

Counseling God's Way

I. What Counseling Is

Lesson 2 - The LORD as Counselor, Part 2

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

What Counseling Is

All right, let's continue in our study of What Counseling Is. We are looking at Old Testament passages that remind us of this great truth, the Lord is the counselor. This is the anchor truth of our entire course.

Isaiah 9:6 we look at now. We've touched upon it. Let's just read it.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God...

The prophetic title of the Messiah, who we know now is the Lord Jesus Christ, is Wonderful Counselor. Jesus is our Counselor. He is the Wonderful Counselor. In the family of God, in the kingdom of God, in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One, innate Counselor—the One who is by His very nature, person and gifts and work and ability, the Counselor. Not an instrument of His counsel, but the Counselor. That's the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can call Christians counselors in a sense, if they are an instrument of His counsel. But it is a derived issue. It is the Lord counseling through them. He is The Counselor and He is a Wonderful Counselor.

If you want to add to your notes right here, Colossians 2:3, then we will come back to Isaiah. Colossians 2:3. How wonderful is this counselor, the Lord Jesus Christ? Just how wonderful is He? Well, Colossians 2:3 answers it powerfully. Speaking of Christ, that verse says, “In whom are hidden *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

In the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our wonderful counselor, there are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Heaven is, as it were, a divine spiritual treasury of wisdom and knowledge. Counseling has so much to do with the ministry of getting the knowledge you need and the wisdom to use the knowledge you have. So much of counseling is just people out to get the knowledge they need or if they have knowledge, the wisdom to use it.

Well, how do we access this treasury of heaven? They are hidden in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. We access the treasury of wisdom and knowledge through the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Heaven's treasury is infinitely rich with wisdom and knowledge. We need it and God has it. Where is it?—in a person, the Lord Jesus. How much of the wisdom and knowledge is there? Look at the word, “In whom are hidden ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” It doesn't say, many of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden there. It doesn't say most of them. It doesn't say a lot of them. It doesn't say all but three or four biggies are there. It doesn't say they are all hidden there except for that rare collection brought to us by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Alfred Adler, Eric Fromm, William James, B. F. Skinner, you name it. They are not upon this earth to fill in the gaps in God's knowledge and wisdom.

The tragedy is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been behaving for maybe twenty or thirty years like—oh, there are the missing gems in the treasury house! Now, we are rich with the answers we need! The church has been, for three decades at least, the number one referral agency

of troubled people seeking help out into the psychological clinics and psychotherapeutic offices of the world.

It began to turn some years ago, instead of sending them out there. “We have trained our own people in their wisdom. We will kind of do it in-house, thank you.” In other words, now we have the world training the church how to counsel the people of God. And of course some believe this is the height of wisdom and knowledge. They call it the integrated path of counseling, where the absolute perfect, pure, sufficient life-changing truth of the Word of God is going to be integrated by the guesses, theories, and knowledge and wisdom of godless heathen—even anti-Christ geniuses like Freud and Jung and Maslow. And if I could find a stronger way to put it, I would.

It looks like the church is going insane! We are turning from our wonderful counselor, who is our shepherd, our refuge, our strength, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And we're asking these godless geniuses to fill in the gaps for us. I think we are losing our mind as the church. We're losing our spiritual mind. We're losing our mooring. We're losing our direction. We are off course. We are not anchored into this truth—the Lord is the Counselor.

Many of these theoreticians purposely were trying to create a philosophy of life, to explain who man is, how he got here, why he is here, where he is going, and how to help him get there, with God left totally out. That is what motivated a lot of these men to think. God was out of the picture. They were thinking up a way where they could live, not being accountable to God, maybe even explaining away any possibility that He even existed. And now we are integrating that with the Word of God? We are taking geniuses who are anti-God and they are going to help us grow in godliness? We're taking men who rejected Christ and they're going to help us become like Christ? Oh, I think not at all! Not at all!

