

## **The Process of Counseling (Part 2)**

### **I. Love**

Love: Relationships are the context for change

- 1) God's love must shape our lives
- 2) God's love must shape how we enter the person's world
- 3) God's love must help us identify with suffering

### **II. Know**

#### **A. Four Foundations of Knowing Your Counselee:**

##### **1. Knowing your counselee is a way to love**

- Be kind
- Be engaged
- Show mercy
- Demonstrate respect
- Don't jump to conclusions
- Remember your own standing before God

##### **2. Knowing your counselee demands organization<sup>1</sup>**

- a. What is their situation?
- b. How are they responding?
- c. What are their thoughts and motives?
- d. What are the consequences? What harvest are they currently reaping from what they have sown?

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from David Powlison's book, "Good and Angry," Chapter 13.

- e. Who is God in this situation? What is true about him and how do they need to see him more clearly?
- f. How do they need to turn to God for help?
  - i. God you are \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. I'm facing \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. You promise \_\_\_\_\_
  - iv. I've done wrong by \_\_\_\_\_
  - v. I've been misruled by my love of \_\_\_\_\_
  - vi. Please forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_
  - vii. I love you because \_\_\_\_\_
  - viii. Please help me to \_\_\_\_\_
  - ix. Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_
  - x. I rejoice that you \_\_\_\_\_
- g. How do they need to learn to respond to this world with the gospel?
- h. What consequences of faith and obedience should they expect and pray for?

### 3. Knowing your counselee requires diligence

- a. Can I take a massive story and summarize it in a way that the person feels known?
  - i. Do I see the themes of sufferer, sinner, and saint clearly?
  - ii. What details about *circumstances* do I know and what do I still need to know?
  - iii. What details about the *heart* do I know and what do I still need to know? (*see Appendix 1 – X-ray Questions*)
  - iv. What details about our interaction can I observe? Try to discern what their actions, reactions, and emotions reveal about the worship of their heart and their belief system.
  - v. Am I hoping the best of the counselee when I restate details? When I summarize does my tone and word choice show that I'm hoping the best of them?
- b. Can I simplify the basic story?
  - i. What visual diagrams or metaphors help explain their story?
  - ii. What statements do you hear that capture major themes?

- iii. Can you use a “here and now” example as a summary case study for their heart?
  - iv. How would you bring the major themes of their story before the Lord in prayer?
- c. Am I always pursuing a deeper knowledge of the heart?
- i. Faith – Key questions about faith. What lies are suppressing the truth? What commitments to truth are growing through the Spirit? What do their interpretations about circumstances reveal about their core assumptions about life? What do they believe about God, themselves, and the world?
  - ii. Desire – Key questions about desire. What do they want that they aren’t getting? What do they seek in their idols that they are meant to find in Christ?
    - 1. Salvation
    - 2. Life
    - 3. Love
    - 4. Security
    - 5. Identity
    - 6. Joy (pleasure, comfort)
    - 7. Hope

**4. Knowing your counselee necessitates discernment**

- a. Do I have a biblical worldview for judging and discerning the details of someone’s life? (John 7:24, 1Cor 5:12)
- b. Am I discerning with what people share with me? (*See Appendix 2 on Biblical Confidentiality*)

<p><b>Sample Questions I Ask Myself.</b> We interpret facts based on what we believe, our own worldview. Consider these questions between sessions to grow more aware of the thoughts and beliefs that influence your counselee’s interpretation of their world.</p>
1. What do they want from counseling? In their mind, what does successful counseling look like?
2. Are they saved?
3. What are they really seeking from their idols?
4. How do they understand their situation?
5. How are their hearts responding to their situation?

