

Counseling God's Way

II. God's Way in Counseling

Lesson 7 - Prayer in Counseling

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

Father, we come again with just untold numbers of reasons to give You thanks and praise. Lord, You are so faithful. You are so merciful. You are so steadfast and reliable, trust worthy, ever true, and Your lovingkindness never ceases and we give You great thanks for that, Lord. Thank You for what You have done in our lives. Thank You for the things You are doing now. Thank You in advance for the wonderful things we know You have ahead. Thank You for the opportunity, again, in this time together to study Your Word. Lord, we know this matter of counseling and doing it Your way is a critical issue in the life of the church anytime, especially in these days when it is under such attack and undermining. And we just come seeking You that we will be a part of a revival, even a reforming, a reformation, a reshaping of the thinking and behaving and ministering of the church of Jesus Christ. So we trust You to even counsel and guide us as we seek You now, and to work by Your Holy Spirit in Jesus' name. Amen.

We now come to the issue of prayer in counseling. This is our third study under the heading of God's Way in Counseling. That is, God's means in counseling, the means that He uses to get His counsel to us. The Lord is the counselor. Well, how does He counsel us? We've already seen that it involves His Word and the Holy Spirit. His Word used by the Holy Spirit in our lives. And that leads us in a spiritually logical, natural way to the third of four means God uses in bringing His counsel to us, and that is prayer.

Since the Holy Spirit must be the One who takes the things of the Word, explaining them to us, unfolding them, applying them, transforming us, and enabling us, then prayer must be involved. The Holy Spirit works in prayerful, humble, seeking hearts.

First of all, we will look at prayer concerning the Word. Then we will look at prayer concerning the Holy Spirit. We are sort of stepping back. The Word is critical in counsel as is prayer, but much of the prayers the Lord wants in our lives are to be in relationship to the Word of God. And then we'll see many of the prayers coming up from our hearts are about the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. So we'll kind of just keep building on the very things we have looked at. Then we'll look at general exhortations to prayer and some prayer examples for counseling in the Scriptures.

First with prayer concerning the Word, the Lord is our counselor and His basic way of course to counsel us is by His Word. But this happens as we prayerfully seek Him concerning His Word. Like Psalm 119:17-19,

Deal bountifully with Your servant, *That* I may live and keep Your Word. Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law. I *am* a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me.

Psalm 119 personally, to me, is a favorite in all of the Word of God as a section of Scripture. It is one of my favorite psalms and Psalms is one of my favorite books. Psalms, the Gospel of John, the Book of Colossians, the Book of Hebrews, Second Corinthians... just to name a few. Oh, but this psalm is so great! You probably know that virtually every verse in this psalm uses a term in reference to the Word of God. And when we're talking about law of God and commandments and all that, we're not talking about law versus grace. These are just general statements about the whole Word of God, just sort of titles of the Word of God. And almost every verse, at least 171 of the 176 verses, mention the Scriptures in them.

Another thing that often is overlooked in reading this book is that the vast majority of the verses in this psalm are, in fact, prayers. Not just statements about the Word, but prayers about the Word. The majority of the verses in this psalm are addressed to God and certainly these are here. This is part of one of the great prayers in the Word of God about the Word of God. "Deal bountifully with Your servant." That's the appeal to God. "Deal bountifully with Your servant that I may live and keep Your Word" (Psalm 119:17).

I like to paraphrase Scripture personally. I like to outline it for my own understanding. It helps me meditate on it and think through it. And I also love to paraphrase verses, especially if I'm either touched by them or perplexed and missing the point. You know, I like to just keep seeking the Lord till I can just rewrite it and not leave any element out of it.

Something like this—a prayer to God, "Work in my life abundantly, so that I may thrive spiritually and be able to live by Your Word." It's a great prayer. And it is a prayer about the Word of God.

The Word of God is critical in the life of one seeking counsel or giving counsel. Well, praying about the Word is very critical. It's in the praying heart that the Word of God goes to work, as the Holy Spirit unfolds it, applies it, convicts, encourages and transforms us.

Psalm 119:18. What a great prayer this is for one who is offering counsel or seeking counsel. See, just looking into the Word is really not enough. God intends more than that. We need God to reveal to us what we're seeing in there. That's the kind of prayer this is. "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Psalm 119:18).

