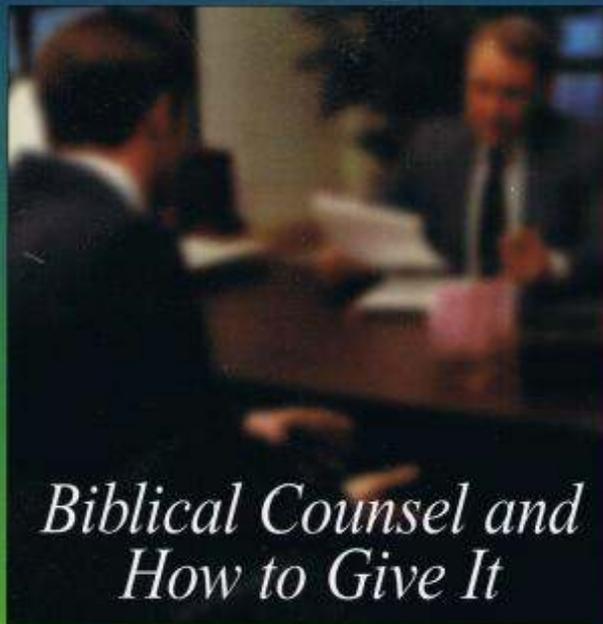


PRACTICAL COUNSELING PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIANS



*Biblical Counsel and
How to Give It*

BY DR. JEFF OWENS

SLBC
Christian Counseling One
LESSON ONE

**PRACTICAL
COUNSELING
PRINCIPLES
for
CHRISTIANS**

Dr.
Jeff
Owens

**PRACTICAL
COUNSELING
PRINCIPLES
for
CHRISTIANS**

**A BOOK ABOUT BIBLICAL COUNSEL
AND HOW TO GIVE IT**

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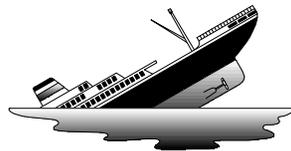
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The saddest thought I had while preparing the material for this book is that many counselors will read it to help others while they personally need to seek counsel for themselves.

If the captain of the ship does not get help when he needs it and his own life is shipwrecked, who will save the crew? Don't let your pride keep you from seeking counsel.



Dedication

I joyfully dedicate this book to my father, Eugene Nelson Owens, Jr., who is the founder and pastor of the Trinity Baptist Church of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. He is also the best Christian I know.

The decision to dedicate this counseling book to him was a very obvious one for me to make. He has been my counselor, father, and friend throughout my life. He has spent many long hours counseling me and helping me make right decisions. Every decision he has helped me to make has been the right one. He counseled me as a child, a teenager, a young single

adult, and a young married man—first without children and then with children. He is now one of the people to whom my children turn for godly counsel also.

He counseled me when I was a laborer, a deacon, a machinist, a Bible college student, and a preacher. He continues to counsel me now that I am on a pastoral staff. Through all of these times, he has been able to maintain a warm father-son relationship. He has been a steady and dependable counselor. Most of all, he has established a friendship with his son that will stand the test of time.

He loved me when I was right and when I was wrong. I owe my ministry to him. I love my father with all of my heart.

– Jeff Owens



Eugene N. Owens, Jr.

Born: June 7, 1941

Anderson, Indiana

Acknowledgments

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I want to express my appreciation to the following men for teaching me how to counsel by giving me godly counsel:

Dr. Jack Hyles
Dr. Maurice Paulson
Pastor Eugene Owens, Jr.

The counsel and teachings in this book that the aforementioned men have produced is used with their permission.

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Foreword

THIS BOOK IS Jeff Owens in print. It is Jeff Owens reflected on paper. It is the heart of Jeff Owens. He has authored other books and articles, but none reveal the real Jeff Owens as does this excellent manuscript on counseling. Brother Owens is basically a counselor. He counsels as he teaches his Sunday school class; he counsels many hours in his office; he counsels as he preaches powerful messages; he counsels by his life as he is an example for others to follow and emulate.

1. **Who he is.** Jeff Owens is an assistant pastor of the First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana. He is a faculty member at Hyles-Anderson College.

2. **What he is.** First and foremost, Jeff Owens is a good Christian. He believes right and practices what he believes. He preaches right and practices what he preaches. He stands right and practices where he stands. He walks right and practices what he walks.

Jeff Owens is Christian character. He is punctual, disciplined, and diligent. He embodies what Christian character was intended to be.

Jeff Owens is loyal—loyal to his Christ, loyal to his church, loyal to his friends, and loyal to his preacher. He does not absorb all the love of his followers but shares it with those whom he follows.

Jeff Owens is a friend. He is my personal friend, and he is a true friend to all whom he has given his friendship.

3. **What he does.** Jeff Owens is the director of the high school Bible Clubs in the Northwest Indiana area and in the south Chicago suburban areas. These clubs are public school teenagers organized through the public schools; then they are brought to Sunday school and church on Sunday. Hundreds of these public school teens trust Christ as Saviour every year, and scores of them go on to serve God full-time. Jeff Owens leads the

largest number of high school Bible Clubs in the world.

Jeff Owens directs the “E” Bus Ministry, which is a very unusual work. This is not the bus ministry that goes into the ghettos and into the homes of the poor and needy. This is a bus ministry that goes into middle-class and upper-class neighborhoods and reaches the “up and outers.” Rarely is there a Sunday but what some of these people walk the aisle professing faith in Christ as Saviour.

Jeff Owens teaches at Hyles-Anderson College. He teaches such courses as New Testament Survey, Old Testament Survey, Pastoral Counseling, How to Build an Adult Sunday School Class, etc. He is a valued member of our faculty.

Jeff Owens teaches the largest couples class at First Baptist Church of Hammond. Just a few years ago he started this class with nothing but an empty room and now has a large, well-organized Bible class.

Jeff Owens is many other things. He is phenomenal in his work.

4. What he has. He has strength and yet tenderness. He has love and yet convictions and standards. He has diligence and yet time for everyone.

I was asked to write a foreword for this book, but Jeff Owens is the book, and the book is Jeff Owens. You will see the qualities that I have mentioned as you browse the pages of this needed manuscript.

–Dr. Jack Hyles

“I Am Your Office”

by Dr. Jack Hyles

I am your office;
I know no greater thrill!
You've helped me be, midst other things,
A clinic to the ill.

Within my walls you've helped me be
A school where truth's revealed.
You've made my walls a judgment hall
Where justice is appealed.

I've witnessed youth reclaimed for God,
And marriages re-healed.
I see a very sacred spot,
The place you often kneel.

I've witnessed resurrected plans
And hopes rise from the dead.
I've watched you plan and weep and sigh,
To lift a fallen head.

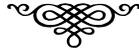
And through my roof have risen prayers,
And answers come back through
As miracles I've often seen,
As God has answered you.

My carpet's caught a lot of tears
From both sides of the desk.
My windows open wide to you
That you may do your best.

Yes, I'm your office,
And we together form a team,
Where both of us can live and love
And help and pray and dream.

[Written especially for Dr. Jeff Owens; December 11, 1996]

THE COUNSELOR



“Selfishness kills compassion.”

–Dr. Lee Roberson

I

COUNSELING

AND

God's Wisdom

I BELIEVE THAT WISDOM is the ability to see life through the eyes of God. If counselors can get wisdom, they can give good counsel. People do not need a counselor's guidance as much as they need God's guidance. People seeking counsel often don't need a counselor's opinions as much as they need God's opinion. A counselor needs God's wisdom so that he can offer something of value to the one who is being counseled. The following teachings all have to do with wisdom—God's wisdom.

1. **The counselor should seek wisdom on a daily basis.** Proverbs 8:34 says, "*Blessed is the man that heareth me [wisdom], watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*"

2. **The counselor who seeks and finds God's wisdom daily will find his days to be more productive.** "*Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.*" (Proverbs 3:16)

3. **The earlier in life one seeks wisdom, the better.** Also, seeking wisdom early in the day is necessary. "*I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.*" (Proverbs 8:17)

4. **The one who obtains wisdom in his youth is a blessing to his parents.** "*The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a*

foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." (Proverbs 10:1)

5. Not only will one's parents enjoy a child's wisdom, the child will also have a more enjoyable life. Proverbs 3:17 says, "*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*"

6. A longer life is available to those who seek and find wisdom. Proverbs 4:10 teaches, "*Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.*"

7. Wisdom may be obtained from other wise people. "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*" (Proverbs 13:20)

8. Wisdom can be obtained from God's Word. "*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*" (Psalm 19:7)

9. Wisdom will increase one's practice of Biblical principles concerning finances. Proverbs 8:20 and 21 says, "*I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.*" Also, Proverbs 22:7 teaches, "*The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*"

10. One should consciously seek God's wisdom in God's way. "*Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*" (Proverbs 8:34)

A. Prayerfully seek wisdom. James 1:5 says, "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*"

B. Lovingly seek God's wisdom. Proverbs 8:17 says, "*I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.*"

C. Earnestly seek God's wisdom. Proverbs 2:1-7 teaches, "*My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.*"

D. With much thought, seek God's wisdom. "*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast*

made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." (Psalm 119:97-99)

11. Wisdom often comes as a result of the hardships and trials (testings) of life. Proverbs 15:31 says, *"The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise."*

12. Wisdom will increase God's use of one's influence because others will respect the evidence of his use of God's wisdom. *"The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools."* (Proverbs 3:35)

13. Wisdom will increase one's ability to lead. Proverbs 8:14-16 says, *"Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."*

14. One who seeks God's wisdom receives God's attention and favor. *"Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD."* (Proverbs 8:34, 35)

15. We must ask ourselves the following question: Do we have God's wisdom? To discover the answer to this question, we should ask ourselves the following questions and answer them truthfully.