It is deadly. It is a denial, a total rejection of the truth that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And notice that they are hidden there. They are not lying around any place to be bought for ninety dollars an hour. They are not even tucked into the church bulletin on Sunday, so if you just show up once or twice a month you'll have your list of them. They are hidden in a Person.

They are not hidden there, though, so we can't find them because we are told right where they are. They are hidden there so in order to find them we have to dig into the only place where they can be found. And that is in a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are willing to do that, God is willing to reveal all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that we need for life and godliness, to take Peter's phrase. They are not in a place. They are not in a program. They are not in a procedure. They're not in psychotherapy. They are in a Person. It is critical in the counseling ministry. If we need counseling, we need to dig into a relationship with the Lord Jesus more. If we want to be used as God's counselors, we've got to be digging into and developing a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is critical. There is no other option. Because everything we need is hidden in that person, the Lord Jesus.

Consider the implications of Isaiah 61:1-3, in light of the truth that the Lord is the Counselor.

Isaiah 61:1-3,

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me

To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison *to those who are bound*; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees [or oaks] of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

This is the prophetic Word of the ministry of Messiah. This is how Jesus ministered. This is how our Wonderful Counselor ministered, by the Spirit. And these are ends to which He ministered, good tidings to the poor. That is the Gospel to the spiritually bankrupt and wholeness for the brokenhearted. It is liberty for captives, opening up the binding prison door to those who are in bondage.

Oh my goodness, we are covering now so much territory concerning which people are scrambling for a word of counseling. How many people seeking counsel are sensing spiritual bankruptcy but wanting to hear, “I’m okay; you’re okay.” No, I’m broke; you’re broke! We are the same, but we are not okay. We are needy.

How many are brokenhearted? They need to be made whole. How many are captives, locked in bed, thinking about bad relationships, bad goals and bad values? We can proclaim liberty in the name of the Lord. These are things people are seeking counsel for. They are bound and they need the opening of the prison. They are mourning and they need to be comforted and consoled. Their life is like ashes and they need the beauty of the Lord. They are in great sadness and they need the oil of joy. Their spirits are heavy. God can give them the garment of praise. To what end?—that they may become righteous trees, oaks of righteousness. They may become lives that God plants in the river of life, to the end that He might be glorified.

Tie that in with Isaiah 42:3, another messianic prophecy speaking of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus. It says, “A bruised reed He will not break. And smoking flax He will not quench.” Or that could be translated “a flickering wick, or a dimly burning wick, He will not extinguish.”

What a counselor the Lord Jesus is. A lot of people seeking counsel are like a bruised reed. You know a reed that is not strong, which grows by the river. You bruise it, it just flops over. It has no strength there. Well, the Lord does not break the bruised reed. Often the human counselor can just smash those bruised reeds. Already they are hanging over and a human counselor can come stomping in there, especially a self-righteous, legalistic, letter-of-the-law, religious counselor. He may ask, “Boy, what kind of a reed are you, wimp? Do you think God is happy with that, slouching over there in the middle?” The next thing you know, they are just busted off, totally broken. The Lord does not do that. He does not break the bruised reed. He puts it back together and strengthens it to grow again.

And a smoking flax, or a dimly-burning wick He does not extinguish. So often a person’s life can be just like a little flickering wick. You know, the slightest “phew” would blow it out. And that wick goes to some human counselors who say, “What’s the matter with you?” And “phew”—well, it’s all over. Snuffed out and all hope gone, you know. The Lord doesn’t do that. He just fans that, fuels that little flicker. He brings that flickering wick back to a flame, even back to a blaze. He is a fantastic Counselor. He has power and might and glory and wisdom. But He has sensitivity and tenderness. There is no counselor like the Lord Jesus. Wonderful Counselor, it doesn’t overstate it. It is right on target, just like God always speaks.