When we go into the Word of God, it is great to do it crying out to God. I just don't like it when I'm in reading the Word and I realize, fifteen, twenty minutes later, half an hour later, I just been reading and trying to grasp it with my own best thinking, or my interest. I kind of realize, "Lord, I just kind of, you know, jumped into this on cruise control. And I know that's not awful, but there's a better way. You know, I just need to start over again here. I really wasn't seeking You. I really wasn't asking You to speak, to open my eyes, or to plow my heart tender and things like that."

Praying in relationship to the Word of God is so critical. It's so right. The Scriptures exemplify it. And since the Word of God is so critical in the counseling ministry, we need to be praying in regard to the Word of God.

I was teaching a men's study, I still remember Nils a dear brother. We were going around, actually taking turns paraphrasing different verses. I remember, I wrote down part of what he paraphrased that night for verse 19. It was something like, "Lord, I'm an alien here. I need Your road map." That is good! "I'm a stranger on the earth. Do not hide Your commandments from me." That's pretty good. I'm an alien. I need Your road map. But it was a prayer and a great way to seek the Lord.

We need to be praying about the Word of God and not just in a perfunctory manner, just sort of well you got to read the Bible, so read it some. Well, I mean, that's a start, but there is more to it than that. We are not just gathering data out of a religious compilation of writings. We are encountering the Author Himself, the Living God, and we want Him to speak to us and talk to us. So this is prayer concerning the Word.

When someone comes to us seeking counsel, we want to be praying in the Word, about the Word, for the counsel we share. We want to encourage them to be praying about the Word and what they are going to hear.

Psalms 119:25-28 has more prayer still addressed to God.

My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your Word. I have declared my ways, and You answered me; Teach me Your statutes. Make me understand the way of Your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works. My soul melts from heaviness. Strengthen me according to Your Word.

Revive me according to Your Word. Strengthen me according to Your Word. This is a phrase that comes up often in Psalm 119—"according to Your Word."

I've got a personal prayer list I've worked on now and then through the years, sort of entitled "According to Your Word." And I write things I find in there that God has said or promised or desires. I just like to turn them into prayers, according to Your Word. There is no safer ground to pray than to pray the Word of God. That is where we know the will of God is expressed. And this is a great arena to pray in and a way to pray. "Revive me according to Your Word. Strengthen me according to Your Word."

People who are seeking counsel need to pray that way. They need reviving. They need strengthening. That's really what they need. And listen, those who are used of God in counseling need to pray this often. Revive me according to Your Word. The counseling ministry is one of the most refreshing and impossible ministries at the same time. One of the most delightful and yet devastating ministries at the same time. It can really wipe you out. Just tear your heart out. "Revive me. Lord, give me life to function in this arena, as Your instrument of counsel. Strengthen me according to Your Word." Oh how we need the strength of the Lord.

But according to Your Word, that phrase at least has a couple of aspects to it and probably much more. But according to Your Word, maybe the most obvious is in line with Your Word. Revive me by the very ways Your Word describes. Strengthen me by the very ways Your Word describes. But also, just a little turn on that—according to Your Word, that is, by the resources of Your Word. Revive me according to Your Word. That is, in accord with what is in there that can give me that new vitality. Strengthen me according to Your Word. Not only in line with what Your Word says about strength and where it comes from and how You give it, but by the very resources of Your Word. You know Job 23:12, Lord, Your word, I need it "...more than my necessary food." Strengthen me by the resources that are in Your Word.

When we're seeking God's counsel in the Word, or giving God's counsel from the Word, we are to do both of these things, by praying concerning the Word of God. Prayer concerning the Word, it's a great arena of prayer. It's very critical for those seeking or giving counsel.

Now prayer concerning the Holy Spirit, why touch on that? Because again the Holy Spirit, we have seen, is so critical to the counseling ministry. The Holy Spirit must be involved in counseling God's way. He must be. No choice here.

Ephesians 6:18 says,

Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

We are to pray at all times. But we're also to pray at all times in the Spirit. This is not talking about praying in a private prayer language. That is one way that some of God's people through the ages have prayed, and some do now. This is bigger than that because it says, pray at all times in the Spirit. Well, there are all kinds of praying modes that God has for us. And not all even have that gift, the Scripture says, so some won't be praying in that specific way ever. But, we're all to pray at all times in the Spirit. So it's bigger than that.

Praying in the Spirit would be praying—whatever way we're praying—praise, thanksgiving, intercession, or in private worship language or whatever else, we're to be praying guided by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, and sustained by the Spirit. This is prayer by the Holy Spirit.