A. Do we talk too much? *"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise."* (Proverbs 10:19)

B. Do we look for the opportunity to win souls? *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."* (Proverbs 11:30)

C. Do we seek God's guidance for our life? *"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."* (Proverbs 9:9)

D. If a lady, do you desire to have a home that is pleasing to God? *"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."* (Proverbs 14:1)

E. Do we seek godly counsel? *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."* (Proverbs 28:26)

F. Do we appreciate it when someone shows us errors in our life? *"Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."* (Proverbs 9:8)

G. Do we work hard? *"He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame."* (Proverbs 10:5)

- H.** *Do we use our conversation to help others?* “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.” (Proverbs 12:18)
- I.** *Do we obey our parents?* “A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.” (Proverbs 13:1)
- J.** *Do we obey the rules of our leaders?* “The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.” (Proverbs 10:8)

What we do with the wisdom of God may determine what God can do with us. The things we have learned from God are the only things worth learning from us. We need to stop and ask ourselves, “How much do I have to offer others?”

II

COUNSELING

AND

Its Importance

LIFE IS A series of relationships, and with those relationships come decisions. Some people learn the hard way that experience is not the best teacher; they do not seek counsel. Others realize that someone else's experience is the best teacher; they seek advice or guidance from a knowledgeable person.

1. Because counseling is important, it should be done properly.

II Samuel 16:23 says, "*And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.*" This verse clearly indicates that when Ahithophel counseled, it was as if he had inquired at the oracle of God. In this verse, the oracle of God means a person considered to be a source of wise counsel or authority.

The right kind of counseling should be done so people feel as if they are receiving counsel straight from God. I am saying without reservation that one's counsel should be what God would counsel. One way of assuring that a person's counsel does come from God is to read and reread His Book.

2. One of the best examples of a Bible counselor was Moses. I believe that Moses may well have been the busiest counselor in the Bible. Moses spent 40 of his 120 years leading the one to three million children of

Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. No doubt, with that many people traveling so closely together, disputes and problems arose that needed constant mediation.

Exodus 18 gives an account of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, worrying over the health of his son-in-law. *"And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee."* (Exodus 18:14, 19-22)

Moses was such a busy man, he was instructed to appoint wise men to be counselors for the multitudes of people. He instructed his counselors to care for the small matters, while he would care for the great matters. Counsel must be very important to God.

3. Every counselor should have a cabinet of counselors, and he should teach people seeking counsel to have their own cabinet of counselors. Ezra 7:28 teaches that King Artaxerxes had counselors. *"And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me."* Artaxerxes had a cabinet of seven counselors, and in Esther 1:14 the names of Artaxerxes' cabinet of seven are listed. As we carefully read and study the Bible, we will find many people had a cabinet of counselors.

I find it to be a strange thing that the President of the United States has enough sense to have a cabinet of counselors, while most Christians do not have a cabinet. We should choose a cabinet of people who are wiser in given areas than we are. We should allow our counselor to give us advice and guidance in his given field. We should allow that counselor to have veto power in our lives.

The following people should be in any person's cabinet of counselors.

- **A pastor.** *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and*

some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11) Every person should seek the counsel of his pastor—especially on the big decisions of life.

- **A real friend.** *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* (Proverbs 27:17) This verse is not speaking of some acquaintance or what the world would call a friend. This verse is talking about a Scriptural, Biblical friend who would be truthful.

- **Someone successful in your chosen field of service.**

- **A spiritual mother.** Ephesians 6:1 says, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”*

- **A spiritual father.** Proverbs 1:8 teaches, *“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”*

- **A wise person.** Not all wise people are great soul winners. *“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.”* (Proverbs 24:6)

- **A soul winner.** Not all soul winners possess great wisdom. *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”* (Proverbs 11:30)

In the Bible, the number seven often represents a number of completion or a number of perfection. I believe it just might be very wise to have seven people in your cabinet of counselors—especially the seven I have listed.

In my study and searching of the Bible about counseling, as well as having had hundreds of counseling appointments, I have made the following general observations about the great importance of Biblical counsel:

1. **Bad counsel brings tragedy.** *“Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.”* (Numbers 31:16)

2. **A nation was rebuked for being devoid of counsel.** *“For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.”* (Deuteronomy 32:28)

3. **Following proper counsel can save lives.** *“Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.”* (I Kings 1:12)

4. **Following bad counsel caused Rehoboam’s downfall.** *“But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with*

the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him.” (I Kings 12:8)

“And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men’s counsel that they gave him.” (I Kings 12:13)

“But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.” (II Chronicles 10:8)

“And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men.” (II Chronicles 10:13)

5. Saul died partly as a result of seeking bad counsel. *“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it.”* (I Chronicles 10:13)

6. Ahaziah’s downfall was accepting counsel from his wicked mother, Athaliah. *“Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother’s name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction. He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote Joram.”* (II Chronicles 22:2-5) Not only did he receive counsel from Athaliah, he also accepted the advice of members of the wicked house of Ahab—Athaliah’s peers.

7. Following wise counsel aided in the revival under Hezekiah. *“For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness.”* (II Chronicles 30:2, 23)

8. Part of Ezra’s revival included accepting wise counsel. *“And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.”* (Ezra 10:8)

9. We are not to counsel with a wicked or ungodly person. *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”* (Psalm 1:1)

“Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.” (Job 22:18)

“Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.” (Job 21:16)

“The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.” (Proverbs 12:5)

10. Counseling was foretold as one of the ministries of Jesus Christ. *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7)*

11. Wise people will listen to wise counsel. *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” (Proverbs 12:15)*

12. Failure often is a result of a lack of counsel. *“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” (Proverbs 15:22)*

13. Following wise counsel helps in old age. *“Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.” (Proverbs 19:20)*

14. Counsel will give a person depth. *“Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.” (Proverbs 20:5)*

15. Wise counsel helps confirm one’s decisions. *“Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.” (Proverbs 20:18)*

16. Seek counsel from real friends who will be honest. *“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.” (Proverbs 27:9)*

17. A person’s own counsel alone will not suffice in his Christian walk. *“The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.” (Job 18:7)*

“Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.” (Psalm 5:10)

“So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” (Psalm 81:12)

“But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.” (Jeremiah 7:24)

18. As I noted earlier in this chapter, everyone needs a wise counselor. *“And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son, a wise counsellor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward.”* (I Chronicles 26:14)

“Also Jonathan David’s uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni was with the king’s sons.” (I Chronicles 27:32)

19. Joseph of Arimathæa was a counselor. *“Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.”* (Mark 15:43)

20. Many Old Testament kings had hired counselors. *“Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand.”* (Ezra 7:14)

“And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king’s mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.” (Ezra 7:28)

“And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered.” (Ezra 8:25)

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.” (Daniel 3:24)

“At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.” (Daniel 4:36)

“All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.” (Daniel 6:7)

“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.” (II Samuel 15:12)

“And Ahithophel was the king’s counsellor: and Hushai the Archite was the king’s companion.” (I Chronicles 27:33)

One of the duties of the pastorate will be counseling. One's duties as a counselor are prescribed in the Scripture—they are made very clear. The pastor should not expect his people to go to professional counselors and psychologists. The pastor is supposed to be capable of counseling. He is supposed to make sure he is educated enough to counsel wisely; therefore, he should be well-educated in the Word of God.

III

COUNSELING

AND

The Counselor Preparing Himself to Counsel God's People

EVERY COUNSELOR NEEDS to be prepared to counsel God's people. He needs to be prepared mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The following 20 points are ways counselors can prepare themselves.

1. **Every counselor needs to seek counsel for himself because he will remember to use it later.** *"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end."* (Proverbs 19:20) Some counselors need to be seeking counsel and getting answers to the situations in life that they personally face. Someday we will be reproducing those answers. Each person is basically the sum total of the experiences of others. A counselor can only reproduce counsel in the areas where he has sought advice and received answers. A counselor's answers will, of necessity, come from God's Word, God, or God's man. If I were to ask someone how he would counsel a given situation, I dare say the first thing he would do is search his mind for whether or not he had ever received counsel concerning that matter. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, a person gives the counsel given him—especially if it worked. However, some counselors wouldn't have very

much to give because they never seek counsel. How tragic!

As a young married man, my wife and I had a rough time for a month or two. I was very busy working many hours, and, as a result, I became very edgy. Truthfully, I was not as sensitive to her needs as I should have been. My wife talked to the pastor about our situation; the pastor called me to his office. During that short “mandatory” counseling session, he made a statement that helped me so much. “Jeff, never let the sun go down on your wrath as far as your marriage is concerned. I don’t believe a married couple should ever go to bed angry with one another. I believe you should stay up as late as it takes to fix the problem. Then and only then should you go to bed.”

When a young couple takes anger to bed with them, a wall is erected between them and their physical relationship. The Bible makes it very clear that a married couple are to give themselves to each other. A wife may think, “I’ll get the attention I need by withholding myself from him.” What a wife is more apt to do is to send her spouse somewhere else to have his physical needs fulfilled.

