

Counseling God's Way

III. Counselors and Their Equipping

Lesson 9 - Who Is to Do Counseling

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

Lord, we give You thanks again for bringing us to Yourself. We're so grateful, Lord. Just one thought of where we used to be, how far off we were from You, how dead, how totally into self, and Lord You called us out of darkness into light and out of our lifelessness into Christ. And You've been a wonderful Shepherd and Lord and Master and Counselor to us. We just give You great thanks, Lord, for all You've done in our lives; the things You're doing these days; the things You have ahead between now and Your return. Lord, You can do many things even in just a day or a week or a year. And we ask You to minister to us tonight in a way that will build Your church that we might serve and glorify You. Lord, we're burdened that there is an enormous need to see the counseling ministry of the church come back to You and to Your ways. And we ask You to do that work in our lives and make us a part of that transformation, that reformation in the church. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Counselors and their Equipping

Study number nine is the first lesson in the third section of our course entitled, “Counselors and Their Equipping.” The first section was “What Counseling Is.” And we saw that that is the Lord as Counselor counseling unto discipleship and sanctification. The second section, “God’s Way in Counseling,” that is the means He uses. It is fourfold: His Word, by the Spirit, in praying hearts, all in the setting of church life through ministering one to another. Now we build on that last section of church life a little bit in a third portion of the course called “Counselors and Their Equipping,” where we’ll spend three or four different units of study.

In this arena of counselors and their equipping, first we ask: Who is to do counseling? Well, as the outline indicates, I think the Biblical pattern is that every believer in general is to do counseling. The next heading indicates particularly those who are gifted in counseling. Furthermore, especially those who have these characteristics of spiritual life developing in their lives as listed here.

Who is to do counseling?

Now we’ll notice along the way, too, how the Biblical truths here speak contrary to this general trend of thinking that only experts can do the counseling. And usually by experts what people mean, in this day in age, even in the church—the “experts” are those who have the human insights given by man’s theories on what makes man tick inside. And so, the church is all into the theories of Freud and the theories of Carl Jung and the theories of Abraham Maslow and Alfred Adler and Erickson and the list just goes on and on and on of men taking guesses about what is going on inside, where only God can see. But those are the “experts,” supposedly.

Not so according to the Word of God. And we’ll see that God ordains every believer in general to be involved in the counseling ministry. Yes, to a different extent and with different effects or consequences, sure, depending on gift and calling and many other factors. But the basic issue regarding who is to do counseling is that every believer in general should. And we find that taught many places in the Word of God and one of the very strong statements on that is found in Romans 15:14,

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

This is addressed to the brethren, “You, my brethren.” God is speaking through the apostle Paul to the church at Rome, in other words to the family of God. He is speaking to a given church and by implication and application, the family of God, the church of Jesus Christ, or any local church anywhere. Not some select few, but “you, my brethren.” The family of God is being addressed here. “You are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge.”

Now to put that in a Biblical context, remember in the Scriptures there's always the immediate context that gives light and insight on what is being said. And then there's the context of the book in which you find a passage. But there's always a bigger context: the whole Word of God. And there's even a bigger context than that, and that is, the very person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and His being, which is even bigger than the Scriptures itself. And God and His character and His work revealed in the Word and then it is brought down to a statement like this.

Boy, this is a big statement. Jesus said, “None is good but God alone” (Mark 10:18). So if anyone is full of goodness, where must it be coming from? God alone! It's nothing about them. It's not that they have just sort of arrived. Or generally speaking, people aren't too good, but God selected those prizes and here we are. I don't think so! It's not possible. We know by our own experience it can't be that. But far beyond that, by the Word of God, none is good but God alone. And yet it can be said that believers are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge. That's in the context of this book and even in the whole Word of God. We brought in some of the other portions of the Word of God; “No one is good but God alone” (Mark 10:18). “...Christ in you [us] the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). The good things in our lives are all related to the fact that Christ lives in us.