Praying is one of the hardest things man has to do; the flesh just does not gravitate toward it. Why is it that more Christians will show up for a praise concert than a prayer meeting? One is much easier, much more inviting. Now, not that it's wrong to want to go to a praise and worship concert or something like that. That's fine, if it's by the Spirit. But praying is just kind of like death to the flesh. The flesh is dying to make room for the Spirit. The flesh wants to do things, make things happen, or enjoy itself. In prayer you are asking God to make things happen. And you are often praying about things that just become a burden or a hope, but not yet fulfilled. I mean, prayer is a critical part of the warfare for all of us. We must be praying by the Spirit. "Lord, sustain me so seven minutes later I'm not asleep or all prayed up, as they say. Or so distracted that I have to go off and do the twelve things I remembered that I didn't get done the day before."

Pray at all times in the Spirit. Humbly crying out, depending, asking the Spirit of God to guide, strengthen, sustain and focus us.

But not just prayer by the Spirit, but also prayer for the Spirit. Luke 11:9-13,

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he* asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" [Well, of course not.] If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

I think the basic application to this is ultimately, in the fullest sense, to believers. I mean, most unbelievers aren't asking, God, "send Your Holy Spirit to me." They are, crying out, "I'm a sinner. I'm sorry. Please forgive me." You know. Of course the Spirit is sent. But this specifically, ask, seek, knock. And then it closes, you know, if earthly fathers know how to give this to their children, how about the heavenly Father? To whom?—to His children. And a lot of Christians kind of balk at this because they say, "Wait a minute. I'm a Christian. I have the Holy Spirit." Yeah, well it's still addressed, I believe, primarily to the children of the Father. And having the Spirit doesn't mean that we stop asking the Father to send the Spirit in the sense of new ways, new works, and new dimensions in our lives.

Just a little side note, if you want to write in your notes—Ephesians 3:16. This prayer in Luke 11 is kind of like Ephesians 3:16, kind of praying "...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

It's one thing to have the Holy Spirit, but it's another thing to be open to Him working in our lives in all the ways He wants to and can. Praying for the Holy Spirit to be given to us by the Father, say in some new dimension, measure, area, arena, or to some effect or work, is not denying we already have the Spirit. The Person of the Spirit lives in us, yes. As one man said, "Yes, you have the Spirit, but does the Spirit have you?" Yes, you have all of Him. But does He have all of you? It's that kind of an issue. It is a desiring for the Lord to send the Spirit to work in a more full measure in our lives.

And even the Spirit who lives in us can also come upon us. If we were like sponges, standing in the ocean of the Spirit of God, we would be in that ocean of the Spirit. The Spirit would be in us. But at times it's like you need a twenty foot wave of His work to come upon you. You know, to just—whoosh! Thank You, Lord. I needed that. You know sponges get kind of wrung out sometimes, a sense of need there.

That's all that this is about, just sensing a need, a thirst, a desire, a lack, a weakness, an emptiness. Just ask, seek, knock and the beautiful promise is everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds. And to him who knocks it will be opened. You just take it by faith. God keeps His promises and that's how you will know. Just ask and believe and you'll know you will receive and just go on about your business. "I didn't get the same tingles that she did, you know. I didn't jump the way he did. I didn't sound the way they did." So? Do you see anything here about that? No, just the straight out—ask, seek, knock. And everyone who does that, concerning the Spirit, God will work. It's astoundingly simple. Praise God it is!

I love to fight against religious flesh wanting to complicate the things of God, including in the counseling arena. Let's not complicate it with the theoretical guesses in the psychological field of man's theories and all. Let's not complicate it. Let's keep it simple. Jesus is the wonderful Counselor. Let's keep it simple with the Spirit. If we ask, the work of the Spirit will be given. We seek, we'll find. We knock—"Lord, pour out Your Spirit in a fresh new way upon my life"—it shall be opened to you. It will open up and God will work. The consequences, the effects, the timing, the fullness and when and where and how, let God take care of all that. Just keep it simple. That's His choice and He knows far better than we do anyway.

Oh, in the counseling ministry, prayers by the Spirit are important, and prayers for the Spirit. There's hardly any place in ministry that you can pour yourself out more quickly than in counseling ministry. Those in counseling ministry, prayers for the Spirit are very appropriate and wise. In fact, you just won't sustain any other way. Your heart just gets too deeply involved in the impossibilities. Or even the joys, which can also be wonderful, but also can be exhausting. The Lord can even pour out a blessing that we cannot contain. Then what are you going to do? You know, cry out for help. That's the most fun way to get helpless, by blessings that we can't contain.

