying to learn the ways of man's counseling and bring it into the church. And it's changing radically the counseling ministry of the church and how Christians view counseling—what it is, where to get it, what to do with it, what it should look like. And we need to be warned concerning counseling man's way. It's one of the deadening influences, not only in the American church, but in the Church worldwide. And I run into this issue all over the place. I mean whether it's Kiev, Moscow, Sydney, Australia or off in the wild, wild west of the Philippine Islands like Mindanao Island. Counseling man's way is coming into the church and the Lord wants to warn us.

We want to approach the subject this way: first, get counsel and get equipped, because that's the way the Word approaches every issue, really. It gives us the truth we need and equips us to share it with others. But the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation give a constant warning theme about what isn't right, but maybe looks and sounds right.

A classic example of that is when Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). That's the truth. That's what we need to hear. It touches us and then we can touch others with that truth. But not too long after this Lord Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6). These were the two major religious leadership groups in the nation, in the chosen nation of Israel. And their teaching had a leaven in it, a corrupting influence. And Jesus didn't just say, "Here's the truth. Now watch out. Everything you hear isn't true." That's a good warning too. We need to hear that just to be on the alert. He went far beyond that. He was saying, "Here's the truth and watch those two groups out there, the major authoritative groups with the biggest following in all of Judaism. Watch out for them; they've got a leaven in their teaching that corrupts."

And we'll be doing that along the way too. Not in any way to try and take on some self-righteous air like we know everything and somebody else knows nothing. No way. Only God knows everything and man needs always to learn more no matter what God has taught him. We want to be true to the Word, to the way the Lord deals with truth and the way He touches our lives.

In my own history of involvement in this arena of ministry, the Lord has let me teach His Word now for twenty-nine years. And the first year I was a Sunday school teacher, then a youth pastor, and then the third year of teaching the Word I was pastoring. And then the Lord let me pastor in Dallas, Texas for fourteen years and then at Calvary Chapel Irvine in Orange County for eleven years. And in twenty-five years of pastoral ministry, through thousands and thousands of counseling situations, God gave me a heart for the counseling ministry. I saw in the practical experience of the people of God how important it was. I saw in the Word of God, increasingly, how God had ordained it. It's just part of church life. God's put it there and it's critical.

Then about fifteen or twenty years ago, I began to notice counseling approaches coming into the church of Jesus Christ that were undermining the way God had always ordained to do it. And before I knew it, I was doing a lot of study and teaching on this subject.

Five years ago we did a series of Bible studies. And I often did some book studies through the Word, and then interspersed it with topical studies. We had done a long expositional, verse-by-verse study and we were going to do an expositional, topical Bible study. And the subject was going to be Biblical counseling. And I told the folks, "I don't know how long this study is going to take. I think it's going to be one of the longer ones. I usually did the topical studies, eight, ten, or twelve units of study on things all the way from the Holy Spirit to the grace of God, to the Word of God, the law of God, you name it. And I said, "This might be one of the longer ones, you know, maybe twelve, fifteen, maybe even eighteen studies. And all I had before me was a mountain, a literal mountain of Scripture verses. God laid on my heart strongly not to make this a research project. There are a lot of great researchers out there. Some are worldly, some are godly. And the world is doing it their way, and there are some godly researchers.

Now I had read through the years a few books by Jay Adams, whom I respect greatly. I had read some other books that troubled me greatly. But basically I'm not a researcher. I love to read, but as the years have gone on I have read other things less and less, and the Word of God more and more. And this was not a research project. It was a Bible study teaching project. And all that was in front of me were just mountains of Scripture that the Lord had led me to through the years And I just went before the Lord in prayer with just the Word of God and prayer and God's faithfulness and the work of His Spirit, and actually the outline you have for this course came out of that study and those days of prayer.

The Lord literally counseled me through the study step-by-step. I didn't have a clue where to begin, let alone where to go next or that it was going to end up being twenty-two one-hour studies. It was an hour Sunday morning, and an hour Wednesday night for eleven straight weeks. And I didn't know that it would fall into five or six segments and this would be part of that. But step-by-step it unfolded. And when it was all done I looked back and I was almost overwhelmed by the Biblical, spiritual logic of it all. It was like, wow Lord! You've been speaking to us, haven't You? You said You are the Wonderful Counselor and my goodness, if anyone needed it I did. I know this is an important arena, Lord, but where to begin and where to go and let it stand just on what You say and not a lot of human experts good, bad or indifferent, but just what You have to say.