Of course, anyone who would go outside the marriage for physical contact is very wrong. It is also wrong for a spouse to stop the physical relationship because he is angry. Husbands and wives cannot let the sun go down upon their wrath when it comes to marriage. Kissing and making up is probably about one of the greatest ways of reconciliation on the face of the earth.

I have used that pastor’s sound Scriptural advice about my marriage hundreds of times with other young couples. However, some so-called counselors will have nothing to remember or from which to draw because they refuse to seek counsel for themselves. Every counselor needs to be seeking advice because someday someone will seek counsel from him, someone in whom he needs to repay the investments made in him.

2. Every counselor needs to constantly beg God for wisdom. *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* (James 1:5) The wise counselor will show God this verse and claim it every time he prays.

3. Every counselor should go soul winning. *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”* (Proverbs 11:30) There is no greater confidence builder to prove to a Christian he has the power of God than to personally see someone saved. When a counselor needs extra wisdom, it would be wise to do extra soul winning. After soul

winning, he can quote Proverbs 11:30 to God and ask Him for more wisdom.

4. Every counselor needs to read and become knowledgeable about many subjects. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”* (Proverbs 1:7, 8) Through the years I have found that approximately 50 percent of counseling is about marriage, children, and finances. Fundamental Baptists should not run from teaching on these subjects because the neo-evangelicals happen to specialize on them. We should read, make notations in, and know the following books:

- A. The King James Bible, of course.
- B. *How to Rear Infants, How to Rear Children, and How to Rear Teenagers* by Dr. Jack Hyles.
- C. *The Home* by Dr. John R. Rice.
- D. CHARACTER: *The One Thing Money Can't Buy-The One Thing You Can't Afford to Be Without!* by Dr. Jeff Owens.
- E. *Woman, the Assembler* by Beverly Hyles.
- F. *Help Lord! They Call Me Mom!* by Marlene Evans.

I believe that fundamental Baptists should limit their reading to material written by the people who believe the way we believe. I personally only read that which is written by independent, fundamental, separated, King James Bible, New Testament Baptist church authors. I don't read a lot of outside reading because it would cause me to not be faithful enough to my Bible.

5. Every counselor should think about the person and his situation before counseling with him. A counselor must prepare his heart for those seeking counsel. He cannot allow himself to become mechanical because people are not machines.

6. Every counselor should pray for wisdom before every counseling session. Before someone steps into the office, every counselor should kneel behind the door and ask God to give wisdom to two people—himself and the one seeking counsel. If I have all the wisdom God can make available, but the person being counseled hasn't enough wisdom to listen and obey, I will not be much help to him.

7. Every counselor should hear out the person seeking advice before giving his counsel. *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”* (Proverbs 18:13) Some counselors prematurely answer questions that were not asked or try to answer a matter

without hearing the entire issue. The Bible says that is not wise. I have yet to find a counselor who truly has what I call a “Baptist word of knowledge.” A counselor does not already know all of the problems, and he doesn’t already know everything that is needed without talking to the person. Perhaps a counselor’s speculations about the situation are right, but he should ask questions of the person seeking counsel. He cannot afford to decide his advice in advance.

8. When there is a two-party situation, every counselor should listen to both sides before giving advice. *“He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.”* (Proverbs 18:17) Two-party problems are best solved with two parties being present. For instance, I don’t do marriage counseling with only one spouse present. I must have both people present to try to fix the marriage relationship. I can fix an individual with that individual present. I can help an individual know how to live right, but I need to hear both sides of the story in a two-party problem. We counselors must make sure we listen to any and all sides of a dispute to be fair to all people involved.

9. Every counselor needs to preach to his people’s needs. *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.”* (Isaiah 61:1, 2) When we preachers preach to our people’s needs, we will prevent much one-on-one counseling or private counseling. By so doing, I am basically doing what I call “public counseling”; that is, counseling them as a group.

Many times, if our people hear the preaching, the preaching will solve their problems. Isaiah 61:1 and 2 lists some purposes of preaching: (1) to bind up the brokenhearted; (2) to proclaim liberty to those who are bound—by temper, by pride, by sins against the body, etc.; and (3) to comfort. What do we do in counseling? We bring comfort, help solve problems, and help people rise above the things that are destroying them.

Let me share a few ideas concerning this concept of counseling from the pulpit. I may go to my pulpit and say, “Because of counseling sessions lately, I have noticed that many of us are struggling with a certain situation. This evening I want to help all of us by using the Bible together to solve that particular problem.” We preachers cannot preach to our people’s needs when we get all our sermons from someone else. The Holy Spirit will lead

us to study our Bible and preach to our people's needs.

Through public counseling we preachers need to teach the people to do right. The time spent between the opportunity to do right and the actual doing of right will be spent rationalizing the doing of wrong. I have found when I preach on a certain subject that I am less likely to offend people with it than when I meet them face to face in my office. I am far better off making a statement to my people and letting it apply to 500 people in the building as opposed to making that statement to one person while in a one-on-one counseling appointment. When we get down to one-on-one counseling, it can be very hard on relationships. However, I will continue to preach the truth with or without the good relationship with my people, though I would not intentionally try to ruin the relationships I have built.

I have found there are seasons when people struggle more in given areas.

A. *During the Christmas and New Year seasons, people get very depressed.* Statistics show more suicides occur at that time than any other time of the year. Why? One reason is because people who are routinely lonely are extremely lonely at Christmastime because it is a family time. If a person has no family or is estranged from his family, depression can come.

Another cause of depression is people spending too much money during this season. When January arrives, facing the bills causes depression. During November, a wise pastor may want to begin to speak to his people about not overspending and being satisfied with what they have. I keep myself from having to counsel people in severe financial straits in January by counseling from the pulpit during November and December.

B. *During May, many must make new decisions.* Why? It is the natural time for graduation, and many people must make decisions about the future. People become easily confused at graduation time. What an important time for the pastor to be teaching on how to make decisions in life.

10. A counselor may often need to say, "May I talk to you here and now?" Counselors need to keep themselves in the mode of helping people. They must always remember that people are more important than things. People are also more important than business. When someone comes to me and asks a very simple question, I cannot be such an elitist about my pastoral duties that I say, "You may talk with me by getting an

appointment.” When a person comes to me to ask a question (and they often do), I try to answer the question on the spot. The reason why I try to answer the question immediately is because sometimes the person only wanted to ask, “Where are the lightbulbs so I can change a broken bulb?” Certainly, we will not always be able to stop in the hallway at church and help someone on the spot, but we surely should have our hearts prepared to help someone if we can.

If I can solve someone’s problem in one minute as opposed to scheduling them with a 30-minute appointment, I have obviously saved time. I try to answer the simple question with a simple answer. Simple people often ask simple questions, so counselors don’t need to be complicated counselors.

11. A wise counselor will use what I call the “line concept” after church to make himself more readily available to his people. Let me explain. If someone asks for an appointment, he is told, “If you will get in line at Dr. Owens’ door after the Sunday morning, Sunday evening, or Wednesday night church service, he will talk with you then.” After every church service, a line of people stand at my door. I speak with each person one at a time very quickly. Each person steps into my office and I ask, “What can I do for you?” The person may say, “I need an appointment.” Often I say, “Why don’t you ask your question now, and let’s see if we can take care of the matter now.” If I can answer the question then, I do. However, I only take a couple of minutes, and if I can’t answer immediately, I give the person an appointment.

I find utilizing the “line concept” to be very fair. Everyone gets an appointment the same way. I have a policy that the only way a person can get an appointment with me is to get in line at my office. All have equal access to the pastor in this way, and everyone knows how he can get to the pastor. This concept also gets a person into church so he can set up his appointment. I am amazed at how many times a person who won’t come to church regularly will come to church in order to get an appointment. However, I find if someone won’t come to hear the preaching, I can’t help him much anyway.

The “line concept” also helps me to know who has the character to do what I tell him. If someone won’t go through the effort of coming to my office for an appointment, I doubt that he is going to have the character to do what I tell him once he comes for the counseling time. I weed out many characterless people (who don’t really want help anyway) by adding one

little step to getting an appointment. I also find that usually the ones who won't come to my office for an appointment don't have the character to show up for the appointment. In Proverbs 20:5, the Bible says, "*Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.*" A person seeking counsel must at least make it to the well.

12. A counselor should not schedule a requested appointment for the same day unless it is a dire emergency. "*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*" (James 1:19) Allow me to quote from Dr. Wendell Evans: "An emergency today will be an emergency tomorrow." People will have emergencies crop up all the time. Most are not nearly the emergency as claimed. Some severe emergencies require an appointment that very same day; however, in most cases the person needs to wait for his appointment. Patience is the perfecter. God is capable of solving the problem without a counselor's help, and He may choose to do so while the person waits.

For instance, I wait three days before I counsel a marital disagreement. I look at those three days like a decontamination period. I try to give the couple a waiting period to adjust the pressure of the moment. Some people panic for a few hours and then give a sigh of relief and say, "I don't know why I acted like I did." The wise counselor will realize this volatility of people and let it run its course. A counselor still needs to meet with them later, but he also needs to let the panic run its course—especially in marriage situations.

13. The wise counselor will not counsel someone who says he has already received Bible counsel from a good Christian authority. "*Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.*" Acts 19:32 speaks about an assembly of confused people. I Corinthians 14:33 says, "*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*" Since the Bible cannot lie, surely God does not want His people confused. The Bible teaches that a lack of knowledge confuses us in many areas of our Christian life. According to Hosea 4:6, God's people are destroyed as a result of a lack of knowledge. God doesn't want one counselor to advise one thing and another counselor to advise something different because diverse advice will confuse the one who is seeking counsel. I have three reasons why I have a policy not to counsel a person who has already received counsel from another.

