

Counseling God's Way

III. Counselors and Their Equipping

Lesson 8 - Church Life in Counseling

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

This is the fourth area under the heading of God's Way in Counseling, and that is the Church Life. God's four means of getting His counsel to us: His Word, the Holy Spirit, prayer, but all in the setting of church life. We'll see that counseling God's way is not designed to take place in some sterile or secular or even professionalized Christian clinic. It's not designed to take place there. Not saying it can't take place there. Anyone that seeks God anywhere and sticks to His ways, God will work. It may be less than ideal, but we're not saying that God cannot work there. Although so often the way the Christian professional approach to clinic counseling, the way it is done, builds in so many obstacles to God's way, that sadly in some cases, nothing of God takes place. It becomes just the flesh excusing the flesh or feeding the flesh of someone else.

But let's come back the other way. It doesn't mean that God can't work in any of these settings that are not ideally as He ordained. But even if God is working somewhat in a situation that's less than ideal, we don't say, "Hey, perfect, great!" No, we say, praise God for what He's done, but let's all call each other to His more perfect way. And it doesn't condemn everyone out there in the so-called "Mental Health" field or out there in the clinics that are trying to help people. It doesn't condemn them because a lot of them really do want to help people. And a lot of them are very compassionate and lay down their lives for others in many ways. And if they pray at times, if they point to the Lord at times, if they share the Word at times, God's going to honor that.

God is not a Pharisee. "Oh nope, that's not perfect. I won't be working until that's perfect." That's the way man gets. If God were like that none of us would have any ministry. So we want to look over that whole range of what is or isn't happening there and can or can't. The bottom line is that it still doesn't change anything, ultimately. If any of us are doing it less than the way God designed, let's call each other back to the right way. That's all. I'm not saying we all know how to do it perfectly. But if we notice in our own lives that we're off the track, may we be reprov'd or may we be convicted and let God adjust us. If we see others that are off track, even though God is using them in part, we go praise God for what He's doing. Let's all come back to God's way. Let's learn together how to do God's way better. Not just say, "Well, you know, at least there are some good things happening out there. Even so, let's look where God ordained for this sort of ministry to take place. And He ordained for it to take place in church life, as a regular, normal part of member to member, one another relationships and ministry. That's where God ordained it.

Let's be reminded further, just briefly by way of introduction to Ephesians 1:22-23, of the heavenly picture of the church. And then we'll look at a passage that is a picture of church life, living together.

And He put all *things* under His feet [He, the Father put all things under Jesus' feet] and gave Him [Jesus] *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Some of the things we touch on in this study are elaborated on at length in one of the other studies that we often do called, "The Church, How Jesus Builds It," that a lot of us went through together. But it has critical implications to the counseling ministry.

God "put all things under His feet and gave Jesus to be head over all things to the church"—including the counseling ministry, both those who counsel and those who seek

it. Jesus is head over all that; He is head over all things to the church, "which is His body." It is a living, spiritual organism, not a dead religious organization. It is certainly not a psychologized religious organization. Which is His body—a living, spiritual organism, that lives by the life of Christ the head. His body, the church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The church can be called, rightly understood, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Remember, Colossians 3:11 says that Jesus is to be "all in all." The One who is all lives in all of us and we're to let Him be that. And the more we are looking to Him that way the more the practical reality of it is true that the church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. The One who is the fullness and had the fullness and lives in all of us, that's what the church is to be. To put it another way, the church is to be filled with Jesus. And then the church can live as the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Don't you see the implications there for the counseling ministry? The Head is the Wonderful Counselor, who is to be all in all of His body. Wow, let's just let Him be that. Let Him be all that the Wonderful Counselor is to be in all of us. And let it happen in the body, which is where it's ordained to take place.

This New Testament truth is all lived out, primarily and basically, in the individual local churches, each a microcosm you might say, of the whole. Each is a little reflection of the whole church, the body of Christ.

So that's by way of introduction, just to have our thinking in the right direction. This is the spiritual reality behind, the setting in which, counseling God's way is to take place. All the rest now will elaborate on that.