I sent out a letter, at the suggestion of one of our elders, to every pastor I knew in the world and offered to give them a gift of those twenty-two tapes if they could use them in their ministry. Well, we were not quite prepared for what happened. For twenty some years Living in Christ Ministries, which had grown out of the first church I pastored in Dallas, was on radio and having meetings and now and then a conference and sending out tapes. And we were sending them out by the thousands year by year. Well, overnight we were sending them out by the tens of thousands. I mean, overnight. And so many multiplied times more tapes went out on that than anything I had ever taught up to that

point in twenty some years of ministry. So it was really like the Lord was ringing a bell saying "yes," this was important as a pastor to your flock.

As an under shepherd I had to do it to be faithful to the Chief Shepherd, but I've had some other things in mind here too. The Lord knew I had a heart for pastors. Pastors have been on my heart more and more through the years. I loved being a pastor in two churches those twenty-five years. I've loved even more now traveling among the churches and helping and encouraging pastors. People ask if I take counseling appointments anymore? Basically, no! I still counsel a lot, but it is almost always with pastors and their families or their leaders when I am out on the road and staying in their homes and all. Most of the time I am teaching about this subject, which is kind of a shift from counseling to equipping counselors, from being a pastor to equipping pastors and helping them. I've had a heart for pastors. I don't even know how to express what pastors face and go through. I mean if I got real specific you'd think I have quite an imagination—that it couldn't be all like that. What pastors face is just phenomenal—the impossibilities! The joys, the blessings are also beyond measure. But the warfare, the perplexity, and the day-to-day surprises can turn you from a tranquil Sea of Galilee to an absolute hurricane in fifteen minutes or less. And my heart has been building for pastors through the years.

When we sent the letter offering the study tapes to the pastors, I was overwhelmed at the response! But then I began to see, it was the Lord's answer to my prayer. Years before I had asked the Lord if there was any way I could somehow encourage and help pastors and those in ministry or those who are preparing for ministry or want to minister more. This changed the entire course of the ministry God has given to me and my dear wife. Brian was the first one on the phone to order those tapes. He wanted all those tapes at their church in Vista. And the next thing I knew he asked me to a pastors' conference to take those twenty-two hours and do like hour and a half every day at camp, kind of as an overview of the study. And I said, "Let's do it. Let's be praying and see what God does."

Next thing I knew, "You've got to do that for the whole congregation" and we did that. And we were still broadcasting on KWVE at that time, so we announced the study and people came to that all-day Saturday overview from all over Southern California. Some folks came from as far away as Modesto. And it was another wake-up call. And it was like, "oh my goodness, Lord, what is going on?" I knew this was important. I know there is a hunger and a need, but I underestimated the dimensions of it. And then the next thing I knew pastors were calling from near and far.

And before I knew it in four steps in the ministry at a time, I passed on over a year and a half period of time, I my ministry on to my dear, dear friend and associate, John "not the radio host" Stewart. I was spending hours every week with John praying with him and for him; comforting him as he was soon to be the pastor. Since then I have traveled near and far teaching a lot on this subject, sometimes on related pieces of the heart of it, like the "Growing in the Grace of God" class. And sometimes "Contending for the Faith," which takes these issues and extends them out beyond counseling to many other arenas.

That is the story behind this course on counseling. Basically it's kind of, in my own heart and life, a culmination of twenty plus years of study and living in counseling. I know I don't have all the answers that God has for our lives or for how He wants to counsel. But I sure have more than I did twenty some years ago because God is faithful to speak when we cry out. And you'll see probably as we go along, that I'm noticeably convinced that God does have all the answers. I love to let the Word speak to us and think out loud together of the implications of that, both for God's way and warning about man's way.

So that's kind of a perspective on where we are, where we are going, who God is making of me and what He is laying on my heart and why a class like this. I praise God for this opportunity. So, with that in mind let's plunge into the Word. That kind of gives a framework of thinking and preparation for direction.

What Counseling Is

The first arena of study has to do with What Counseling Is. This is a perfect Biblical place to begin. The reason being, if we're going to study counseling God's way, let's get God's definition. I mean, if we're going to study about how to counsel God's way, let's ask God to tell us what this is about. What the whole subject is—counseling God's way. What Counseling Is, and we'll look at three aspects of it: the issue of the Lord as Counselor, and then Counseling and Discipleship, and then Counseling and Sanctification. Then we will have a very strong Biblical understanding, a starting point for what counseling is.