A. If the person rejected the counsel of counselor #1, he is

probably going to reject counsel from me as well. If he has already received counsel, why is he coming for more?

B. *The person who goes from counselor to counselor could be divisive.* I stay by my policy—I don't counsel people who have already sought counsel from someone else. Not every counselor starts a counseling session at the same place with the same approach, and that could cause division. Though they are heading toward the same destination, the different perspectives taken could cause trouble between two counselors.

C. *The person is more than likely looking for someone who agrees with him.* Many people look for someone who believes what they believe so they can do what they want to do anyway. In truth, the person is not wanting counsel; he is wanting agreement. He wants someone who thinks his way. That is exactly why some people won't come to me for counsel! They know I will disagree with them because they already know how I believe. "*In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 17:6)

At First Baptist Church of Hammond, we have many sincere men on our church staff who would not hurt anyone on purpose, and they love the people. Our pastor hired us to help him help his people, though we do not have the same years of experience or the same level of wisdom as he does. Some men on the pastoral staff have only five or ten years of experience. Some may have 15 or 20 or even 25 or 30 years of experience. Some, like Brother Hyles, even have 50 or more years of experience. So we have men on the pastoral staff with five to 50 years of experience. Let me illustrate by means of a chart.

If a person counsels with a staff man who has five years of experience, the staff man will definitely start the person seeking counsel in the right direction. However, the person seeking counsel will have four or five steps to take to get to the solution, but he will get there. The counselor with 25 years of experience will not take the person seeking counsel through so many steps. The distance between where the man is and his solution is a shorter distance just by virtue of his counseling experience. Though the counselor with lesser experience takes longer to arrive at a solution, he still arrives at the same solution. Suppose a person seeks counsel from a man with 50 years of experience. More than likely he has the solution. In one statement, he may be able to say, "This is exactly what you need to do." So

he gives a one-step solution. The solution is the goal, not how many steps it takes to reach the goal.

<i>A Counselor's Years of Experience</i>	<i>The Number of Counseling Steps It Will Take to Help Solve a Problem</i>						<i>The Counselor's Goal</i>
5 years of experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>Solve problem</i>
10 years of experience	1	2	3	4	5		<i>Solve problem</i>
20 years of experience	1	2	3	4			<i>Solve problem</i>
30 years of experience	1	2	3				<i>Solve problem</i>
40 years of experience	1	2					<i>Solve problem</i>
50 years of experience	1						<i>Solve problem</i>
<i>The Solution</i>							

COUNSEL HOPPING CONFUSES PEOPLE

When the person seeking counsel starts with a counselor with five years of experience, then hops to a counselor with 40 years of experience, then goes to the counselor with ten years of experience and back to the counselor with five years of experience, then back to the person with ten years of experience, he will be confused. It will also take more steps to solve the problem. People should be advised to go to a good, godly counselor and stay with him through all the steps he advises.

When someone counsels with two different people on the same subject, many times the end result is becoming bitter with leadership.

14. Every counselor should constantly claim wisdom. *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* (James 1:5) If a man wants wisdom, he must get it from God. He should ask God for wisdom, then ask God for wisdom and ask God for wisdom and ask God for wisdom. By faith we need to believe that God has given us some wisdom. I ask God for wisdom, and then I claim it by faith. A time may come when we are going to be making a couple hundred decisions a week. We don't have an hour to beg God for

wisdom for each decision. We have to make decisions claiming the wisdom God has given us. That is why we should be asking for wisdom all the time. Counselors must keep an abundance of wisdom in the storehouse of their minds and hearts.

15. Every counselor should prepare for counseling. The following are some ways I prepare for counseling that I would like to suggest to counselors:

A. Counselors need to read magazines in order to be knowledgeable on many subjects.

B. Counselors need to read newspaper editorials with caution. Sometimes a writer prepares an editorial about a topic when he has absolutely no concept of what it takes to be successful in that given field. He just happens to know how to write successfully. Knowing how to write well certainly does not make him a professional in that field about which he is writing. I personally am not very impressed with a person who makes a few hundred dollars a week writing a couple of paragraphs that critiques a millionaire.

C. Counselors need to live in the Bible. Joshua 1:8 says, “*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*” We need to read the Bible more than we study it. One reason why I don’t subscribe to newspapers is because I just can’t seem to find enough time in my schedule to read my Bible like I should. Someone may say, “Dr. Owens, you had better read all those other sources to be balanced.” What that person is really saying is that I should replace my Bible reading with other reading material. I don’t care how badly we think we need balance. I don’t believe I personally should pay that price to get balanced. The other reading is not necessarily sinful; it’s just not perfectly pure like the Bible.

D. Counselors need to learn to read history. History will help people to see from that which they have been saved.

E. Counselors need to read biographies of great men. I qualify that point by saying people need to assimilate the character of the person, but not necessarily his doctrine. Proverbs 13:20a says, “*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.*” When one reads the biographies of great men like John Wesley or Charles Finney or Martin Luther, he should read about their character and not their doctrine. Their

doctrine was not Baptist doctrine. *“Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.”* (Job 32:9)

F. Counselors need to learn geography. They need to become familiar with the countries of the world. If they know the Bible, they know it is also a geography book of different countries; even prophecy includes a study of geography.

G. Counselors should listen to the radio. Yes, listening to the radio can be good. However, one will have a hard time finding a radio station that doesn't play rock music at some time. Finding a Christian station that has not sold out to modernism is like finding a needle in a few thousand haystacks.

H. Counselors need to ask someone who is more experienced if they themselves gave the right counsel. In I Kings 12:6 the Bible says, *“And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?”* This Scripture illustrates the king seeking counsel from the older wise men. After a counselor has given advice, it may be wise for him to go to someone whom he trusts and ask, *“I advised thus-and-so. Is that the way you would have approached it?”* Some men believe they know everything. One thing that they don't know, but need to realize, is that they don't know everything.

I. When a person has a problem and does not ask for advice, the wise counselor will decide secretly how he would advise that person if he was consulted. Psalm 39:3 says, *“My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.”* David was a thinker who mused (thought or meditated) on the Word of God. The opposite of *muse* is *a-muse*. We live in a society that seeks amusement. What a blessing a counselor can be if someday someone comes seeking advice and the counselor has already done his homework by thinking through an appropriate answer.

J. Counselors should seek counsel and write down the advice they receive. I Kings 4:32 says, *“And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.”* Counselors need to have a log. The Bible indicates that Solomon took the time to write down questions and answers.

K. Counselors need to read and reread question-and-answer books. It is very wise to learn what other people have learned. *“The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him*

down.” (Job 18:7) Someone has said, “Every man knows something I do not know. I must probe until I find it; hence, all men are my teachers.”

L. Counselors need to be around all classes of people. The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus was around the poor. “*Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: Both low and high, rich and poor, together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.*” (Psalm 49:1–3) Jesus’ disciples were businessmen: one man owned a fishing business, one man was a tax collector, one was a doctor. We counselors need to learn to be comfortable around all classes of people if we are going to counsel all people. I don’t believe for a moment that Jesus was intimidated by a doctor or a tax collector. Not for one minute should a counselor be intimidated by any businessman.

M. Counselors need to learn to be around all races of people. Acts 2:1 says, “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*” Acts 2:5 says, “*And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*” Every race was present at Pentecost because God was interested in every race; God wanted all to be saved. The little song says, “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world.” Every man of every race is important to God.

16. Counselors must prepare themselves to understand that they cannot solve a person’s problems without that person’s help. Counselors can merely offer answers. They should not become depressed counselors because someone who has sought their help won’t do right.

17. Every counselor must prepare to weep. As his people are hurting, he will need to weep for them and with them. If his people hurt him, he will weep.

18. A wise counselor will prepare himself to be criticized for some of his principles. I would rather try to help and fail than to do as others do—try nothing and succeed. If we criticize someone for the help he gives another, we should stop and ask ourselves what we did for that needy person.

19. Every counselor needs to be prepared to walk alone. If the counselor is a good buddy to each person in his church, they have traded their counselor for a good buddy. If the counselor needs a friend, he should

try Jesus. The life of a counselor must be one of loneliness when it comes to human relationships.

20. Every counselor should be prepared to be unprepared. New situations will always arise. He can buy time by asking the person who is seeking counsel for time to pray about the situation. Then, he can go to the Bible and to other counselors to search for the proper answer. No person will ever know it all, so a counselor should not be shocked when it is proven he doesn't know all the answers!

Though I have been counseling since 1976, I still prepare daily to counsel people when they seek my help. When we don't prepare, we rob God, Who wants to help us; we rob ourselves of the learning experience; and we rob another of his time, which is his life. Let's be prepared!

IV

COUNSELING

AND

The Counselor
Personally Seeking Counsel

EVERYONE NEEDS PERSONAL counseling at one time or another. The following are some guidelines to help the person who helps others through counseling. I believe this chapter will be very interesting and helpful.