Think of this. Put Isaiah 42:3 and 61 together. Isaiah 61:3 says that the Lord our Counselor, who can make us oaks of righteousness. But look what He can take to do it, bruised reeds! Who but our Wonderful Counselor can start out with a bruised reed and far from breaking it, when He's done, can turn it in to an oak of righteousness? It is the planting of the Lord? Who gets the glory for it? "Look, at that tree! I can remember when it was a broken reed! Only God could have done that." Glory be to God! Not glory be to Sigmund. Glory be to God.

Let's look at a few Scriptures now in the New Testament. What we are doing is we are looking at passages with significant implications in light of the fact that the Lord is the Counselor.

Here is our Wonderful Counselor in Matthew 11:28-30,

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. [Why?] For My yoke is easy and My burden
is light.

This is our Wonderful Counselor. Oh, how many people are out seeking a word of counsel? They are laboring so hard. They are so heavy laden that they can't drag their life one more day. And they have already been to twelve different counselors and maybe they are on the edge of bankruptcy. They are really close to healing, though, because their insurance is almost run out, you know. I mean, that is the sad state of affairs.

How about if we short circuit all that procedure? Just learn to come to the Lord Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor. "Come to *Me* all you who labor and are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28). Not just those who are somewhat loaded down, but not too seriously. People always want to say, "Don't you have to send the tough cases to the experts?" Yeah, but the expert is Jesus! Let's send them there. Let's keep sending them there. Let's help them go there.

I know that stirs up a lot of "what abouts?" "What about genetic problems?" "What about chemical imbalances and all that?" We'll get to that. One thing I do hope we believe though, our Wonderful Counselor is able, if willing, and if we seek Him, to even directly heal those things as well. It's not like He can't do that. He can do that too. He does provide in His Word, and we'll look at some of what you might call common grace remedies, provisions. "The rain falls on the just and unjust alike" (Matthew 5:45). You don't have to be righteous to have your garden grow, you know. You don't have to be born again to have an aspirin work. There are some common grace things. And we will see that God's Word is not, and we are not in Counseling God's Way, talking about Christian science, conceptually applied to counseling. No way. You will see we are talking about the difference, along the way, between philosophy and true medical science. One we're forbidden to get caught up in. The other we're free to take it or leave it. Medical science is not forbidden for Christians. And we will show some places in Scripture on that.

Philosophy of man is forbidden. Psychological theory is primarily philosophical. Only in a very limited arena is it actually medical science. And when it's actual medical science that is not what we're warning about in this class. But where it is philosophical in nature, explaining who man is, why he's here, how he got here, what he is made up of inside, how you help him—that is philosophy. I don't care if you call it social science, that doesn't change it by just putting a clinical name on it. It is philosophical to the core and the Scriptures warn us in strong terms not to be influenced by it. How about this? "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Come to the Lord Jesus, our Wonderful Counselor.

John 4:13 is counsel to the thirsty person, spiritually. "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.'" Whoever looks to earthly thirst quenching will thirst again. Apply that in the spiritual arena, the counseling arena. In human counseling, the wisdom is earthly water. It doesn't quench the thirst. It leaves people thirsty.

John 4:13-14,

...Whoever drinks of this water [earthly, physical provision] will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

The Lord is promising here not only to quench our thirst but as we drink, to make that water become a fountain in us. It is not just thirst quenching, but a river flowing.

And that's what John 7:37-38 speaks of.

On the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, 'If anyone thirst let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'

When thirsty people, that is, people with inner spiritual needs and yearnings, when they take them to the Lord Jesus, it's like drinking of Him. Verse 38 says, "He who believes in Me." The one who takes their thirst to Jesus is believing He can meet the need. And he who believes in Jesus, he who comes to Him with those thirsts and needs inside, as the Scripture has said, "out of his heart, out of his innermost being, shall flow rivers of living water." Our Wonderful Counselor cannot only satisfy the inner thirsts of our lives, but He can do it in a way that begins to build up a spiritual reservoir of living water inside, to such a point that it overflows like a river for others to drink from.

Boy, what a way to get counseled and get equipped to counsel at the same time. Bring our thirsts, our spiritual yearnings, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Drink of living water. Let Him quench it with the work of the Spirit.