So ask the Lord to send forth His Spirit upon us in whatever way is needed. Seek His empowering, teaching, guiding, counseling us and helping us to counsel others. Yes, the Holy Spirit lives in every believer. But we can be seeking Him for a new working in us, in measure, or arena, or effect. These are prayers for the Holy Spirit and are very appropriate for those seeking counsel, as well as those giving counsel.

Often folks seeking a word of counsel, if they're just encouraged to seek the Lord for a fresh filling of His Spirit, it's amazing how they get more than they even realized they needed. Counseling is not always just, what's this dilemma you've got? You know, it's not in the 48,000 miles and you just come in there with this great word. Wow! There are moments like that, but not

daily. So much of it is sustaining impossibilities in which people learn to walk by faith instead of by sight. That's more what most counseling is about, you know. There are these little things that you just pull one little thing and the whole thing unravels. Usually if there is one thing to pull, it's something like this. You know, maybe you just need a fresh new filling of the Spirit of God.

There are not many folks whose entire lives are turned in whole proper different directions just like that with one new insight. Most of our lives have so many things coming to bear upon them, and it's just learning often one issue after another, day after another, to walk by faith and not by sight. Walk by the Spirit not by the flesh. Issues like this are critical.

All right now, there are general exhortations to prayer. Remember Luke 18:1, Jesus gave this parable and said—to teach that “men at all times ought to pray and not to faint, or not to lose heart.” So often people seeking a word of counsel are seeking it because they are kind of losing heart. They are fainting. They are discouraged. Many times the big thing is just to remind them again of something they maybe already know. This thing needs to be faced with just ongoing, continual, daily prayer, seeking the Lord, trusting in the Lord and looking to the Lord.

How about those giving the counsel? At all times counselors ought to pray and not to faint. You can lose heart in personal ministry with folks, you know. You can get frustrated with them or at them, or discouraged for them. We ought always to pray and not to lose heart. In fact, every time we get a bit discouraged or fainting or losing heart, you know what one thing about that is? God's allowing that as a reminder to pray. We don't know how to pray as we ought. Well, the Lord, has His ways of teaching us. “Lord, teach me to pray!” And then the Lord lets the circumstances come that give us only one option. And boy, I don't know what this, I don't understand why this doesn't make sense. Well, there's the answer to your prayer. Do you see any reason there to pray? Weren't you asking for an increased prayer life? “Oh, yeah!” Men ought always to pray and not faint.

Here's another one. Philippians 4:6-7 are great verses on prayer. Great application of truth can come from these to the counseling ministry.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Oh, what two powerful verses these are concerning prayer!

Again, many people seeking counsel are driven to find it because of rising anxiety in their lives. A lot of people seeking counsel. The Lord may give us many other things to share with them. Boy, here is a great thing right here, a good place to start. And don't leave it. Encourage them that with that anxiety, that whatever they're anxious about does fit in this category called “be anxious for nothing.” Whatever they are anxious about does qualify here. You know, it's that broad. Be anxious for nothing. “Oh no, but you don't understand. If you understood you'd be anxious with me.” Well, here's the Lord's invitation—“Be anxious for nothing.”

You don't just flip a switch. Oh thank you, anxiety off. I mean, that is not how it works. It is prayer that removes that anxiety. It is talking to the Lord about it. Be anxious for nothing. Everything can be taken to the Lord in a way that the Lord can deal with, diminish, and even remove the anxiety.

Instead of being anxious, what do we do? But in everything—everything that stirs anxiety is to be dealt with through prayer. "In everything through prayer..."

And notice this—Let your requests be made known to God. Sometimes those seeking counsel get trapped in letting their requests be made known to everyone but God. Now there's nothing wrong with sharing our burdens with each other. We're called to that and that's part of the body of Christ. But if that's all we do and we don't realize that we're not even addressing them to the Lord, we're missing the point of what prayer is all about.

When I was pastoring we got into the habit at prayer meetings, when we might sing a few songs of praise and seeking God in worship, just to let the Lord use that to draw our attention on Him and just let us enter His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and enter His courts with praise (Psalm 100:4) in that sort of sense. And then we just often, just go right to prayer. You know, we just let our requests be made known to God. It's interesting, if you're together and letting them be known to God, you end up letting them be known to each other too. But sometimes the other happens and you don't get both. You let them be known to each other, and nobody prays, or there is no time to pray. I guess that's that, okay everybody we've got a thousand requests, you know. And I'm not saying God can't use that at all, but I do think it's too easy to miss this, where we just don't address our requests to the Lord.