We'll do some Old Testament verses on the Lord as Counselor. And then some New Testament verses. You can just jot at the top of the Old Testament list Isaiah 9:6, where the prophetic title is given to Messiah... "and His name shall be Wonderful, Counselor". One of the titles of the Lord, one of the names of the Lord Jesus Christ is Wonderful Counselor. That's a great place to anchor our thinking because I really believe Biblically that the critical truth where we want to anchor our thinking is right here. The Lord is the Counselor. In fact, it's His name—His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor.

Here's the great issue and this is the great divide; this is what begins to change everything when you consider counseling God's way. In the kingdom of man, man counsels man. In the kingdom of God, God counsels man. That's the ultimate radical difference. Everything we're going to look at in this course is somehow related to that. We'll be looking at *what it is* and *how to do it*, as well as watching out for what is being substituted for what it is and how to do it. This is the critical issue. And we'll elaborate on this in dozens of directions. But if we don't anchor our thinking here, we are drifting off course all the rest of the way. "And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor."

What is counseling from God's perspective? Here's what it's all about. It's about this truth—the Lord being the Counselor.

Let's think in the Old Testament for a while about the Lord as Counselor. In Psalm 32:8 God is speaking to His people through His servant David here. And God says,

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. (Psalm 32:8 NASB)

God has taken upon Himself the role of being our instructor, our teacher, our guide, our counselor. I will do it. I'll instruct you. I'll teach you. I'll guide you. Or that word is often translated in many versions, counsel you. I will do it. God has taken this role upon Himself. It's not something man does. It's something God does. I will guide you. That is, I will counsel you.

And the Lord instructs us and teaches us in the way we should go. Man counsels to find a way that works for you. Hey, find something that works for me. Hey, give me a way to walk that works for me, something that is true for me and good for me. Maybe others won't accept it, but show me the way that works for me. That's not how God counsels. God counsels in the way we should go. He knows the path that carries divine necessity with it. The way we should go. The way we've got to go or it is a disaster. He's not just counseling us to find something that kind of experientially works. He's counseling us in the way we must go—the way of life.

Then in Psalm 73:24 the psalmist confesses a great truth:

You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me *to* glory.

This is to be our confidence for time and eternity. Throughout time God will guide us with His counsel, if we let Him, if we look to Him, and if we trust Him to do so. And afterward, what will He do? As we're walking along that path of His counsel, He'll just receive us right into glory. He'll just continue it in heaven forever. The Lord is our Counselor.

Psalm 33:18-22 and 25:12-15 sort of restates what we have just looked at. Psalm 23 takes a little bit different direction for a while. There are many other places, like the verses we've listed, where the Lord in the Old Testament says, "I will counsel you." He basically takes the counseling responsibility upon His own shoulders. But there are a lot of other Old Testament verses that have significant counseling implications in light of this truth. The truth being, the Lord is the Counselor. Now with that truth as a given, which the Scriptures make very bold and clear in many places, there are a lot of other Old Testament Scriptures, and in the New Testament ones, that have very significant counseling implication and application, given this truth that the Lord is the Counselor.

For example Psalm 23. The Lord is the Counselor, but the One who is the Wonderful Counselor is also the Good Shepherd. The One who wants to counsel us, look what He is and is able to do, as He counsels.

1 The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

- 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

I'm glad the church of Jesus Christ has shown such great interest in giving attention to this psalm at the death and passing and funerals. Praise God, that's a great time for it. But it was designed especially for the living. I mean it's great at that time. I've taught out of that at moments like that too, and been comforted at moments like that. But this is a psalm for everyday living. We're the sheep, He's the shepherd. That day is now. The One who is our Wonderful Counselor, He's also our shepherd, our guarder, our provider, our caretaker, our helper, our protector.

And because the Lord is our shepherd we shall not want. We'll have everything we need if we walk under His shepherding care. So many people out seeking counsel and do you know what they really need to be reconsidering? Who is their shepherd? Therefore where and how are they going to get everything they need? It's right here in Psalm 23. Our Wonderful Counselor is also our shepherd, therefore we shall not want. We shall have what we need.