6. How does their life reveal their heart?
7. Do they see their sin? Do they see both the big picture and minutia of their sin?
8. Are they repentant?
9. How do they interpret failure?
10. What do they want from their relationships?
11. How do they understand progress?
12. Are they justifying sin, and how?
13. How is their hope? What is there hope in?
14. How do they understand me as a counselor? (savior; adversary; friend)
15. How do they understand suffering?
16. What are the holes in their theology?
17. What are their idols? What are the underlying desires behind those idols?
18. What are they worshiping/trusting in aside from God?
19. What lies do they believe that are keeping them from trusting God?
20. How are they applying, or failing to apply the gospel?
21. How do they understand their identity?
22. Who or what has been their counselor(s)? <i>(this could be books, Oprah, who are they listening to)</i>
23. What is fueling their worship/faith, good or bad? <i>(What does their intake of ideas look like?)</i>
24. Their past – What is magnifying idols? How long is the struggle and what has it looked like? What is encouraging their hurt?
25. What sins might have blazed the trail for greater sins?
26. What other sins is their focus issue leading to?
27. How is the culture speaking to them, and how are they understanding that?
28. What do they need to understand next about their heart?
29. How do they answer basic questions about: God, suffering, strengths and weaknesses, sin patterns, influential people, work, iconic event, things that move you, purpose, circumstances, personal history, sin beneath sin?
30. Am I looking forward to meeting with this person?

### III. **Speak**

Foundations:

A. Pray

B. Process

C. Prepare - *See Appendix 3: Guide for Creating Our First Session*

Key facets of a counseling session:

- Prayer
- Catching Up
- Questions
- Review of previous heartwork
- Teaching/lesson
- Hope
- New heartwork
- Prayer

Helpful Hints

A. Think dialogue, not monologue

B. Counseling should include instruction, illustration, and application

C. Be creatively repetitive

D. Show them in Scripture

E. Remember the multi-faceted nature of truth

F. Not only show them truth, but help them find truth

G. Give them tangible ways to grow and tangible ways to apply

## Appendix 1: X-Ray Questions

David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (pg. 132-40)

---

1. What do you love? Hate?
2. What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey?
3. What do you seek, aim for, and pursue?
4. Where do you bank your hopes?
5. What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about?
6. What do you feel like doing?
7. What do you think you need? What are your "felt needs"?
8. What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish?
9. What makes you tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? What do you organize your life around?
10. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security?
11. What or whom do you trust?
12. Whose performance matters? On whose shoulders does the well-being of your world rest? Who can make it better, make it work, make it safe, make it successful?
13. Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living? Whose love and approval do you need?
14. Who are your role models? What kind of person do you think you ought to be or want to be?
15. On your deathbed, what would sum up your life as worthwhile? What gives your life meaning?
16. How do you define and weigh success and failure, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, in any particular situation?
17. What would make you feel rich, secure, prosperous? What must you get to make life sing?
18. What would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight? The greatest pain or misery?
19. Whose coming into political power would make everything better?

20. Whose victory or success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?
21. What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?
22. In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? Confident and relaxed? When you are pressured, where do you turn? What do you think about? What are your escapes? What do you escape from?
23. What do you want to get out of life? What payoff do you seek out of the things you do?
24. What do you pray for?
25. What do you think about most often? What preoccupies or obsesses you? In the morning, to what does your mind drift instinctively?
26. What do you talk about? What is important to you? What attitudes do you communicate?
27. How do you spend your time? What are your priorities?
28. What are your characteristic fantasies, either pleasurable or fearful? Daydreams? What do your night dreams revolve around?
29. What are the functional beliefs that control how you interpret your life and determine how you act?
30. What are your idols and false gods? In what do you place your trust, or set your hopes? What do you turn to or seek? Where do you take refuge?
31. How do you live for yourself?
32. How do you live as a slave of the devil?
33. How do you implicitly say, "If only..." (to get what you want, avoid what you don't want, keep what you have)?
34. What instinctively seems and feels right to you? What are your opinions, the things you feel true?
35. Where do you find your identity? How do you define who you are?

## Appendix 2 BIBLICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

---

In 1 John 1:7 God calls us to walk in the light, as He is in the light. Confidentiality is an important aspect of counseling, and all the information you share with your counselor will be carefully guarded. We understand that opening up about personal struggles can be scary, and yet we know that sin can only be killed when it is exposed by the light (John 3:20). You may fear what your counselor may think of you once they hear your struggle. You may fear being limited in your ministry involvement if you open up too much. Perhaps you're not struggling with a specific sin, but in your current suffering you fear letting someone into your life who can't possibly understand your situation and won't actually help you.

Thankfully God helps us see the truth. While fear tells you that you'll be safe as long as no one knows about your struggle, Scripture teaches that he who confesses and forsakes his sin will find mercy (Prov 28:13). God calls us as a church to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

As counselors, our intent is never to publically shame you. Generally, our intent is never to share what goes on in counseling sessions. We take the details of your life very seriously and are committed to your privacy (Prov 12:23). We recognize the sensitive nature of our counseling ministry and will take great care not to intentionally or inadvertently disclose confidential information to third parties. Counselors will be expected to exercise strict protection of the confidentiality of all those counseled and to protect against dissemination of any information discussed in the sessions, including but not limited to the counselor's notes.