And in the counseling ministry this is important. Help people address their concerns to the Lord. We're not the great anxiety removers. God is! A great way we can minister to people in counseling is just help them be reminded and learn to pray about the things they are struggling with.

Now none of this diminishes the place of the Word of God in counseling. All it does is it enhances the fruit of the Word of God. Counseling God's Way has a lot to do with prayer. Oh, the Lord is the centerpiece and right next to that is what He says in His Word.

Psalm 138:2 says, "He has magnified His Word according to all of His name." What He said is just as important, and some translations say "above His name." Either way, what He said is as important to God as His very name, that is, His very character.

How do we enter into all that? It is by prayer, praying about these things. Then we have the peace of God, the calm, the serenity, and the tranquility of heart that is so priceless, so precious, so impossible to manufacture on our own. It surpasses all comprehension, this peace of God (Philippians 4:7). You cannot figure out how there could be peace in the midst of all this, you know. Well, it's because God's at work comforting us and calming us.

And then that peace guards our hearts and minds. Literally, builds a spiritual fortress around our hearts and minds, our feelings, our thinking, our motivations, our desires and our decisions. And this all happens— it will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. That's how God works in our lives. For those who are in Christ, He works in our lives through Christ, through what Jesus has done and can do and what He is to us now and His works for us and His provisions now to us and His life in us. That's always how the Lord works, by Christ Jesus, through Christ Jesus. And this is all entered into by prayer.

Then of course, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." This is a good word for those giving counsel and receiving counsel. If you are getting together with someone, pray before you get together and when you get together, pray. While the other one is sharing, you pray. It is possible to pray and listen. In fact, we'll talk a lot about that toward the end of this course. The

more you listen in counseling, the more you want to pray and when you part from counseling, pray. And while you're apart, pray. Just pray without ceasing. It is tremendous, heavenly methodology for counseling.

This came to my mind, some of the stories through the years that stirred me to study the Word of God on this subject. Troubled Christians out seeking help in the so-called Christian counseling clinics. Way back that didn't seem all that strange. I mean, I guess this is the way it's done, you know. But oh, the horror stories I was hearing and of the perplexities! I wondered why they didn't just come to the church. I guess these clinics are where the experts are.

And then I ask them, "What did you do there?"

"Well, they gave me a bunch of tests, and found out I was phlegmatic or something else."

Self-introspection, I guess is finding out what kind of self should have been crucified, or something like that.

"What else?"

"Well, I did a lot of talking."

"Oh you did. Did you get into the Word?"

"No."

"Well, did you pray together?"

"No."

Boy, I tell you after hundreds of encounters like that I was just starting to think: *What is happening out there?*

Anyone who is in counseling, personal ministry, from the most informal level, to the most formal, maybe a staff person with an office and a schedule—if prayer is not a critical part of their counseling ministry, I know they are not doing it God's way. And I'm not saying I know how to do it all, I'm just saying I know it's not God's way. Prayer is critical to counseling God's way.

And in the Scriptures there are of some what you might call prayer examples for counseling, some great ones. Ephesians 1:17 is a great one, which is a prayer, by the way. A prayer that the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." It is a prayer that God, by His Spirit, would give us the spiritual capacity to know God with wisdom and the unfolding, revealing work of God. It is a profound prayer about getting to know God.

Let's face it, our deepest need throughout life is addressed right here in this verse. You know, people debate, what is a person's greatest need? Well, I think the Scriptures are absolutely forthright on it. Everyone's greatest need is to know God, and then to know Him better. There is nothing that competes with that in priority. Knowing God. A lot of people who are seeking counseling, what they really need is to get back on the track of getting to know God better. What better way to launch that refined path of discipleship again, sharper and refocused, than a prayer like this. A prayer that: "God would give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him," in getting to know Him. Just think about it, there's no heartache, problem, decision or dilemma anyone faces but that cannot be dealt with more, improved, by a greater knowledge of God—who He is, what He is like, what He's done, how He thinks. There's no dream, vision, stirring, opportunity, or the like, but that it would be dealt with and fulfilled and progressed by a greater knowledge of God, who He is, what He likes, how He works, what He can do, what He wants to do. It is through the knowing of the Lord.

This is a great prayer for the counseling ministry, for those giving counsel, and those receiving it.

Colossians 1:9 is another one.