He who is our Wonderful Counselor, if we let Him counsel us as He counsels, then He will shepherd, provide, and care for us. He'll make us lie down in green pastures. A lot of people seeking counsel, you know what they really need?—just to lie down for a while, spiritually speaking, in green pastures. Just slow down, lie down, and let the Lord feed you for a while. A lot of people seeking counsel, they're just in a frantic frenzy, undernourished, weak and on the edge of a panic. Now the Lord understands and He cares. And many of them can have the deepest of their needs met just slowing down, lying down as it were, just resting a while with the Lord in green pastures. I mean, spiritually speaking, here are the green pastures.

There are a lot of weed fields out there. Not wheat fields, weed fields. You know, with a lot of humanistic thinking, you know. Not fields of grain but just fields of weeds. You know, wild things, non-productive things. Not nurturing, just growing but not helping. The Lord loves us to lie down in green pastures. Just rest a while and get fed.

Our wonderful counselor who is also our shepherd, He leads us beside the still waters. A lot of people seeking counsel, they just need some quiet times of refreshment. They need quiet times of refreshment with the Lord or with another brother or sister, depending on the situation. Brother getting with brother, sister with sister, being refreshed with the still

waters, the peaceful work of the Holy Spirit in our lives; abiding in Christ, walking in the Spirit. Considering again what the Christian life is all about.

Verse three says, "He restores my soul." Is it God's restoration projects or man's recovery programs? Oh, they're popular these days. You know, restore my soul. Recover me. Put me back into what I should be. Hey, how about the Good Shepherd? He restores my soul. He can put our soul, our inner life back into the state it ought to be in. No one can do it like He can do it.

And He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. How many people seeking counsel—are just driven with a passion or a panic, they've got to find the right path to take in life. Decisions. Choices. Options. I mean, here it is in the Bible. He leads me in the paths of righteousness, the right paths are the righteous paths. And not just for a feel-good experience for me or a, "Whew, that takes care of that decision!" It is much bigger than that, it is for His name's sake. He'll put us on the right paths and it will end up honoring His name. Boy, how's that for counsel? We're not talking about a quick fix here. We're talking about a life path that the Shepherd is leading us on.

This is the same One who is our wonderful counselor. How about just hanging out with Him? You say, "Yeah, but I need help in that." He knows that, that's why we are to counsel one another, as we'll see later down the road. He uses instruments of sheep ministering to sheep. But sheep only have to give what the Shepherd gives them. How can a sheep help another sheep? Here comes a wolf! Hey, no problem, I'll take care of you. *Bahh!* Why am I not comforted? But the Good Shepherd, oh hey that's another matter!

Verse four says, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Many people are in the deep valley of darkness, the shadow of death. It's like death is casting a shadow over them. Many people live daily in what you could call the valley of the shadow of death. Just in a deep place of darkness, confusion, fear, apprehension. Here's the great thing—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death"—and we all get our treks through there. I know that from the Word of God. I know that from watching Jesus in the Scriptures. I know that from watching great men of God like Moses and Paul and others. And I can bear witness by my own testimony. We all get our treks through the valley of the shadow of death. Where everything just looks like it's dark and dying and impossible, with no way through. And fear threatens from every side.

I've been there and I may be there again. But praise God, the more we walk with our Shepherd, we can say this—"Yea, though I walk through that valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." I'm not going to dread all the evil that lies around me. Why? "For You are with me." This is not whistling by the graveyard. This is not the "unpower" of positive thinking. This is faith based on fact. I will fear no evil. Why?—because "You are with me." Because the Lord's there! Not because we're somebody. Not just because we just refuse to be afraid. All those things will run out sooner or later. Someone big enough, with a big enough "Boo" will just bring that to the end. No, I need more than

that. I'll fear no evil right in the valley of the shadow of death, when all looks like darkness and dying. Why?—"For You are with me." And He is with us, as a Shepherd. "Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." The rod is to beat off the enemy, the wolf. The staff with the crook is to pull us out of the pits, out of the mess.

Verse five says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Yes, in this world we have a vicious enemy. Whipped at the cross and by the resurrection, but he won't stop fighting until he's thrown in the pit. But right in the presence of our enemies, the enemy and all those who are cooperating with him, wittingly or unwittingly, the Lord prepares a table before us right there. All the way from food to eat to spiritual nourishment when all around is the enemy.

"You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over." Of course, this is the picture of a shepherd anointing the injured or needy sheep. But it is done in such a way that there's just overflowing blessings. Apply this to New Testament believers who could walk in the fullness of the Spirit. The Lord anoints us, the Spirit upon us, until the cup of our life just overflows.