1. **A pastor should never seek counsel from his church members about personal matters.** Proverbs 11:12 says, "*He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.*" If a pastor goes to one of his people for counsel about personal matters, he has forced that member to give up his counselor. That member has also given up his pastor. How unwise for a pastor who is having marital problems to go to one of his deacons! How unwise for a pastor who is having problems with one of his children to seek advice from a church member! Very likely, that person will soon despise the situation. That person may even despise his pastor because his pastor revealed his weakness. A wise man needs to learn when to open and when to close his mouth. The people need to be able to come to their pastor for marriage counseling. How can a pastor do marital counseling if his own marriage is in trouble? If the pastor needs

personal help, he must go to a wiser man who is a pastor.

2. **It is acceptable to seek counsel from a church member about some personal business dealings.** *“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.”* (Proverbs 1:5) If the pastor needs some advice about a retirement program and has a layman with experience in that business, the wise counselor will seek counsel about that program with his layman. Perhaps the pastor is planning a building program; if so, seeking counsel from a layman who owns a construction company is acceptable. The wise pastor will get a certain amount of counsel from his deacons.

3. **The pastor should not regularly seek counsel from the same person.** He cannot create a system that will not function when all the participants are not present. Suppose the counselor is unavailable. A pastor needs to be careful not to create a situation in which he is paralyzed without his counselor. A pastor should have more than one counselor if it is necessary. As I mentioned elsewhere, it is very wise to have a cabinet of counselors.

4. **The pastor should read—especially biographies.** *“I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.”* (Jeremiah 5:5) God also gives warning in Job 32:9, which says, *“Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.”* It may be that a man may have had great character, but he may not have had the wisdom of God. Therefore, when reading biographies of great men, one needs to study their character as opposed to their doctrine. Many times great men of the past were not wise about the things of God, and their books promote incorrect doctrine. Reading biographies shows what other great men have accomplished. Deductive reasoning tells us that one way to get wisdom is by walking with the great men. *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise....”* (Proverbs 13:20) Since we cannot physically walk with D. L. Moody or J. Frank Norris or men of such distinction, we can read of them and therefore walk with them. Though we cannot physically walk with Christ, we can read His Word, which will help us to know His character and His wisdom.

I believe there are many ways to obtain wisdom. The following are three Scriptural ways to obtain wisdom:

A. **Other wise men.** Proverbs 13:20 says, *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”*

B. The hardships of life. Proverbs 29:15 says, “*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*” The Bible says that reproof brings wisdom. Often in Proverbs we find the word *reproof* attached to the word *wisdom*. Reproof can be hardship. When we discipline a child, he is learning not to do what he just did. What a good way for a child to get wisdom! Every person can obtain wisdom that way in life; however, I, like most, prefer to get wisdom in other ways! One way to obtain wisdom is by gleaning from someone else’s experience. I believe gleaning wisdom directly from the Word of God is the best teacher. When I was in school, I did not have the privilege of attending a Christian school. I must admit that I learned many things the hard way. I have many scars of learning that I would rather not have. But, I must say that I would rather have the education and the scars as opposed to not having an education.

C. The Word of God. We get wisdom from the Bible, which is packed full of wisdom. We can choose any passage and find that wisdom is there for the taking.

5. A counselor cannot trust the confidentiality of anyone in the world. “*A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.*” (Proverbs 29:11) Experience teaches that if we don’t want anyone to know a secret, then we don’t tell one person that secret. If a matter is totally confidential, we had better keep it confidential. If we want and need sympathy, we can go to Jesus. My wife sings a song with a line that says, “Tears are a language which God understands.” If we want to cry on someone’s shoulder, we can shed our tears in the sight of God and let Him take care of the problem. The wise counselor will not seek sympathy from his people.

6. Without divulging names, the wise counselor will ask his children about ways to counsel other children or ask his teenagers about how to counsel other teenagers. Proverbs 20:11 says, “*Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*” By doing so, the parent/child relationship is strengthened, and their concept of justice is developed. We might be surprised how much insight children have about children. In a sense, wisdom is being able to see life the way God sees it. Sometimes it is difficult to see problems through the eyes of children.

Allow me to illustrate this principle. One day, a lady took her son into a store that had an old-fashioned candy counter with glass jars full of colorful candy. The boy stood staring at the many different kinds of candy

while his mother did her shopping. Soon enough it was time to go. The storekeeper had watched the little boy admiring the candy and asked, "Ma'am, may I give your son some candy? He has been such a little gentleman." When she answered in the affirmative, the proprietor took down a jar and said, "Son, stick your hand in here and get a handful." The boy just stood there with his hands in his pocket. The storekeeper reiterated, "Son, it's free. Go ahead and take a handful." However, the little boy just stared. His mother even urged, "Go ahead, Son." The storekeeper tried another tactic, "Son, don't be afraid to get your candy," but the little boy wouldn't take a handful. Finally, the frustrated storekeeper reached into the candy jar and took a big handful and dropped it into the boy's pockets and said, "There you go, Son." The little boy smiled his thankfulness.

As he walked to the parking lot with his mother, she asked, "Son, why didn't you take the candy? That man was so nice to you." The little boy looked up at his mother and simply said, "He has a bigger hand."

This illustration teaches adults to see the world the way a child sees the world. Children may very well have ideas that will help in counseling by virtue of the fact that they are children—they see life differently than adults do. For instance, they have not developed all of the prejudices and biases of adults.

Let me share a personal illustration where I employed the idea of seeking counsel from a teenager. A public school Bible Club teenager transferred to our Christian schools. Needless to say, it was a total culture shock. By the time she received her first report card, I had already heard that she had failed algebra. When she finally came to my office, I said, "I want to talk to you about your report card. Do you have it with you?" Reluctantly, she took it from her purse and laid it on my desk.

I said, "Before we start, I would like for you to sit in my chair behind the desk. I am going to sit where you would sit. You will be Brother Owens, and I will be you. I want you to advise me about my report card, which I have placed on your desk."

She said, "First of all, I would say to you that I understand what a big difference there is between a public high school and the Christian school. I would say that I understand that up until just two months ago, the teachers never made you do anything; you didn't have to study to pass. I would also understand that you don't have any friends in the new school because they are afraid of you. After all, you are the 'ex-public school kid.' I would say that I understand your parents don't come to church. I

understand that it is tough to go to this new school. I would also tell you that you had better work hard and bring up your grades.” After giving all that advice, she was nearly in tears, and rightfully so.

I said, “Good enough. Now you come to your seat, and I’ll take mine. Please listen to me carefully. The first thing that I want you to understand is that I understand what a culture shock going to our Baptist school has been for you. I realize that all the way through your sophomore and junior years of school you never had to study one time, yet you passed. You came to our school, and now you have had to make it on your own. That must be very hard. I want you to know that I understand our young people at the Christian school are going to be scared of you because you don’t know much about our kind of Christianity. It must be tough not to have friends.” She nodded her head in agreement. When I picked up her report card, she was trying to hold back the tears because she knew I was going to look at her card. I said, “Please always do your best,” as I handed her the report card without looking at it. “By the way, if I could find some people who would be friendly, would you like that?”

“Yes!”

This entire scenario was my seeking counsel from a teenager, and she gave me such good advice. Certainly, it will not be wise to counsel every teenager by letting him tell what he thinks should be done in his situation; but from time to time, their ideas may help.

7. A counselor needs to seek professional counsel only from someone more advanced in his same field of expertise. “*Also Jonathan David’s uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni was with the king’s sons.*” (I Chronicles 27:32) This verse teaches giving preference to an older man with more experience. While at college, a freshman student should not seek counsel from another freshman student. Ninety-nine times out of 100, a man who is in his first year of the pastorate should not seek counsel from another man in his first year of the pastorate. A man who has been married for six months should not seek counsel about his marriage from a man who has also been married six months. A man who has children should not seek counsel about how to rear children from a person who has no children.

I am not discounting the fact that we can learn from the Bible about rearing children. We can also learn from a counselor if he teaches from the Bible about rearing children. However, I do think a parent would be better off seeking counsel from a person with children who would teach him Bible

principles. In this case, he gets that person's experience, plus the Word of God, plus that person's wisdom. This is not an issue of good and bad; it is an issue of better and best.

8. A counselor should not seek counsel from his wife unless it is in her field of expertise and he plans to follow her advice. "*A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.*" (Proverbs 19:13) I cannot begin to say how unwise it is for a man to seek counsel from his wife and then not to follow her advice. First, a person should not seek counsel from someone he does not trust. The trust placed in any counselor should be predetermined because one should not seek opinions when seeking counsel. He is supposedly seeking answers. If he has no trust in a particular person's answers, he should not go to that person in the first place.

If a man rejects his wife's counsel, he will cause his own marital problem. "*The continual dropping*" is like the constant sound of dripping water. A contentious wife is a quarrelsome wife who sounds like the constant dripping of water. A man should not seek counsel from his wife unless he plans to follow her advice. Her self-worth is damaged by his asking and then not following her advice. Every wife needs to be reminded continually that she is important and that her ideas and thoughts are important.

Let me share an illustration: A lady in my adult Sunday school class suddenly became very critical and negative. When I mentioned it to my wife, she said, "Would you like to know why? I believe I know what has happened. She has gained some extra weight, and she is embarrassed. She thinks everyone notices her weight gain; therefore, she is negative toward others in an effort to build up herself. I believe she would stop pointing out others' negatives if she could get some help on taking care of her own." My wife wisely began to help her. The lady began to look better and started feeling better about herself. When that happened, she stopped seeing so many negatives. My wife's counsel was good advice.