Keep doing that and that drinking of the Lord by faith—"Lord, I know You can meet this need"—it's like drinking living water. It satisfies inside. It fills us up inside eventually. To such a point that that which God is doing inside begins to pour out on other lives. So, while God is satisfying our thirst, He is preparing us to share living water with those who are thirsty.

I really believe that God's way to handle this arena is so profoundly simple, that everywhere I have ever taught this, sooner or later I have heard people say, "That's too simple!" We'll spend a lot of time on that very issue on down the road. We'll look at some Scripture that warns us not to become "unsimple." It warns us not to complicate it. We'll look at that down the road. Oh, how simple can it be? Are you thirsty? Come to Him and drink.

A lot of people seeking counsel are seeking it because they're thirsty inside. They are dry. They are needy. Again, "Come to Me," Jesus said. Oh, the implications in these verses in light of the fact that the Lord is the Wonderful Counselor!

We won't look at it now because we'll spend much time later in the course on the Jeremiah 2:13 passage. But it spoke of Israel forsaking the fountain of living waters to go out and dig up broken

cisterns that can't hold water. Why forsake the Lord Jesus? He is the fountain of living waters to us now. Why go out looking for worldly systems, cisterns to collect thoughts in to live by? It is polluted water at best. It is not living. And the cisterns are broken anyway, so what is in there keeps leaking out. They have to keep filling up with new ideas. “Yeah, I know that didn't work quite as well, but listen to this...we've added this to it now. We have the new improved 3000th edition of Freud rehashed.” You know, nobody wants to be identified with Freud anymore. He's *passee*. But one way or another, multitudes of wise of this age are still linking into him. It is just new language with just a little twist on it. We'll talk about that too, later on.

John 8:12,

Then Jesus spoke to them again saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’

Look at this in light of the truth that Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor. The one who is *the* Counselor and a wonder of a counselor; there is no one like Him. He is also the light of the world. Again, how many people are seeking a word of counsel because they are staggering around in some measure of darkness?—the darkness of fear, darkness of confusion, darkness of bad habits, darkness of bad thinking and bad values that the world gave them. “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”

People in darkness need to come to the Lord Jesus, who is the light. Let Him shine His light in. If they come to us for help, we want to point them to the Lord Jesus. Let them know, in that darkness in which they sit, He is the light to shine in to drive away the darkness, to cause it to make sense and to give direction. But notice, He gives the light of life not just the light that clears up issues, but a light that is characterized by life. His light brings with it abundant life. As He clarifies things, as He drives away the darkness and it's not just, “Oh, now I understand!” It is, “Now I can live! Now I can believe! Now I can share! Now I can serve! Now I can grow! Now I can live!” It is the light of life. It is not just conceptual understanding that comes to us. It is the light of God that unfolds the life of God to walk in. I love that verse. “I am the light of the world.” He can shine in any corner of the world, in any life in the world and everyone who follows Him. That is what discipleship is, following Jesus. We will look at that a lot next session. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness. Why—because He is the light. And following the light, they get the light of life, the life that is related to eternal life. The light that leads to more living! The light that is characterized by life, not just by mental concepts cleared up. But a light that brings more life. What a Counselor!

John 10:10,

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

Oh my goodness, how many people are out seeking a word of counsel because the thief has been stealing, killing, and destroying? There are so many people seeking counseling just because they have been getting ripped off by the enemy. And most of them don't even know it. They are just looking for some technique, some comforting thought, some justifying excuse, some *thing*. And what has been happening is the enemy has been ripping them off. And as he rips them off, they get motivated to go out and seek help.