A lot of Christians that are seeking counsel, really need nothing other than just letting the Wonderful Counselor, who is also their Shepherd, just anoint their head with oil. That is, pour out the Spirit upon them until the cup of their life just overflows with His presence and His work. Boy, I'll tell you, when the Lord is doing that, you can have a hundred counseling problems being dealt with simultaneously by one work of God, by the filling of the Holy Spirit.

And look at the assurance we can walk in as we walk with our Shepherd. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." What a great assurance that all the way through this life, we have this assurance, that God's goodness and God's mercy will be right there with us. In His goodness to supply what's needed, it is with a loving intention. And His mercy—to be sure we don't get what we deserve! What a Shepherd.

And He'll do it all the days of our lives. Yes, even today! He'll also do it all those other dreaded days. Yesterday He was doing it, whether we saw it or not. And tomorrow He'll do it. And then when that's all done we'll just live in God's house forever. That's the path of walking with the Good Shepherd. Who also is our Wonderful Counselor. If the sheep of God's pasture would just, as it were, cuddle up close to their Wonderful Counselor and find out He is their Good Shepherd and walk with Him day by day, I think we would be blown away at what a Wonderful Counselor He truly is.

Oh I love these Old Testament verses that have such mighty implications in light of this truth—the Lord is the Counselor.

Well, if we spend that much time on every passage, we'll be here twelve months. Let's hop onto the next page to Psalm 34:18. Oh, this is a great one! Think of the implications of this truth in light of the fact that the Lord is the Counselor.

Psalm 34:18,

The Lord *is* near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Some versions translate that last part, "And saves such as are crushed in spirit." Life comes like a stone sometimes, crushing us and breaking our hearts. No one, no one is likely to go through life without a broken heart. Think of that. What a vain dream to think that we can go through life without a broken heart. Look at the Lord Jesus. He died of a broken heart. And look at His saints of old, the ones He used. It seems the more their hearts were broken, the more God used them.

I don't know if God's through with breaking my heart. If He is, that's fine. But I doubt it. I used to run and hide from a broken heart. Don't get in those places where your heart can get broken. How do you hide from God? You can't even hide from the devil. He's quite a heart breaker too, but never for a good reason. Even if the enemy breaks our heart, as God puts it back together, it's as good as if God had broken it. He gets the same purpose out of it, the same use.

Sometimes folks say, "I'll never find the counsel I need. My heart is so broken, so shattered." Or crushed, this one phrase could be rendered. "I'll never find the counsel I need." Listen, God specializes in the broken heart and the crushed spirit. It's like those are the ones He does His greatest work in and ultimately then through.

See, the Lord is near to those who have a broken heart. The brokenhearted feel like they are totally cast off, isolated, rejected and even out of God's love. The truth is the Lord is never nearer than when the heart is broken. He's never more available to be more intimately known than when the heart is broken. What a Counselor that is, huh? The Lord is near to the brokenhearted.

And He saves, He rescues, He delivers such as have a crushed spirit. What a wonderful counselor. So many that are seeking counsel need just this kind of ministry from the Lord and no one can offer it like the Lord Himself.

Psalm 46:1-3,

God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though its waters roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling. SELAH

What a great truth this is. See, the Lord is our Counselor. Now add this truth—The Lord who is our Counselor, He also is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Yes, even if the world is falling apart and shaking, He's still our refuge and our strength. He's a very present help in trouble.

Does it ever seem like the only thing that will be appropriate that could possibly help is a perfect place to hide in safety? Well, God is our refuge. We can seek refuge in Him. We can do it any time, any place, whether we're alone or with multitudes. We can hide in the Lord, as it were, by faith. Seek refuge in Him, He is a protecting, sheltering, hiding place. He's a refuge, a place of safety.

Do you ever feel like, if God doesn't give strength, you'll never have any? Well, God is our strength. Oh so many seeking counsel are asking, "How can I be strong?" The world has its ways. Well, you look in the mirror and you tell yourself, you're strong. I am strong! I'm getting stronger every day! That's very weak. Someday that mirror will look back and say, "Who are you kidding?"

But God is our strength. How many people seeking counsel, if they would just consider—if God would just use us to share with them. Or if we ourselves need to hear this, here it is! God is our strength. The life in Christ is designed to be lived, not by human strength, not even religious consecrated zeal. It's designed to be lived by the strength of God at work in us.