Let's look at a picture of church life, that is, body life. Colossians 3:12-17, is a beautiful snapshot, spiritually speaking, of what life together in the church is to be. How it ought to be and can be as we allow the Lord to live among us.

Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection—[that work of God that just binds us together]. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

What a picture of church life. It is obviously church life, just terminology here for the elect of God, holy, beloved, forgiven, and it is relating one to another.

Verse 12, as those who "put on a heart of..." is speaking of those who are the elect; as the elect, put on this kind of heart. Ask God to work in us to walk this way in light of who we are—God's people—let's ask God to produce this kind of life among us. May we have hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience with each other.

Verse 13, "...bearing with one another..." Putting up with each other and forgiving each other. How? Like the Lord forgave.

Verse 14 then, "...above all these things, put on love." Live by the love of God which is the bond of perfection. It is the love of God that perfectly binds us together. It is His truth, we are to stand on. His love then binds us together upon that truth.

Verse 15, "...allow the peace of God rule in your hearts." Literally, the word would mean function as an arbiter or umpire. Let the love of God be the umpire between us. You know, the one ruling how we relate to each other. When you get those attitudes and the love of God goes, you're out of here. That's out of line. That's a foul ball, you know. That's no good. The love of God is toning and shaping how we are to treat each other.

Verse 16, is also allowing the Word of God to have a major place in our life together. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." There is a lot of room in each of our lives and among all of us. Then "...teaching and admonishing one another" and doing it with wisdom. And we are doing it sometimes through "...psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Boy, sounds pretty good, doesn't it? I'd like to just see every church like that. Well, that is what the potential is. That is what's there for us to walk in.

Verse 17, "And whatever you do [all of church life] in word or deed, [words or actions] *do* it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Thanksgiving appears here, I think, three times in this section as God's people are living together in gratitude. God is so good! We are to be doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is, under His authority, according to His will, as His representatives, for His glory, by His resources! These are all related to someone's name—doing it in His name, under His authority, according to His will, as His representatives, for His glory, using His resources. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

That's a picture of church life, body life. That's how the church is to relate to God and to each other. Boy, the more a church is like that, the more glorious it is! The less it's like that the more agonizing, the more humanistic. I mean, this is a glorious comprehensive picture, of life together as the church. This would be a great thing to pray for all of our churches. "Lord, just make our churches like this!" Wow! That's what God has in mind. That's what He can do.

Then Colossians 2:19, related to this church life, is speaking of people who are not holding fast to the head. They were off base. This was wrong. We need to be holding fast to the head, "...from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase [that is] from God." They are holding fast to the head, abiding in Christ, looking unto Jesus, staying in close fellowship and walking with dependence in Him. From whom the entire body—every member of the body, every one of us, finding in the head, receiving from the head all that we need and what we need to pass on to the rest of the body.

Then we get nourished and knit together we are nurtured and are given from Christ things to release and share with others. We are held together, knit together, strengthened together, built together by joints and ligaments. Joints being the relationships of member

to member, functioning together like members of the body do in their joints. The ligaments are the strong love bonds that hold those joints in place.

We can be enabled by the love of God and the work of the Spirit among us and holding fast to the head and ministering to each other, to have the joints of relationships in the body of Christ, member relating to member, creating a joint. Just like members of the physical body, create a joint in their relationship and work together. We can see spiritual joints created and held together by ligaments.

It's sad the trivial things that pop one Christian out of joint with the other. It seems like sometimes it takes almost no pressure. I guess you could say, to get someone's nose out of joint in the body of Christ. It doesn't have to be that way. We can let the head, as we draw from Him, ministering to each other, build strong ligaments. Just like in the physical body. If there were not strong ligaments, any little pressure, movement, change, just pop that joint out to where it would be unusable. And that relationship between those two members would be gone. They could not function together. It doesn't have to be that way. The spiritual body of Christ can be like the physical body, which is the language used here. God has created the physical body with joints and then ligaments that grow in there tight and hold those joints together, so that one member can stay functioning with another member, even under great pressure. They just stay related.