But let's just take this in the context of the book of Romans. Fourteen and a half chapters revealed the plan and purposes and work of God for man. Starting off with the Gospel in chapter one and God's righteousness and His judgment for unrighteousness in end of chapter one, going on into chapter two. And then it getting into justification in chapters three and four. There is some more about justification in chapter five. And then sanctification is covered in Romans chapters six, seven, and eight. And the promise of glorification and union with Christ is in Romans six. Romans twelve, minds renewed by the truth of the Word of God. That is the context. A believer must be drawing on that, living by that, counting on that to the extent that it becomes their context for Christian thinking and living. Here's the fact: “...you, my brethren that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge” (Romans 15:14).

These resources of God can bring God's goodness to fill our lives and fill us with the knowledge of the Lord. And on that basis, we are able also to admonish one another.

“Able to admonish,” the Williams translation translates that phrase *competent to counsel*. It's the very verse from which Dr. Jay Adams got the title of his classic book on Biblical counseling that he wrote. It was one of the early wake-up calls to the church to get back to the Lord Jesus Christ and back to the Word of God. This is where he got the title for his book by that name, *Competent to Counsel*. He just took that phrase right out of the Williams New Testament translation.

We are competent to counsel, competent through Christ, through His Spirit, His truth, His resources provided as described in these fourteen and a half chapters of Romans. That's where our competency comes from.

Why competent to counsel? This word is translated *admonish* in many versions. It's a term we've already come across. *Noutheteo* is where Dr. Adams coined the American word—he created a new word in the English language, *nouthetic*. He just transliterated Greek characters into English.

He couldn't find a good English word that said what he felt that Greek word said. And he's a very outstanding Biblical linguist. He's not just a counselor and quite good in Bible languages. And he couldn't find a real good English word, so he made an English word and defined it, which is basically how we get all of our words anyway. And when people talk about nouthetic counseling, this is the word from whence it came. It is counsel by confrontation. Counsel by bringing the truth of the Word of God right up before someone where they're held accountable to what it has to say.

Competent to counsel or it is able to admonish. Competent to counsel is being able to be an instrument in the hands of the Wonderful Counselor. For us to counsel one another we can really only do it right if we're an instrument in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is the Wonderful Counselor. Don't forget the anchor point in our entire study. When we talk about people counseling in the church, it anchors back in the truth that—“...His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor...” (Isaiah 9:6). If a person is an instrument in the hands of the Wonderful Counselor, sharing His counsel, then they're doing Biblical counseling to that degree. It's not that they are the counselor really. It's that they are the instrument that the Wonderful Counselor is using.

We are competent to counsel through Christ, His Spirit, and His truth, there's a competency there. And counseling, admonishing, bring truth before people's lives as the Wonderful Counselor leads and guides us to do it.

Remember again, the counseling ministry is a “one another” ministry in the church. There is no more all-inclusive, comprehensive, every-child-of-God phrase in the Scriptures than “one another.” Everyone can minister to each other. It's totally universal, comprehensive, and there is absolute mutuality in it. No one is excluded. There is total reciprocity, one to the other, just all over the whole body. It's a beautiful phrase. And it's tied a number of times in the Scripture to the counseling ministry.

So who is to counsel? Every believer in general.

One of the ways that this can be done can be seen in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. This is not the only way every believer can be involved in the counseling ministry, but here is a classic example:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble [or any tribulation], with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

This is a powerful look at personal “one another” counseling ministry. One of the ways every believer can do it. Not the only way, but a very profound way.

The God of all comfort, the Lord is called here. All true comfort, if it's real comfort, genuine comfort, must be of God. To comfort, that is to ease someone's pain, lessen or lighten their difficulty and their load, as well as strengthen and encourage them. All true comfort must be of God because He is the God of all comfort.

There is a lot of humanistic, philosophical comfort, you know. Whistling by the graveyard...great comfort. I'm sure that scares the enemy away! Or the other side of it saying, “every cloud has a silver lining,” as the storm is blowing. What comfort? It is not very good comfort really.

All real comfort should come from God. He is the God of all comfort. He has all kinds of comfort to give us. Think through the years that you've walked with the Lord, how many times He has comforted you or eased the pain, lessened the difficulty, strengthened, encouraged, and sustained us through things? He is the God of all comfort and we haven't exhausted His comfort or even the varieties of the kinds we yet need and will get.