My wife Schery happens to be a licensed cosmetologist and aesthetician, as well as a Hyles-Anderson College graduate. I always ask for my wife's advice in her area of expertise. It is obvious to me that in this case she solved a potential problem in my Sunday school class that could have easily escalated.

9. The counselor cannot bring problems home to his wife. Proverbs 19:14 says, "*House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a*

prudent wife is from the LORD.” A good wife is a gift from God. The wise counselor will make his house his castle and his wife a queen, and he will be the king of the castle. As I have mentioned elsewhere, if we want our home to be a haven, we must work to keep it that way. Therefore, it is unwise to bring home all the problems from the church or work. One reason is because the wife was not created to carry the burden that man was created to carry. She is to be the completer.

Did you know that a pastor is to pastor his wife as well? When I arrive home, my wife might ask, “Honey, have you had a tough day?” I might say, “Yes, but from the moment I got home and saw you, I have forgotten it all!” That may sound far-fetched, but that is how I want my home to be. I need my home to be a haven. Schery is my queen. If I am going to be a king, then I need to keep it that way. One way is to keep my burdens away from home.

Allow me to share an illustration: As a man went into work one day, a coworker was watching him walk to the factory door. There he performed a daily ritual. He took off an imaginary coat and hung it on an imaginary coat rack outside the factory door. Then he took a different imaginary coat off an imaginary hanger and put it on. Then he walked into the factory. After work, the coworker watched him leave work, take off the imaginary coat, and hang it up. Then he took the first imaginary one from the imaginary hanger and put it back on. He walked to his car, got in, and left. Every day the coworker watched him pull in, take off an imaginary coat, hang it up, put on another, go to work, get off work, taking off his imaginary shop coat, hang it up, put the other back on, and drive home.

Finally, the spectator gathered the courage to ask, “What are you doing?” The man replied, “Right now, I am wearing my ‘home coat.’ It is for my wife and children so I never wear it into the shop. I hang it here so I can leave the problems and burdens of home outside my place of work. Then I put on my ‘shop coat’ as I go to work. All of the time I am working, I want to give my boss 100 percent. When I am finished working, I hang up my ‘shop coat’ and leave my work problems behind. I put on my ‘home coat’ before I go home to my wife and kids.”

This illustration teaches me to keep my home a haven.

10. A counselor cannot share his burdens with anyone just to get sympathy. Psalm 86:15 says, “*But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*” Since God is a God of compassion, understanding, grace, and mercy, He will take care of us. It doesn’t take long to discover that leadership gives

strength. It does not take strength. The counselor should use his work to build the people, not the people to build his work. He should not seek sympathy from others constantly. Instead, he needs to let people seek sympathy from him.

11. He cannot let his burdens become obvious to the people. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55:22) A counselor should be a burden bearer, as Galatians 6:2 instructs: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” If a counselor’s burdens become too obvious to the people, they will be afraid to seek counsel from him. They may think, “I can’t put any more on him; things are already too tough for my pastor.” A counselor should let God bear his burdens. I can promise that if a counselor takes his burdens to the Lord and leaves them there, God can take care of them. While God carries His counselor’s burdens, the counselor can help carry another’s load.

12. A pastor cannot share negative letters—either publicly or privately. “Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.” (Nehemiah 6:17–19) There is no sense in publicizing problems. If a pastor is unwise enough to read a negative letter in private, he is even more unwise to read it to his congregation. What was known by perhaps two people is now known to all.

The Bible says in Romans 16:19 that a Christian is to remain simple concerning that which is evil: “For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” People don’t need to know the negatives. I find it amusing how people stay so active searching out negatives, but are so inactive when searching out positives. Usually the person who knows the most negatives also knows less positives than anyone else. The counselor must fill his life and the lives of his people with positives.

Many times negative letters are anonymous. It is best to not read anonymous letters. The first thing one should find out when receiving a letter is whether or not it is signed. If the sender doesn’t have the courage to sign his letter, why should the receiver waste his time reading it? When

someone sends an anonymous letter, there is always a reason why he doesn't have the courage to sign it. Most unsigned letters are critical or negative, though, at times, a few may be positive. For that reason, it is generally more wise to read only signed letters.

13. The pastor should seek counsel concerning how to counsel difficult cases. Exodus 18:26 says, "*And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.*" The Bible has answers to man's problems. In Exodus, the Bible gives an account of men who helped lift Moses' counseling load. If they did not know the answers, the counselors went to Moses and received the correct counsel. If a person seeks counsel, and the person seeking counsel presents a particularly difficult case, the wise counselor will seek counsel from another counselor instead of taking a chance on giving wrong counsel. Counseling is not like Russian roulette. A counselor is not supposed to take chances with people's lives; their problems are not games.

14. The counselor needs to learn to counsel with himself. "*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.*" (Psalm 143:5) In this verse two words are very important—*meditate* and *muse*. Musing is thinking or concentrating. The best way to repeat the recipe for a good day is to meditate and then write down what happened on a good day and repeat the cycle. Likewise, when having a bad day, muse; then record the events and don't repeat the cycle. That procedure is counseling oneself. It is meditating or musing. A great counselor learns to use his mind.

15. The counselor needs to learn to counsel himself about depression. A young mother came to me for counsel and said, "Dr. Owens, I hate to admit it, but I am depressed."

I asked, "Can you affix the time when the depression started?"

She said, "Yes, it started this past September."

I asked, "Is there a time of the day when you seem to be more depressed?"

She thought about it and said, "Yes, sir. In the morning about nine o'clock or so."

I questioned, "Is there a time of the day when your depression seems to stop?"

"I usually come out of it about three o'clock in the afternoon."

"Now, let's see if we can ascertain what might be causing this depression. Do you have any children?"

“One, a daughter,” she replied.

“How old is she?” I asked.

“Five,” she answered.

“Is your daughter in kindergarten?” I asked. When she answered in the affirmative, I asked, “Did she start in September?”

I was able to tell her that her depression started when she got out of her usual routine. “You cared for your daughter every morning for five years; suddenly, in September, she went off to school. At 9:00 A.M., your loneliness and loss of routine hits you. At 3:00 P.M., you become encouraged because your daughter arrives home and relieves your depression.”

It is important to have a rhythm, a routine, and predictability in life. Another lady sought counseling for her depression. After the same line of questioning, we discovered the source of her depression was her husband’s shift change. I advised this lady to readjust her schedule with specific things to do. The depression problem was solved with a little thinking.

If a pastor will counsel himself in this way, he may well avoid some times of depression. As I said before, there is security in rhythm or routine—a schedule, if you please.

16. The wise counselor will plan a time for his burdens. Once I counseled a man named Joe, whom I won to Christ. One of Joe’s burdens was the death of his brother as a result of drunken driving. This accident was literally tearing Joe’s family apart. Joe came to me and asked, “Do you think you can talk to my parents? My mom cries all day long since my brother died; the doctors fear she will have a nervous breakdown.”

I went to see them, and I had the privilege of winning the parents to the Lord. I began to counsel with Joe’s mother. “Ma’am, there is nothing in the world wrong with crying over the death of your son, but what we need to do is to schedule your times of grieving. For instance, visit his grave one time a week and cry then. You are robbing your husband and children who are living by continually mourning the death of this son. I believe it is fine for you to have this burden and for you to cry over your loss, but you must grieve at the appropriate time.”

In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, the Bible says there is a time for everything: “*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a*

time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.”

Joe’s mother and I scheduled a time once a week for her to visit the cemetery. I advised her to cry and remember the good times, then to go home and forget. I advised her to spend a large portion of the day marking the anniversary of her son’s death, looking at photo albums and his obituary. I told her to spend half the day crying and grieving for her son and what might have been. Then I told her to dry her eyes and make cookies for her living children and rejoice that she still had them to hold, hug, and love. Joe’s mom did as I suggested, and the result changed her life and the lives of her family members incredibly. Schedule a time for burdens.

I trust these many points will aid the wise counselor in choosing to seek help as needed.

V

COUNSELING AND The Power of the Holy Spirit

IN LUKE 4:18, the Bible says, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”*

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18)

A counselor must learn many lessons if he wants to successfully help people. I believe a reader could glean much and learn many necessary lessons from this book. However, I wonder if the most important lesson is contained within these few pages of this chapter about the Holy Spirit of God. Without the Holy Spirit’s guidance and fullness in his life, the counselor will fail at achieving the kind of success that God wants him to experience as a counselor. Therefore, a counselor should often ask God for His Holy Spirit’s power.

The following nine points could revolutionize the counselor’s life and his ministry.

1. God wants to pour out His Spirit upon His man. *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons*

and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (Joel 2:28, 29) These verses are not limited to just pastors, but are intended for "all flesh," which means young and old alike. Anyone who wants to help people should not do it by his own power but in the Holy Spirit's power.

2. **The anointing of the Holy Spirit equips one for counseling or any task done for God.** Acts 10:38 teaches, "...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Since the Holy Spirit was a necessary part of the ministry of Jesus Christ, how can one possibly think that anointing to be anything less than important? God's Son needed that anointing of the Holy Spirit, and so does a counselor.

3. **If the counselor would simply yield himself to the Spirit, the anointing will be made available to him.** This principle is taught in Luke 11:8 and 13 which says, "I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" God wants every Christian to have His power, which is readily available to every Christian. The counselor and the person seeking counsel need to be filled with God's Spirit.