This One who is our Counselor, who is our Shepherd, He's our refuge and our strength. I mean, we're talking about some Counselor here.

The more I study the Word of God regarding who the Lord is and in light of it Him being the Counselor and being all those things, the more I look at what man offers. Oh my goodness! We're back to shooting BBs at dragons to try and help people. With man, using man's theories to help man, why that's anemic next to this. What person can you go and hide in? What person can you go to and say, he's my strength? We try to lean on people like that, but they can't help. They can't take it. Why?—because they're not God! One of the best ways to wipe someone out is to treat them like they are God. A lot of husbands and wives wipe each other out, putting all their hope in each other. Well, I know what that's going to come down to—somebody is going to be disappointed.

God is our refuge and strength. Someone might say, "Yeah, but you don't get it. I'm in trouble!" He is a very present help in trouble. The more the trouble, the more is His very presence. You just know that He is there for you, very present. It is not like He is just hanging around sometimes and you might get His attention if it really was that urgent. No, He's a very present help. He's right there on the job when the troubles come. And He's our Counselor.

Psalm 55:22

Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

That is, shaken until they're just wiped out, moved aside. Again, how many seeking a word of counsel are doing it because they are so burdened down? Let's face it, the loads of life get heavy. Responsibilities, demands, expectations of people, duties, needs, hopes, dreams, relationships, heartaches over what was done wrong and apprehension over what yet needs to be done right. I mean, the burdens just come in a thousand directions.

Here's what we're called to do, "Cast your burden on the Lord." It's a picture of rolling it over off our shoulders. Just kind of tipping, letting it dump on the Lord. And He shall sustain you. He'll carry us through. He won't permit His righteous ones, His children to be moved. That is, shoved aside, out of His path, wiped out, or shaken to destruction. He won't. He's faithful.

One more and then we'll take a break. Psalm 62. When we were broadcasting, Living in Christ Ministries which was broadcast in Dallas, Texas for many of the years. We were going to go on this big 100,000 watt station, when there was an opportunity to move from the station we were on. And they agreed to pray about putting us on, and they wanted one of our tapes to hear what the teaching was like. And I asked our radio engineer and dear friend, to send them the tape on Psalm 62, which was titled, "Jesus Only." They got the tape. We got a phone call a couple of days later, "Are you some of those "Jesus Only" Pentecostal groups? You know there's no Father, no Son, it's all Jesus."

I said, "No, no! That is not the point of the message title."

"Okay, then we'll go ahead and listen to it." And they listened to it and we did end up broadcasting on their station for years.

But this is a psalm about all that we need is Jesus. Jesus only is all we need. Kind of taking this psalm, bringing it up into the New Testament age in which we walk. Psalm 62:5-8, "My soul, wait silently for God alone."

Oh if we would learn that. What a great part of counseling, to encourage and help people to wait on God alone. Not wait on man. But wait on God. That is, hope in God. And sometimes it's good to do it silently. Not that it's wrong to share and speak, but sometimes it's good to just silently put our expectations in God.

For my expectation *is* from Him. He only *is* my rock and my salvation....
(Psalm 62:5-6)

That's right. Not someone else. Not some church group. Not some church leader. Not some famous Christian example. Not some great author. Not some human Christian psychological counseling expert. But He only is my rock and my salvation. He only is that solid rock I stand on. He only is my salvation, that is, my rescue from and through and unto all that He wants to save me from and save me through and save me for.

...He is my defense; I shall not be moved. I shall not be moved [shaken]. In God is my salvation and my glory. (Psalm 62:6-7)

If I'm going to be saved or rescued, if I'm going to see anything glorious, it's in God the rock of my strength and my refuge. My hiding place is in God.

"Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him."
God *is* a refuge for us." (Psalm 62:8)

Do you know how many multiplied kinds of counseling needs just those four verses speak into right there? If we just let God counsel us with those four little verses of truth and started passing those on to others as well, we'd probably be part of a little mini-revival, you know.

God alone! Oh, it's the ultimate counseling word. To teach folks to trust in, stand on, hide in, walk with, expect of God alone. He is our salvation.

The implications of these verses in light of the fact that the Lord is our Wonderful Counselor are enormous. They let us know what He can do if we let Him counsel us. What He can do through us to others if we'll let Him use us as an instrument of His counsel.