The God of all comfort is who comforts us in all our afflictions. There is no affliction, no tribulation, no trouble that God does not have comfort to provide for us. He comforts us in all our tribulations, if we'll turn to Him for comfort. There is no tribulation that He does not have comfort for us.

Back to another familiar term, comforts us. It's the other New Testament Greek word that can be translated counselor or counseling. One was *neutheteo*, *nouthetic*. This is *parakaleo* or *paraklete*, meaning to come alongside to help. This is counsel by comfort, not by confrontation. That's why so often versions translate this word comfort. But it's a word that some versions, in some places just translate counsel. But it has the flavor of a comforting counsel and not a two tablets of stone in your face. Though there is a place for that for the rebellious, for the hard hearted. But this is the arm of the Holy Spirit around your shoulder. The *paraklete* called alongside to help. This is I'm with you, I'm for you. God is for us, not against us. And the humble heart can enjoy that rest and live by that, counting on that.

Now God comforts us. This God of all comfort, our God, who has every measure of comfort needed and is the source of all true comfort, He comforts us in any trouble so that we might be able to comfort those who are in any trouble or affliction. How? “[It is with the same] comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” 2 Corinthians 1:4. God not only comforts us because He loves to share comfort, because He has a loving heart and He does it so that we can pass that comfort on to others. It's not just to meet our needs, though He loves to meet our needs like that. But it's bigger than that. When God comforts us in our trouble, part of it is He's equipping us to pass on that comfort to somebody else. And in a world like we live in, there are millions of opportunities everywhere you look there are people who need comfort. There are people who are really hurting, discouraged, in despair, stressed out, striving, condemned, guilty, fearful, weary, and worn out. Boy, a little comfort can go a long way in ministering to someone. And we can minister the comfort of God to people.

Sometimes folks say, “I don't know how to comfort that person. I've never been through what they're going through.” Well, notice this verse tells you, you don't have to know what they're going through to comfort them. Do you see that? The God of all comfort comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble. Any trouble! How do you do that if you've never been through what they've been through? It is with the same comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. Just share with them how God comforted you in your need. That's all. It doesn't have to be precisely the same situation. All they need to know is it's the same God, the God of all comfort. And let me give you an example of how He works and how you share how He works because He's the God of all comfort, so He can do for them what He did for you.

This is the counseling ministry in action in just the broadest, most basic picture possible. And yet this is a powerful ministry. This is not just a kind of fill in stuff until the heavy hitters come along. I mean, this is heart-touching, life-changing ministry. You find someone who needs comfort and just start to share with them the comfort that you've already found. Because if you've walked with the Lord over a week or two you've probably already needed to be comforted, unless you had an unusually long honeymoon with the Lord or just glory hallelujah

and your feet didn't even touch the ground for a couple months. But sooner or later all of the children of God need comfort. And so, you've been comforted by God and all around us are people who need to be comforted. What a fantastic way to minister. Just be on the alert, watching out for people who need to be comforted. And no matter what they're going through, don't disqualify yourself.

Too many Christians either disqualify themselves or let the enemy disqualify them. Or the world, with all its systems and all of its degrees, [snap] like that—ooh, look at that problem. Oh man. You're going to have to have at least two or three degrees to deal with that one. There is this person just tormented in affliction, needing comfort, and we're looking for an expert for them, when we could go right to that person and just begin to tell them that God loves them. You're concerned of the heartache we see and we've had heartaches too. “Let me tell you what God did for me once. He's a God of all comfort. Let me tell you how He comforted me once. I know He can comfort you.” I mean, that's powerful ministry and it's so simple!

We all can do this. We are called to it. We just comfort people with the same comfort with which we ourselves our comforted by God. It's again pointing people to the Wonderful Counselor and letting the Holy Spirit go to work, whose name is Comforter. Sure, the Spirit convicts of sin and righteousness and judgment. Praise God for that ministry. But He's also the Comforter for the afflicted.

Someone once said their ministry was two-fold? Comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable, or something like that. There is a lot of truth in that, you know. That's grabs a lot of Biblical truth. All believers are able, through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the work of the Spirit, to do such counseling ministry and much, much more than that, not only that but more.