The foregoing policy of confidentiality is subject to the following exceptions:

**1) Child Abuse Reporting Counselors** will make disclosures wherever a legal duty and/or LCC's policies regarding the reporting of known or reasonably suspected cases of child abuse override the duty to maintain confidences.

**2) Prevention of Harm** The California Supreme Court has held that pastoral counselors do not have a duty to refer potentially suicidal people to professional therapists, and therefore pastoral counselors cannot be held liable for their failure to refer. Nevertheless, counselors will make disclosures where, in the counselor's judgment and discretion, a threat of immanent physical harm exists, either to the counselee or to a third party.

**3) Counselor Assistance Counselors** may make disclosures where, in the counselor's judgment and discretion, the collaborative experience and judgment of LCC's counseling staff will provide benefit to the counselee. In such instances, a counselor may discuss only such specific details of the counselee's circumstances as may be necessary to obtain meaningful assistance from LCC's counseling staff; otherwise, the counselor will make every effort to maintain the counselee's anonymity and confidence.

While your privacy is a priority, our faithfulness to care for you as those who will give an account to God will occasionally require us to share your personal information with others. We are not professional counselors, we are simply your brothers and sisters that want to see God glorified in your life. Our hope is that you see through this process that we are committed to your privacy, but our greater commitment is to your relationship with God.

## Appendix 3

### GUIDE FOR CREATING A FIRST SESSION

---

- Place name of counselee, date, session #, and total length of session at the top
- Note taking tips
  - Keep track of the facts. Write down factual information, not speculative, because it can be subpoenaed in a court of law.
  - Only type/write in a way that allows you to maintain almost continual eye contact. Remember you're building a caring relationship, not conducting an interview or teaching a class. So feel free to stop note taking to pray with them, weep with them (have tissues present), or rejoice with them.
- Outline for time
  - WELCOME. Begin with a greeting and then see what general questions they have about biblical counseling.
  - INTRO TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING. Transition to a brief time of explaining what biblical counseling is, why it's an important part of your church's ministry, and summarize the contents and purpose of the counseling covenant before having them sign it. **In the space below write out what you would say about biblical counseling to someone who is new to it and how you would explain the purpose of the counseling covenant.**
  - PRAYER. Pray for the time. **Write out a prayer that you would use to begin the time, include thankfulness for God's word and hope in the gospel.**
  - QUESTIONS. As you transition to the time of counseling, explain that the purpose of the first session is mainly to get to know them, so you'll be asking questions and mostly listening today. Start with general questions that allow you to hear their story. Be sure you hear and understand how they came to know Christ as Lord and Savior, their church background, current spiritual life details, and the state of their current relationships. Then move to more specific "entry gate" questions that target the heart and allow you to see their worship through probing different desires, beliefs, fears, frustrations, and hopes. **Write a sequence of 10-20 questions that apply to the person you've been assigned to counsel. Remember to move from general story questions to specific heart questions.**
  - TEACHING. Depending on where the person is at in understanding the nature of their heart, it could be helpful to spend time teaching briefly on the nature of sin, idolatry, and the heart. **Write out at least two paragraphs explaining this to someone who hasn't thought through their struggle in the context of worship. Be sure to include Scripture references you would use.**
  - HOPE. Then end by trying to give specific hope in the gospel that connects to the specific challenges they are facing. **Write one paragraph that connects gospel hope to the presenting problem you saw in their PDI. Include Scriptures you would use.**
  - HEARTWORK. Assign "heartwork" that reviews, expands, and tests the truths that were covered in today's session. Since it's the first session, consider also assigning data gathering work to help them better examine their heart throughout the week (*e.g. x-ray questions*). Have them send in all work before the second session. **Write out 2-3 potential heartwork assignments for this counselee.**
  - PRAYER. Close with a prayer that reaffirms the hope that you shared.
  - CALENDAR. Schedule next session. To others (How will I help this person relate with the dignity and humility of Christ so that they love others instead of fearing them or using them? [Rom 13:8-10])