Of course the ligaments in the spiritual body of Christ are strongly developed bonds of love. So, even as pressure comes, a tough day, a bad word, a harsh attitude, we don't get disjointed. I hope I see you again talking to that person, hugging that person, praying for that person, you know. We don't have to get popped out of joint. And that's the setting in which we are to live together. And that's the setting we are going to see in a moment, in which God has ordained counseling to take place. It is to be such an alive, fertile, living relational setting and not some cold, sterile clinic somewhere. And especially we are not to be drawing on some theories of godless geniuses. This is where God intended for it to take place, in the body where there's life and Him and relationship. That's where God does what He wants to do.

Colossians 2:19, then the body grows with the increase that is from God, a qualitative growth, a discipling growth, and a counseling growth, which is from God's divine activity. We want to see counseling grow and flourish in the church. Here's the setting. Let it come from a growth that is from God. God the Son allowed to be the Wonderful Counselor. And using us in our joints, member to member, joint relationships, bound in ligaments of love and counseling one another.

Ephesians 4:15-16 gives us the same kind of picture;

But speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

God's truth, God's love, oh they're critical in counseling ministry and that's how we minister to one another, speaking truth in love. Not compromising truth, but not being unloving as we share it. Truth shared desiring God's best for the other person. It is truth in love, compassion and concern. This is the context in which God wants to work. Then

we “grow up and mature unto Christ-likeness into all things into Him who is the head, even Christ.”

Then that picture of drawing what we need from Christ, ministering it in relationships and joints. And then out of those ministry relationships, supplying the things of God out to serve and minister to others as we all, every one, doing their part. That's God's will. This is a picture of church life: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, truth and love of God, teaching, admonishing in God's wisdom, and thankfulness, holding fast to the head, doing everything in His name. This is the entire church is participating and growing relationships, supplying God's resources one to another. This is a picture of God at work among His people as they relate to each other.

Now in the midst of that, we have noticed there are “one another” relationships. Let's look at one another ministry in the church and we're going to see that one of the strategic ones is counseling one another.

Colossians 3:13, “...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.”

One another ministries is hanging in there with each other, mutually each with the other. It is forgiving each other and not holding grudges.

Then Colossians 3:16 where we want to land a little while; “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.” There are many ways to do that. Other Scriptures speak of here, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. But the phrase that appears a number of times is “admonishing one another.” We could study it in other passages. The reason we want to study it here is that it is right in the middle of church life. It's right in this classic picture of the church living together as the church under the head, relating to each other.

“Admonishing one another” is one of those two key New Testament Greek words that can be translated “counseling one another.” This is the word *noutheteo*, from which Dr. Jay Adams coined the phrase “nouthetic counseling.” Dr. Adams is not only a gifted counselor, but he's a very gifted Biblical linguist. He loves studying the Bible languages. He couldn't find an English word that he thought captured this Greek word *noutheteo*, in the noun form. He just coined an English word *nouthetic*. He just transposed, transliterated the Greek to English and then that gives you a new word and then you define it. That's how we get all our words anyway. And I think that was wise of him.

Nouthetic counseling has to do with warning. It is putting something in mind with sort of a challenge in it. It is confronting people with the truth of the Word of God. See, some know who the confronters are. In fact they call Dr. Adams the consummate confronter. I've had some wonderful interactions with Dr. Adams through the last few years and I tell you I love him, he's a dear man.

But counsel by confrontation, this very word is in a number of versions—Revised Standard, Amplified, Williams New Testament, and others—at different places they translate this word “counseling” or “counsel one another.” It's that kind of word. It's strategic to understanding New Testament counseling. Seeing what it's used in and what it means and how it's applied. And this word shows up right here in Colossians 3, a picture of church life. Part of church life is to be counseling one another.

See, counseling God's way is a "one another" ministry, by admonishing one another, confronting one another and warning one another.