Who is to counsel? Who is to do counseling? Every believer in general is to counsel and furthermore, particularly those gifted in counseling. Everyone, no matter what their gift, whatever their calling, can be involved in the kind of counseling ministry we just looked at in 2 Corinthians 1:2, 4 but particularly those who should do counseling are those who are spiritually gifted in counseling. I'm not talking about just some human skill, but spiritually gifted.

Romans 12:6, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...” Context here—the subject is spiritual gifts.

You know the spiritual gifts are God's grace imparted to us. They're not just some special knack. It's the grace of God enabling us to function in a certain way. You see it right here. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Spiritual gifts are grace imparted to us enabling us to function in a specified way, characteristically, especially.

In fact the word *charismata*, translated most often in the New Testament as *spiritual gifts*, from which the English word “charismatic,” especially religiously speaking. Sometimes it's spiritual; sometimes it's just religious depending on what's going on. You know, if it's charisma you know it's just religious. If it's true charismatic, it means it's just spiritual gifting by the grace of God to function in special ways.

But the word for grace is *charis*. It's the very core of the word *charismata* which means spiritual gifts. It's all about the grace of God. It's not just a knack to do something. It's God's grace imparted in sort of a special way, a charismatic way. It causes one to function best and most and most effectively this way and another one this way. And that's their gift. Every Christian is to function beyond their gift. We're all called to arenas of ministry where we don't have spiritual

gift. But we might have one or two or three spiritual gifts where our ministry gets emphasized and characterized by that. You know, we're all to have faith. Well some have the gift of wonder-working faith, you know. We're all to give. Some have the spiritual gift of giving. We're all to help each other. But some have the gift of helps, you know. It just sets them apart as what they're all about, really. So that's the subject here, now let's apply it to our study right now.

Romans 12:8, “...he who exhorts, in exhortation.” This is the same word *exhortation* here, as in 2 Corinthians 1 that spoke of comfort, exhorter, comforter, encourager, or counselor. You could translate it any of those ways. This would include the spiritual gift of counseling. All of us are called to counsel to some degree or another. Some people are spiritually gifted at it. The special way the grace of God works in their lives characteristically is, they're enabled by God, given a heart for, and a spiritual ability to counsel other people. And those people, particularly, are the ones who should be doing counseling in the body of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4, to carry this issue a little bit further there are diversities of gifts. So we're talking again about spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:7, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” The manifestation of the Spirit is another way to speak about spiritual gifts. The manifestation, the open demonstration of the Spirit of God at work in that person's life is another way to describe their special gift. It is given to each one, every believer having at least one. We are having gifts for the profit of all. Not for personal advantage or gain, but to serve others.

And on this list of gifts there's some interesting gifts mentioned here. 1 Corinthians 12:8-9,

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit...gifts of healings by the same Spirit.

Just to pick those gifts out for an example, some Christians have the spiritual gift of counseling. And we're going to talk in a while about the answer to the question, “Don't you have to send some people who need counseling to the experts sometimes?” Yes! As long as we know who the experts are. We're not talking about man's experts. God has built in experts in His plan for the church. It's built in to calling, gifting, training, enabling. God has a plan to raise up experts. It's built right into the Word of God and life of the church.

We've been referring people to so-called experts for two or three decades now. But they're man's experts. And we'll see later in the course God looks upon their wisdom and He has an interesting word for it—foolishness. The church has been referring people to those who are so impressive to the world and God says it's all foolishness. Shame on us!

God has a way to raise up His experts and it has to do partly with those who are spiritually gifted. But there are some with gifts that aren't precisely the spiritual gift of counseling, but their gift is beautifully adaptable to the counseling ministry. It doesn't mean that counseling will be their main thing, but they'll be especially, particularly useful there.