Well, he is right there with the referral cards. He knows where to send them. “Hey, come over here. Your problem is you have been getting ripped off. Come over here and we will use some

rip-off theories on you.” The devil’s been hassling you? Let the devil counsel you! That is the way we are doing it today. It is crazy. We’re letting wise men like Freud and Jung and others teach us how to help people. Well, they were totally under the influence of the enemy. The enemy motivated their genius. The enemy gave them ideas to explain man without God. Now the church takes troubled Christians and sends them out there, Christians or maybe just seekers who are getting ripped off by the enemy. He is stealing from them. He is killing them. He is trying to destroy their lives. And we send them off to those who are experts in the rip-off theories of the enemy. What happens? They get in a bigger mess than when they started out. Look at this, “I have come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.”

What is the answer for lives that are getting ripped off by the enemy? Get them to Jesus Christ and help them stay there and grow there and learn there. Because the enemy came to rip them off, steal joy, steal forgiveness and destroy relationships. Jesus came to give life and He wants us to have it abundantly—growing, overflowing joy. It is to be an increasing, broadening, deepening peace, with more and more insight and understanding. It will be a faith that matures year by year, the abundant life. I mean this John 10:10 explains why people need counsel and where to get it. It is amazing how many verses in the Scriptures just wrap it all up in just a few statements.

Then lastly one more verse, John 14:6, Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

Again, how many people are out there seeking counsel, they just want to find a way to make a life or just the way to walk. You know, what is it about? How do you explain this existence? What is the path? Jesus is the way. Follow Him and you will be on the path.

People are out trying to find truth, but no longer are they trying to find *the* truth. They are trying to find *their* truth. And you tell me truth and they go, “Well, that may be true for you, but it is not true for me.” Listen, it is either true or not true, as far as God is concerned. We have forgotten, we have lost the reality of absolute truth. It is truth for you or truth for me. No, if it is God’s truth, that’s what we need. And Jesus is *the* truth, the absolute reality of existence. If you want to know what is real and what isn’t? What matters, what doesn’t? What is genuine and what is phony? Look at Jesus. It’s all sorted out by Him. He is *the* truth. Oh, it’s so great to be able to find the truth. A lot of people in counseling are just finding where the truth is and where to anchor in and just keep finding all they need, their lives are ever after changed in a path of growth.

And lastly—“I am the life.” There are a lot of people out seeking counseling and you get right down to it, they explain, “I’m trying to find a life. I got tired of hearing people say, ‘Go find a life!’ I’m out there finding one, you know.” And a lot of people, whether they say it or not that is what they are trying to do. They are trying to find somebody to help them make a life. They are tired of dying daily. Not the way Paul did and not the way Jesus did, but the way the lifeless do with hopelessness and despair increasing every day. Going nowhere!

Jesus is the life. When we meet Him, He shares His life. Walking with Him, we live the life. Oh, the implications of these “I AM” statements of Jesus in light of the fact that He is also the Wonderful Counselor! The one who is the Counselor is also the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd that came to give abundant life, and He is the way, the truth, and the life and on and on and on it goes!

In conclusion, I have just two quick thoughts. In light of this great truth that anchors what counseling is, that is, the Lord as the Counselor, there are two great implications here. Number one, when you and I need counseling, we need to be looking to the Lord. Second, when others come to us for counseling, we must be pointing them to the Lord. And this is true with or without

instrumentality. Sometimes this will happen alone personally with God. Sometimes it is through the instrumentation of another life. And that is fine. Either way it is still the same truth. When we need counsel we need to be looking to the Lord. When others come to us for a word of counsel we must be pointing them to the Lord. Why?—because the Lord is the Counselor. It is fundamental. It is essential. It is foundational to what counseling is.

Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank You that Your Word has spoken so much on such basic issues of biblical counseling. And Lord Jesus, as our Wonderful Counselor, thank You for reminding us that with the yearnings, the hopes, the dreams, the heartaches, the brokenness, the thirst within, we just need to keep coming to You. Lord, unfold Your vast, sufficient treasures of wisdom and knowledge. May we walk in them, abound in them, and share them with others. And may the Church of Jesus Christ have a wonderful, reviving, reforming turnaround, that You again might be our one-and-only, perfect Counselor. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.