4. **The power of the Holy Spirit is, in a sense, God making His mind available to a person so that that person might do any task that He appoints him to do.** Ephesians 3:16 says, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

Also, Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." This verse definitely indicates to me that one can possess the mind of Christ.

5. **Being filled with the Holy Spirit will help a counselor in his ministry of comforting people.** Read John 14:26, which says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." A man can only bring comfort from the outside to the inside; but with the Holy Spirit's power, he can bring comfort from the inside to the outside.

6. **The Holy Spirit will never lead a counselor contrary to the**

Word of God. II Peter 1:20 and 21 says, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” There are no contradictions or disagreements between the Holy Spirit and the King James Bible; they work in perfect unison.

I Peter 1:12 says, “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

The Spirit of God makes the Word of God come alive to the counselor and the person who is seeking counsel. John 6:63 says, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” The word *quickeneth* can be translated to *come alive*.

7. The wise counselor will not only ask God that he personally be filled with the Spirit of God, but that the person with whom he is counseling also desire the Holy Spirit’s leading. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:11)

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (Revelation 2:17)

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Revelation 2:29) There are many counseling Scriptures which allude to the thought that not only should the person counseling yield to the Holy Spirit, but that it is also wise for the person seeking help be yielded to the Holy Spirit.

8. The wise counselor will realize that the freedom from the bondage of sin desired by the person seeking counsel may be found only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (II Corinthians 3:17) In this verse, the word *liberty* means *to be free*. The Holy Spirit should feel free to control man, which means that He would want to lead man away from sin and the captivity of sin. His guidance through the Word of God and life is much more dependable than being guided by one’s emotions and the philosophies of men.

9. A wise counselor will frequently beg God for the power of

the Holy Spirit. *“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”* (Psalm 37:4)

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7) Because God is omniscient, He alone knows everything. As a counselor, I have learned that without the power of the Holy Spirit of God, those details that are unseen by my human eye will go undetected; but with the help and direction of the Holy Spirit, I can lead people to more successful Christian lives.

Thank God He gave us the Holy Spirit to do through us, to us, and for us what we cannot do ourselves.

VI

COUNSELING

AND

Character

THE BIBLE SAYS in I Kings 3:16-28, “Then came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. And this woman’s child died in the night; because she overlaid it. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the

living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof. And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment."

I Kings 3:16-28 records a story in which two harlots came to King Solomon for his wisdom and discernment in settling a dispute. They had been living in the same house, and each had a young child. No other people were living in the house with them. During the night, one of the women accidentally smothered her child. She went to the mother of the living child who was sleeping and exchanged her dead baby for the living one. The next day both claimed the living baby.

They had to take this issue to Solomon. They stood before Solomon, and each gave her side of the story. In order to resolve the problem, Solomon called for a sword to divide the young child into two pieces—one for each mother. The genuine mother pleaded for the baby's life and offered to give the child to the other woman, who declared, "*Divide it.*" No doubt Solomon had no question about who was the real mother. He saw the mother's love.

In this story, we find two harlots who were intelligent enough to seek counsel. Another point of significance in the story of these immoral women was the fact that they had the character to seek counsel from a wise man of God. I find that people who seek counsel are usually people of character and wisdom. By seeking counsel, a person will benefit in two ways: (1) he will receive direction for developing more character; (2) he will learn with the help of a counselor how **not** to destroy the character he has already gained.

Because the Bible gives many instances of people needing and seeking counsel, let me share some principles I have learned which have helped me to be open to counsel.

1. **The counselor should not be guilty of never seeking counsel.** Proverbs 11:14 says, "*Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*" Deuteronomy 32:28 says, "*For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.*" These two verses teach the importance of seeking counsel. Remember, even the two harlots showed enough wisdom to seek counsel in order to settle their dispute. If two women, obviously living in sin, went to a man of God for counsel, should not Christians receive counsel, too?

However, some Christians never seek counsel. Never seeking counsel

means trouble. At one time or another, every person needs to seek counsel. I have found that most people (if not all people) who leave God's will leave it because they never sought or received counsel. People with character seek counsel.

So why do some Christians never seek counsel? I believe there are two main reasons for never seeking or receiving counsel.

A. Because the Christian plans to counsel himself. This is certainly not best, nor is it enough. The following three verses adequately explain why. Job 18:7b tells me, "...his own counsel shall cast him down." Jeremiah 7:24 says, "But they hearkened not, ...but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward." Seeking and trusting my own counsel will take me backward. Psalm 5:10b says, "let them fall by their own counsels." The Christian may choose to counsel himself, but the result is usually self-destruction.

B. Because the Christian feels that if he asks for help with a problem, his weakness will be revealed. Perhaps he mistakenly thinks that after he reveals his weakness to a leader, he will lose future opportunities. Perhaps he believes the counselor will hold his weakness against him. However, after seeking counsel, a person often leaves with answers to his problems. The truth is that a person is actually *more* qualified to lead after receiving and following counsel than before he sought advice.

When a person seeks counsel, he is better qualified for leadership, not less qualified. People who seek counsel usually become excellent leaders. The Bible gives a record of only one Person Who needed no counsel and was a success. Isaiah 40:13 and 14 says, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" If we don't think we need any counsel, we must presume we are God because He is the only One Who has never needed counsel from anybody. We become our own god. Never seeking or accepting counsel can be equated with having no character.

2. A counselor should not be guilty of seeking unwise counsel. Psalm 1:1a teaches, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." Job 22:18b says, "But the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Proverbs 12:5 informs us that "...the counsels of the wicked are deceit."

Christians should seek counsel from seasoned, older, and wiser people.

In I Kings 12:8-13, the account of Rehoboam seeking counsel from the young men instead of the old men is given; and, as a result of his lack of discernment, he split the kingdom. I'm sure Rehoboam didn't think the counsel he received would be so detrimental to his people. The same is true of Christians today. Receiving and accepting unwise counsel could cause a church split or a divided family or even division in one's own home. Why? Bad counsel was sought, accepted, and followed! The reason some Christians seek counsel from people their own age is because they don't want truthful and right counsel. They want someone who will agree with them so that they may do whatever they please.

Accepting and following unwise counsel brings tragedy. *"Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."* (Numbers 31:16) According to I Chronicles 10:13, accepting bad counsel caused Saul's death. Accepting and following unwise counsel usually ends in devastation. Another result of listening to unwise counsel is a low character level.

3. A counselor should seek counsel from a wise person as often as necessary. Proverbs 13:20a teaches, *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."* The Bible says in Proverbs 4:7a that *"Wisdom is the principal thing."* This verse means that the obtaining of wisdom is urgent. One way to obtain wisdom is by seeking counsel from wise people as often as necessary. Wisdom, for man, is being able to see life the way God sees it. The two harlots of I Kings 3 sought counsel in order to settle a conflict. Surely one would want to have as much wisdom as these harlots displayed in seeking counsel.

One person from whom counsel should be sought is a soul winner. In Proverbs 11:30 the Bible says, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."*

A person I deem wise once said to me, "Before I preach, I run. My whole goal is to get my heart pumping to get my blood circulating to help get the fresh oxygen from my lungs to my brain. When I step into the pulpit, I'm fresh! My mind is keener and sharper."

After considering this man's practice of running before preaching, I decided that I would do the same thing. Before I go to the pulpit and preach, I go soul winning and try to get somebody saved every time I have the opportunity. Why? I want to get the "blood" flowing! I am speaking of

the blood of Christ. There is nothing that will give a preacher more confidence when walking into a pulpit than having won someone to Christ—having caused the “blood” to flow! We counselors must get our counsel from soul winners and people who believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and from those who share that good news with others.

I believe the only stupid question is the unasked question. I have four children. Since they were little, they have asked me, “Why, Daddy?” I hope that my oldest boy, Jeff, who is now 15 years old, will still ask at 16, “Why, Daddy?” I hope that when he is 18 he still says, “Why, Daddy?” When he is 21, I hope he will say, “Teach me, Dad. Help me to develop my character.”

4. A person who has no character has no counsel to offer and will find few people who will trust him. Often, a person who has no character misrepresents himself so that it may seem to others that he is a man of character. Sad to say, the few who do trust him usually pay a great price.

5. A counselor with no character may have good sense and may talk a good talk, but he cannot walk a good walk. Dr. Wendell Evans, the president of Hyles-Anderson College, for years has made this statement: “Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.” Sooner or later, the person with little or no character who looks and sounds good will fail in his Christian walk.

6. A counselor should develop his own personal character for the sake of God and the people he plans to help. “*Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*” (Philippians 1:27) In the Bible, the word *conversation* has a much broader meaning than having a conversation with someone; it means our Christian walk. Paul was saying to the Christians in Philippi to live so that their daily affairs of life were above reproach.

“*Where no counsel is, the people fall.*”
(Proverbs 11:14a)

VII

COUNSELING

AND

The Counselor's Office Decor,
Manner, and Procedures

THIS CHAPTER WILL involve some general ideas and practical helps for the counselor's office. Certainly, the way to decorate the office is not mentioned in the Bible. I believe God thought we would be intelligent enough to be first-class in this particular matter.

1. **The counselor's office should be decorated in good taste and look professional.** The office should be color-coordinated; certain colors go well together. Certain designs and patterns clash such as a striped wallpaper and a polka-dotted border. One may wisely choose to let his wife or a decorator help decorate the office. The colors chosen need to be warm colors; they should not be bright. I talked to a gentleman recently who works for one of the oldest law firms in Chicago. He told me how their buildings and offices were maintained. For instance, he said the doors where people enter are cleaned three times a day to make sure no fingerprints are on them! I like that professionalism! I believe a church should be as professional and clean as any other building in town. God's people should be clean people.