For example, if you have the gift of the word of wisdom, can you just see immediately how invaluable in a counseling situation this can be. When someone presents some impossible situation and you have the gift of wisdom and there are the facts. And most of us look at it and go, “Whoa. I'm sorry, there's no hope. You're the one exception to the God of all comfort. You know there's no comfort for you.” I mean, that's the way you feel sometimes when you hear someone pour out their heart and you go, “Oh, my goodness. I know what's coming. They're going to ask me to help them. There's no way! What should I do?” And I'm going to have to say,

“Yeah, I was wondering the same thing.” Can you imagine the person with the gift of wisdom? A supernatural gifting of God enabling them to, with the wise thinking of the Lord, just speak right into that situation from the truth of God. Those who have the gift of wisdom this is a tremendous application. Now it can operate in all kinds of arenas, not just counseling. But you can see the adaptability there.

How about the gift of the word of knowledge? I grew up thinking the gift of the word of knowledge only operated at that time when the traveling evangelist let us know that Sister Jenkins's kidney was being healed, at that moment! In the public meeting, you know. Maybe you didn't grow up in that heritage. Some of you are looking at me like, “What?” I haven't given you all of my testimony. But I, way back, was in a lot of meetings like that before I came to the Lord. I was in a lot of religious places and some of those were valid settings.

Now sure, in a meeting where the Spirit of God is really in control, if someone has the gift of the word of knowledge and God is, say touching an internal organ or touching someone in their heart or mind where you couldn't see or know that. But if God wants it known for some reason, sure that gift could be used that way. Word of knowledge means it's a supernatural gifting to know something that you couldn't know. It's a gift of knowledge, you know. It's a supernatural, a working of God.

It certainly could function great in a teaching ministry. But how about in counseling? If you're talking to someone and they are wanting your help. They're giving you the whole situation but they're kind of snowing you, you know, giving you their best effort at sincerity. What do you know? But what if you have the gift of the word of knowledge?

There was a story about this troubled family in the church, and people in the church were trying to bring together this young couple. It seemed like a real alienation there. There was a lot of trouble at home. People from church to reach out them. And this one young woman in the church wanted to go along with these older saints who had been trying and trying to help this couple, especially it seemed like the husband. This older couple condescendingly way agreed; okay maybe you will learn something, come along. And they went there and they were very fruitless.

And the young woman was just listening and praying and watching. Then she asked if she could say something. And she directed herself right to that husband. The team had a beautiful spiritual covering and all. And she asked this young man, “Are you in the bondage of deep pornography?” I mean, she just nailed it right to the heart of the issue. Nobody had a clue and she didn't even know these people. Her only exposure was that little visit there. But she was burdened when she heard this family was falling apart. How does that happen in the counseling situation? It is the gift of the word of knowledge. It's like let's quit talking about this other stuff. Let's talk about what the problem is. Zap! Wow! Who's to counsel? Every believer in general, but particularly those gifted; certainly those with the spiritual gift of counseling.

There are other gifts that have a tremendous application to the counseling ministry, like gifts of healings, plural. This is the spiritual enablement by God to help others to wholeness of life in all kinds of ways. Oh, the implications for counseling ministry there is enormous. Because so many people seeking counseling their lives are so broken and lacking wholeness. There's such and emptiness and they are out seeking fullness and reality for that emptiness and brokenness. Those with gifts of healings receive spiritual enablement from the Lord to be able to see lives made whole with the truth of God, the love of God, the counsel of the Lord.

So, who's to counsel? Every believer in general, particularly those gifted in counseling. But especially out of those two groups, those who are, for example, abiding in Christ and living by the Spirit (John 15). Every believer in general, if they are abiding in Christ will be more effective in their counseling ministry. The spiritually gifted ones, if they're abiding in Christ will be especially fruitful in their counseling ministry.

John 15:4-5,

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

If we're going to counsel, every believer in general, we'd better be abiding in Christ the Wonderful Counselor or we won't fulfill the general calling. Why? Because “apart from Me you can do nothing.” Well, how can that be? I've had all kinds of experiences. I've given a lot of good advice to people. As far as the Lord is concerned it amounts to nothing unless we received it from Him. Sure it might bring human betterment, improvement, adjustment in circumstance or something. But what does it amount to? Nothing. It won't save their soul. It won't change their lives to be like Christ.