Now, it's not all confrontation. Another word that we've seen and we'll see again. We saw it with the Holy Spirit. The Comforter, The *Paraclete* or *Paracaleo*, that's the other New Testament Greek word that many versions translate as counselor or counseling. It is a completely different word. It's not, truth of God right up, as they say, in your face. In other words, you see where you are and you see what God says. You must yield to what God says. And that's an important part of the counseling ministry. I must confess it's not my favorite part. Though I've gotten more bold through the years and I see how critical it is.

We can't counsel just, you might say by personality. We've got to counsel by the Word of God. And there are times when it's critical to bring that truth right up in front of someone. See where you are? See what God's Word says? Don't you see the implications? Where you are has to change. If they say, "Oh yeah, I want to, but I can't," well then you start ministering the grace of God to them. But the rebellious, the disobedient, the self-sufficient, the stiff-necked, they need counsel by confrontation.

See what God says. See where you are. That's wrong! God's right. There's got to be change. And if they stay willful, then more confrontation is needed and maybe heavier doses of it. Not out of cruelty and not out of self-righteousness, but for their sake and for the glory of God that they might be accountable and see the consequences and might be humbled. Then you pour out the *parakaleo*, the *paraklete* counsel. This is that other word that can be translated counseling or counselor, which is called alongside to help. It is standing beside with the arm around on another. Comforter. And boy, you can even in one counseling session go from confrontation to comfort when the law that convicts and exposes the sin, the rebellion, the wrong. And if the heart is humble and melts and wants help, well, you're just right there beside them with the comfort of God, that *paraklete* ministry. "Oh brother, you know how God feels about your broken heart? He loves a contrite spirit. You know how He feels about your humility? He gives grace to the humble. You're in a super place, you know. You're right where God's going to do big things." And you just encourage them.

And that's kind of a little capsule view of New Testament counsel. It's all either going to be confrontation or comfort or measures of each depending on where that person is. Our desire, of course, is that they can learn to live by the comfort, encouragement and grace of God. That's the goal that they need to be confronted less and less and less, because they're softer and softer toward God and His will, seeking more of His help and His way. And by the grace of God they're enabled to walk in godliness. That's really New Testament counseling in a nutshell, in those two words.

But it's a one another ministry, admonishing one another. Counseling one another means I can counsel you and you can counsel me. This is brother to this brother. This is sister to this sister. It's not, let's all go off and find the experts. Instead it's let's ministering one to another in the setting where the body is all connected and they're all under the Head drawing what they need. See, that's the dynamic. That's where all the resources are. That's God's ideal.

Now again, it is not that God is handcuffed, when people try to operate a little bit differently. It's just they're already building in factors that diminish the work of God. It's not that they're awful people always. And it's not that nothing ever happens from God. Not at all! God is merciful. He honors His name. He honors His Word. He honors prayer. He honors love and compassion. But this is what He ordained for us to do. And in counseling God's way, that's what we're aiming at. Discover how God arranged it and then let's learn together how to walk in it. And Colossians 3 is a classic passage to that extent.

There are a lot of other "one another" ministries that are greatly adaptable also to the one another counseling ministry.

A little side note before we get into that. The question often comes up, "Yeah, this is great to help each other with the resources of God, you can see great things can happen there, but how about the tough cases, the difficult cases and all that? Don't we have to find the experts and refer them?" Well, we're headed just that way. We'll be there in our next couple studies. God hasn't overlooked that either. God has a plan and a way and it's right in the Word of God, where He raises up experts in the body. And we'll look at that over the next couple studies, when we move to the next section called "Counselors and Their Equipping: Who should do it and how do they get equipped to do it?" It follows up on this session.

But let's stay now just at the "one another" level, ministering one to another. That's what counseling is to be as God has ordained it. A lot of the one another ministries are so applicable to the counseling ministry.

Romans 15:7, receiving one another,

Therefore receive one another [or accept one another], just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

People who are like this, who accept others and receive other people into their lives, willing to develop relationships, they're the ones who will see their counseling ministry enhanced. As opposed to being stand-offish, that kind of an attitude does not develop a healthy counseling ministry. But those who accept and receive one another and want to make room in their lives for others in the family of God, of course that enhances one another ministry and that's right where counseling takes place.