For this reason we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

This great prayer in Colossians is a prayer about the will of God, a prayer to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. Every aspect of our lives permeated by the knowing of God's will. Now think about the application here for the counseling ministry. In fact so many people out seeking a word of counsel, they're saying, "I've got to know the will of God on this matter!" All right, praise God they feel that way. We should feel that way about everything. And that's right on target. Well then, how about praying about it. Sure it's great to share what the Lord has shown us. Sure it's great to be in the Word looking for light and insight, but how about asking God to do this. It is His will that we be fully led, controlled, and overtaken with the knowledge of His will. How about asking Him about that? Do you think He might answer a prayer like that? You know, that's right on target. Talk about asking something according to the will of God, let's be praying for one another that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom. God's wisdom in knowing that will and in spiritual understanding, not just a shallow, carnal kind of "Yeah, I got it. I'll go do it." I mean this is a powerful kind of praying. And how great, how perfectly it fits into the counseling ministry!

Those who are out on a quest for knowing the will of God, here's a great place to start out with them, right here. You want to know the will of God? Well, let's get in the Word and pray about being filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. And if we want to share the will of God with people, let's be praying that our lives will be filled with that will, that we might share it as they seek the Lord.

There are other prayer examples. Just a couple more before we take a break. I just put a few down here. The Scriptures are filled with them. Let's look at Psalm 6:1-3.

Oh Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak. O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled; But You, O LORD-- how long?

Oh, I tell you, the folks through the years that I have prayed that with; I learned to do that by being in that spot myself and crying out to God. Have you ever been in the place where you're thinking, *Oh Lord, how long?* You know that prayer is asked toward God multiple times in the Word of God.

Years ago I research on that. I just started trekking through the Word to find out all the places I could where questions in prayer were addressed to God, "Oh Lord, how long?" You might ask what got me doing something like that? It was because I was asking that of God, day after day after day after day. Then I noticed in here, I can't remember if it was this psalm or some other, but it was like, "Oh man, others have asked this. This is not unique. And then I began searching the Word and I began to think that this is kind of routine, isn't it? I think we all come to those times when we are just crying out, "Oh Lord, how long? My soul is greatly troubled. My bones are just disintegrating. Make me whole. Have mercy on me. I'm so weak I'm falling apart, Lord. I just can't endure this any longer."

Often there are folks seeking counsel and you know where they are? They are actually exactly where this prayer is. And sometimes when I listen to folks in a counseling situation and they're

asking, "How long is this going to keep going on?" How long? I can't take it. It's killing me. It's crushing me. It's driving me into despair. It's impossible!" Listen, God understands that sort of thing. People have been in that spot through the centuries, through the millennia. And they've cried out to God.

The ultimate answer to how long is probably, to paraphrase Galatians 4:4, "In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son." In the fullness of time, when everything was just perfectly arranged where God wanted it that's when He sent forth His Son, the ultimate work of God upon this earth. And that's how He works in our lives too, in the fullness of time. When He has everything just where He wants it, including us, then He sends forth that new work in the name of the Lord. "Oh Lord, how long?" is a great prayer. It is so right and so valid for the counseling ministry.

One more and then we'll stop. Psalm 25:16-20,

Turn yourself to me, and have mercy on me, for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses! Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins. Consider my enemies, for they are many; And they hate me with cruel hatred. Keep my soul, and deliver me; Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.

As we're reading the Word as I believe the Lord wants us to just have delight in His Word, live in it, keep going in it and through it, and letting it go in us and through us. Those with a heart to minister personally to others, personal discipling, one-on-one counseling, it's good to take note of prayers like this, crying out to God when we need to. And then be ready—I mean, this prayer probably fits tonight maybe just across the county, maybe thousands of people that are seeking counsel. I mean, this prayer would just say to God just what they're struggling under, and just what they ought to say to God. It is fantastic way to minister to people. Take them to the prayers of the Word of God that are applicable to people that are hurting and seeking counsel. It's just a way to immediately let the Lord start to work in their life and get them engaged with Him, instead of wrestling with the problem itself.

Prayer in counseling, it's critical. It's just basic to counseling.

In conclusion, counseling God's way is not getting ideas from experts with psychological theories and special human insights to humanity. It's putting our hope in the Lord. It's crying out to the Lord, seeking the Lord, our Wonderful Counselor, through prayer. It's right for us to be looking much to the Lord in prayer, as we seek counsel and as we give counsel.

And another prayer application concerning counseling, I think it's important these days to be praying much for a reviving in the church of counseling God's ways, instead of man's ways.

Let's take a break here and come back and study the next section.