If we're going to counsel in any way that impacts lives rightly, we want to be abiding in Christ. Whether it's just our general ministry like every believer, one to another in counseling, or we're gifted in it, we need to be abiding in Christ. Just think of the picture of abiding in Christ the Wonderful Counselor. We are to be fellowshiping with Him, leaning on Him, drawing from Him what we need in word and deed and attitude and relationship. What we are passing on to that person? The very fruit of Christlikeness that is coming into our life by abiding in Christ. Boy that will touch people in counseling!

What a beautiful picture of the ultimate issue in Biblical counseling which is, the Lord using us to share His counsel. How about if we're abiding in Christ and like a branch in the vine, the life flowing through the branches, the life of the vine? How about if we're abiding in Christ the life flowing through us and out to minister is Christ in us the hope of glory, then it is the Wonderful Counselor just reaching right out through us.

I mean, this is what makes counseling real, effective, life-changing. It's not some clever idea we come up with. Or, “Oh yeah, I see that problem all the time and I know just what to suggest.” I mean, this type of counseling is so above and beyond that. When we are abiding in Christ and then when people look to us for help what's going to come out? It will be life-giving, life-changing fruit. Love, joy, peace—things like that.

And that is the next passage, Galatians 5, because those abiding in Christ, there's fruit that comes out. What is that fruit? It's just another way of saying it's the effect of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives, sharing the life of Christ to us and through us.

Galatians 5:22-23 and 25,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

If we've found life everlasting, spiritual life in the Spirit, let's also walk, take each step depending on the Spirit. And what we'll be sharing with people is spiritual fruit right from the Lord Himself.

Fruitful counseling doesn't hinge on psychological training. It hinges on things like abiding in Christ and living by the Spirit. Now this is in the context of what we've looked at a lot already and that is, the Word of God. And that's what comes up next. It's not disconnected from the Word of God. That abiding in Christ will bring forth a life described in and will even be explaining the Scriptures right through our lives to others.

Those living by the Word and by prayer, especially those. Not only those who are abiding in Christ, living by the Spirit, but especially those living by the Word and by prayer. One verse hits that, John 15:7,

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.

If we let the words of the Lord abide in us, live in us, live out through us, live in our thinking, our deciding, our sharing, our priorities, our goals—if we let the Lord's words live in us we'll be those living by the Word, able to share the truth that sets people free. If we're letting His words live in us we can ask whatever we desire and it shall be done. Isn't that great? That is if we're letting His words live in us, because His words then, determine the things we ask. If His words live in us we can ask anything we want! Why? Because we're going to be wanting what the Word is planting and developing in us. Our prayer requests, the things we desire, they're going to be coming right out of the Word. In that respect, hey, ask what you want because the Word is going to be working on us, working in us, forming our thinking and developing our desires.

This goes back to Philippians 2:12-13, “God is working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.” He uses His Word and the work of His Spirit to do that. Oh, what a prayer life we can have then! Our mind is increasingly filled by the Word. The things we ask are what the Word is teaching us to ask, and we just keep asking all these things and God just answers and supplies.

Answered prayers in line with the Word of God are a powerful way to counsel. Ministering to people the truth of the Word, the will of God, praying for God to do these things, teaching them the truth of the Word, and urging them to pray that God does these things. Boy that person, whether they're just counseling in general or gifted, their counseling ministry will be greatly enhanced by living in the Word and living by prayer.

Another matter that especially makes us competent to counsel are those who keep confidences. Proverbs 11:13. The natural way of man is not characteristically to keep confidences on every issue. It seems like the natural way is to publish it. Proverbs 11:13, “A tale bearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.”

It seems like the flesh is a talebearer. This is kind of a crass definition but it's got a lot of truth in it. Someone asked, “How would you define a secret?”

“Oh a secret?—That is what you tell one person at a time.”

You know, I mean, that's too real. That's too much where people are. No, then that is not a secret. That's probably closer to gossip, you know, where you just keep spreading it, but very secretively.

A tale bearer reveals secrets. A tale bearer just can't wait to tell somebody else. Now there's a proper time to tell things to different folks. But it must be led by the Lord not just done indiscriminately. A tale bearer just reveals secrets. That's what they love to do.