Galatians 6:2. "Bear one another's burdens." Those who are willing to get under the load in love and prayer and help burdened folks cast those cares over on the Lord, that aspect of one another ministry will enhance and multiply the personal counseling ministry.

First Thessalonians 5:11, "encourage one another." Building one another up is so adaptable to enhancing the counseling ministry.

Hebrews 10:23-25. We are to be "motivating, stimulating and provoking one another to love and good deeds. Not forsaking the assembling together." Those with that kind of heart, will see their counseling ministry, personally, even informally can just multiply and flourish and grow.

And then this last one, really the ultimate one. First John 4:7. "Beloved, let us love one another." Verse 12, "...if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us." This is the ultimate ministry one to another. All of the other ministries are caught up in this. Just loving one another, and pouring out God's love on each other. Desiring God's best for each other and being willing to be a part of seeing it happen, see this is loving one another.

This is the way God ordained counseling to take place. And this is where I see, again, this approach of man is a real intrusion into the plan of God. Counseling God's way was not designed for the professional clinic outside the church. Again, I am not saying God is handcuffed out there. I'm just saying it wasn't arranged to take place like that, so it automatically has some built-in obstructions to the plan of God.

And again, it's not that those who are out there in that clinic are awful people. Though, I tell you, I always understate this. I have seen and received testimony and even documentation of unbelievable horror stories too. They stoop to manipulating, conniving, money grabbing, scheming, dishonesty, manipulation, domination, all in the name of professionalism with a Christian flair to it. So I want to be honest and as accurate as the Lord would show me how to be in this whole spectrum. This is not some blanket condemnation of everyone out there trying to help people. There are some wonderful people out there counseling, I think in less than the best place, but they are trying with all their being to do the best they can to help hurting people. I don't condemn them for that. I praise God for the sacrifice and the compassion and the selflessness of a lot of them.

But I still would say to them, "Hey, come on. There's a better way. Come on and do that in the midst of church life, where we're all drawing from the Head and relating to each other and really know each other and where we aren't charging each other. There's a better way."

"Yeah, but it's my profession."

"Well, let it just be your calling in ministry. Who knows if you're really gifted of God—and this kind of gets into our studies coming up—it may become your full-time ministry right in the church. But either way, let's just, let's do it God's way. You know, there's a better way, that's all."

Indeed some out there are, are vicious wolves in counselor's clothing. And be alert to that. You might have friends shopping around out there for counseling. Just alert them that it's not all what it looks like. That everyone in the Christian clinic operation isn't just kind of a Christian a little off base that God's using somewhat, maybe. I know people who've been chewed on and spit out in some of situations, spit out when the insurance runs out is usually the way it works. Which is a tragedy and that danger isn't built into church life. In a lot of that clinical systems, it is built in. "Hey, we can help you as long as the insurance covers it." This is often only fourteen days to eighteen days, more or less, depending on the company, the policy and what diagnosis they were willing to accept. But we'll touch on a lot of all that stuff down the road.

The point here is this is how God ordained it, in church life. How does God get His counsel to us? Through the Word, by the work of His Spirit, in prayerful seeking hearts, all in the context of church life, of God's people sharing the love of God, the life of God, through the relationships that God develops with the love of God. I mean, that is such a pulsating place of potentiality, you know, spiritually speaking. And in the midst of that, God wants us counseling each other. That's where we should expect miracles of

counseling to take place. And too often we think, "Well, I don't have the training. I don't have the answers. I don't have the degree." Well, who said you needed that? Here's what we need [the Bible] and if we walk in it, and many are praise God! Many haven't been sucked into the way of man. And some who have been sucked into that, they have been sort of convulsively spewed out! They just can't take it anymore and they say, "Oh that is not what God has said. And many are finding that just what God said is available.

Let's be praying that God would use us that way more and more and touch His church as well.

Lord, thank You for speaking to us through Your Word. Thank You that You have addressed these issues in the most profound measures. May we see, hear, receive, believe, be guided, adjusted, committed, convicted, and be a part of what You want to do to develop counseling Your way, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.