“But he who is of faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Proverbs 11:13). Can't you see the implications of that for counseling ministry? If we are tale bearers just watch our counseling ministry be undermined and disappear. It will be robbed, killed and destroyed by the enemy, by betraying people's confidence. I mean the things that you hear in the counseling ministry, whether it's a formal or informal counseling ministry, whether it's a broken hearted friend at church or in the neighborhood just pouring out their heart, and maybe they looked at you as the only person they thought they could share it with. It could really be a life-shattering kind of a secret and they're just broken and seeking help. That person can be doubly wiped out if we break their confidence and just start revealing secrets. And then we not only can't help them, we've harmed them. And furthermore, we've diminished our own counseling ministry. Don't tell him what you're going through. Yeah, but he's such a good listener. Yeah, but he's an awful good talker too.

Those who keep confidences, especially they, should be counseling others. And also those willing to sacrifice for others. The counseling ministry is not a convenience ministry. Some of the most critical times and opportunities to be used in counseling come at the most inconvenient times.

I think of my buddy that was in Vietnam. Oh, he was a scary man! The most scary man I ever witnessed to in my life. And for a long time, day in and day out he was there in my office. And he'd start sharing things he'd been through and things he was currently going through and thinking about. And he had just come to the Lord there in the ministry and man, I thought: “Lord, help him, but I wouldn't mind if You would just help me to come out of this room alive.” Oh the torment this dear man went through because he'd inflicted it as an unbeliever on so many. He had some ups and downs. Praise God, he's walked steady with the Lord now. And he has a lovely family no.

But one night in the midst of his troubles, I don't know if it was two or three in the morning or what it was, the doorbell rang and some banging on the door. I went down to see who it was and it was my buddy. I looked out there and I swung the door open and turned on the porch light. And he could hardly stand up. “Okay pastor, start pastoring!” Well, praise the Lord, God let me do it. I said, “Man, come on in here.” Put on some coffee for him and sat down and we talked hours that night. And most of the hours he was actually understanding what I was saying. God sobered him up and it was a tremendous night. You know, the flesh would have wanted to say, “Man, see you Sunday morning, if I even have time for you. What are you doing here at this hour interrupting the household?”

The counseling ministry is not a convenience ministry. Some of the greatest opportunities for it come at what looks like, circumstantially, the most impossible or the least enjoyable moments. But remember 1 John 3:16,

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

Jesus Christ laid down His life for us so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He died for us. We can die a bit to self for the family of God and be willing to do what the Lord has called us to—just to walk in this Christ-like path. He died on the cross for us, certainly that should work

in us a willingness for God to shape and remake us where we're willing to die to self in a lot of situations, to pour out the love of God on others.

Again, who is to do counseling? Every believer in general is but particularly those gifted in counseling. And whether every believer in general or those particularly spiritually gifted, especially those abiding in Christ and living by the Spirit, those living by the Word and by prayer, and those who keep confidences and those who are willing to sacrifice for others. These are the people God wants to use. And God can make us those kind of people. No one is naturally like this. This is supernatural. It isn't that some people just have a knack at counseling and others don't. It's either God is allowed to work in a life and make us more like this and therefore be more useable, or we won't be that. But He is willing and He is able.

People say, “Yeah, but don't you need to send people to the experts sometimes? Don't you get in over your head and have to send people to the experts?” Well, I've been involved in counseling ministry for twenty-six or seven years now and I'm always in over my head! The only one who never is in over His head is God. No matter how deep the water, He's never in over His head. The water doesn't have to get too deep for us, three or four inches of impossibility and it's enough to feel like we are drowning. “Lord, help! I can't help this person. I don't know what to say. I don't what to do.”

Well, as the Lord is shaping our lives and marking our lives, He makes us more useable, and whenever we're extended where we think we've shared all that God has given us, there are others in the body, growing in these things that we can usher a troubled person to. “Listen, I've shared all I know to share and I pray God is helping you. But I see you just hurting and needy.” And you can be praying for the Lord to show you who can take this person on. The Lord has someone else in the body, probably right in the fellowship where they are. Not out in some clinic somewhere. Not in some office with a degree and with a high fee and with a lot of human theories. But to people who are walking in the Spirit so they're more equipped. That's who is to do the counseling and those who are to become the experts. We'll talk more about that issue in the very next unit.