2. **When possible, a counselor should have two seating arrangements in his office.** The first arrangement would be a business type of seating arrangement: the counselor is seated at his desk, and a person sits in a chair in front of the desk. The second setting would be a more relaxed type of seating arrangement—a living room type of seating. The counselor and the person seeking counsel can sit comfortably and relaxed during the counseling session.

3. **A counselor should have a comfortable waiting room.** The waiting room could have some of the following for those waiting for their appointment:

A. Good reading material. Books of philosophy or books of Christian poetry, the Christian school yearbooks, or a church directory all would provide enjoyable reading. People enjoy looking at photographs. However, I recommend to never place controversial items of reading in the waiting room because these often cause frustration. It is probably not wise to have sports magazines in the waiting room because there is no way to regulate the contents. A Bible should definitely be available.

B. Promotional items. Perhaps a pastor had a big day at his church, and some special bookmarks were printed to commemorate that day. Those bookmarks could be placed in the waiting room with a little sign that says, "Free! Please take one." I believe it is second-class to distribute old, dated material, but some things could be used and would be enjoyable to have.

C. A little bowl of wrapped candy. Temperature changes cause unwrapped candy to stick together, and that "glob" of candy would not be appealing or appetizing. People also tend to touch candy. When one person handles unwrapped candy, no one will want any.

D. Little games. Mind teasers create a lot of enjoyment and fun, as well as keep people occupied.

E. Comfortable seating. By all means, provide people with chairs that are comfortable, especially if their wait is an extended one.

F. Pictures or photographs. A photo of one's church staff or the Christian school staff, a picture of the church building, or even a picture of the board of deacons are all acceptable ideas that could be enlarged, framed, and displayed as a part of the waiting room decorations.

G. Air-conditioning. Not only should the waiting room be well air-

conditioned, it should also be well-heated.

H. Carpeting. One should be careful in choosing carpeting, both in the office and the waiting room. He should choose carpet that will wear well and carpet that will not readily show grime.

4. If the appointment is for a businessperson, the wise counselor could do some extra things in the waiting room for that person. The use of a freestanding hallway marquee could be used to greet people coming for an appointment. The words, "Welcome, Mr. John Smith, Smith's Paper Corp." would be very impressive. Possibly the gift of a clipboard or portfolio with the name of the church imprinted on the front could be offered as a gift to make note-taking easier during the appointment.

Have a host on hand to greet the businessperson. The host could be a retired gentleman who would love to do something for his church.

Refreshments could be made available. A counselor could use such things as hot water and tea bags or coffee so people could prepare a drink. I have been in pastors' waiting rooms where the ladies of the church provided individually wrapped homemade cookies. A little professional sign was beside the plate which said, "Free! Please take one." Napkins were also provided. I could not help but think what a generous thing for someone to do.

5. A counselor needs to learn to deal with professional people with extra care. The following are principles I employ when dealing with professional people:

A. I believe it is important to start an appointment with a professional person exactly on time. When a professional waits unnecessarily in a waiting room for an appointment, he may think the counselor is lazy. Seeing a professional person early may well promote the idea of an unorganized counselor. See the professional on time.

B. When dealing with a professional person, a counselor needs to be interested in him as a person. Though he may have money, he is a human being who needs love, no matter how professional he is. Professionals have human frailties and needs like everyone else.

C. A professional needs to know that a counselor is a busy person just as he is. I assure you that professional people will not be faithful to a church with a lazy pastor. Professional people want to be around those who are professional. They will not bring business associates to visit a church if they are ashamed of the Christians in the church.

D. A counselor needs to learn all he can about the professional

people seeking counsel. He should know where his office building is located, the name of his business, and perhaps some of his business associates. He can tell that person honestly, "I know of your business." Don't you feel good when someone says, "I know about your ministry; I have heard about your church"? It never hurts to make small talk.

E. *It is unwise to schedule an appointment for a businessperson on a drop-in type basis.* He needs to obtain an appointment, just like everyone else. I have no doubt he will appreciate the astuteness of the counselor. If a businessman feels he can drop in anytime he wants, sooner or later he will see the situation as careless.

F. *While the professional is in a counselor's office, the counselor should ask him if he has family needs or if he can pray for him and his business.* When dealing with a professional person, it is not always wise to witness to him the very first time he is in the office. A businessperson needs to see a pastor is not just out to get something from him; nor should the pastor let the businessman think the pastor wants him to build the pastor's business. A businessman needs to find out first that the counselor is real, then present the Gospel. Let me explain. I am for confrontational evangelism. I am just saying that with businessmen, a counselor cannot be a "pushy salesperson." Believe me, they know the technique very well.

G. *When dealing with a businessperson, a counselor needs to make sure that he has on hand everything needed for the appointment.* Mentally, he needs to think through the appointment and research to prepare for this particular appointment. I believe a professional looks very disdainfully at the counselor who has to leave his office many times to find a piece of paper, a file, a pencil, an eraser, or a phone number. Advance preparation is needed to think of every problem or need before starting the appointment. I call this method of organization "preventive maintenance" instead of "breakdown maintenance."

H. *A counselor needs to be careful not to be too humorous with the professional.* Although there is nothing wrong with using some humor, it should not be used as a sales pitch. The counselor needs to strive to become the professional's friend.

I. *When his appointment time is finished, it might be very wise to escort him not only to the door of the office but also to his car.* This

is called being a good host.

J. A counselor needs to let other people know who the businessperson is. By all means, the counselor should introduce the businessperson to his staff.

K. A counselor needs to write the businessperson immediately. He needs to thank him for coming to the appointment.

L. He needs to learn the businessperson's name and use it in their conversation. A professional person who carries himself well will use the names of his people, and he will use their names often.

M. When shaking the hand of the professional (anyone's hand for that matter), a counselor needs to shake his hand like a man. When shaking someone's hand, don't give him a high five. Make the handshake firm and appropriate.

6. A counselor needs to have good lighting in the office. I recommend that soft lighting which has a bit of a haze be used because it cuts the glare. People should not be blinded by shiny, bright, or blinding lights. The counselor needs to watch for shadows because people are apt to let their attention be drawn to shadows. Windows should have window treatments to cut down on bright sunshine. Eye contact is very important when dealing with people.

7. A counselor should have a window to open or air conditioning to turn on in the office. A room can get stuffy when the door is closed for extended periods of time. Opening a window or turning on an air conditioner at a low setting can be a breath of fresh air.

8. A few conversation pieces should be made visible to the people seeking counsel. It is important to have casual conversation with people so they will relax. Conversation pieces usually relay to those seeking counsel that a counselor is human, too. The following are some suggested conversation pieces to place in the office.

A. A picture of the family. I believe every man should have a picture made with his family. Someday, he will regret not having a family picture because a family picture promotes the family; and in this day and age, people need to have the family promoted.

B. A picture of your wife. I recommend a picture of just your wife or maybe a picture of you and your wife together. Above my desk in my office at First Baptist Church, I have a picture of my wife. First, I like to have a picture of Schery so I can think about her. In fact, I want her to know that I do so. Another reason for having a picture

of my wife is so the women who come for counseling cannot miss the fact that I have a wife to whom I am happily married. If a woman was immediately convinced that her counselor was a happily married man with a family he loved, she may be less likely to be inappropriate.

C. Other pictures. When a person comes to my office, one of the first things he sees are some pictures of my heroes. I also have a picture of my soccer team. I have coached soccer for years, and having a picture of my team helps me to think about my players. At the same time, many people with whom I counsel are interested in sports, and that photo gives us a common interest. I have a winter scene with a big buck standing majestically on a mountain. I also have a summer scene with a lake of fish. Some will come into my office and say, "I love that winter picture. That deer is beautiful!" I say, "Yes, I love winter, too. The deer is beautiful (especially through the scope of a gun!)." Someone else may say, "Oh, I love that summer scene; I just love summer." I can agree with that person, too. I have both pictures for the sake of conversation.

9. A counselor should have tissues available on the desk for the person seeking counsel. *"I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies."* (Psalm 6:6, 7) People will shed tears, and the tissues will be very needed and important.

10. The wise counselor will choose carefully where to sit. As I said before, a counselor should have two seating arrangements—one business and one relaxed. He needs to be very careful in choosing which setting to use. It is better to start in a formal setting and change to the informal seating. The way to determine where to sit depends upon the need.

11. A counselor also needs to choose carefully how to sit. Every man needs to learn how to sit tall with his shoulders back and his feet flat on the floor. Every man needs to learn how to cross his legs. There is nothing wrong with a seated man crossing his legs at the knees if it is done correctly. A man should not sit like a woman or in an effeminate way. Neither should he slouch.

12. A counselor needs to be careful about the odor in the office. Whether or not he is aware of any odor doesn't mean anything; the office probably has an odor. My wife has a cute statement she makes when teaching her college course: "It is an amazing thing that our mouth and nose are very close. Nobody's nose is closer to our mouth than our own, but

we are the last one to know that we have bad breath!”

A counselor can spend a lot of time in his office, yet be the last one to realize that the office smells bad because he is accustomed to the odor. A counselor needs to make use of air fresheners. He also needs to be cautious about eating in the office because the furniture, carpeting, and curtains will absorb food odors. This odor buildup is one of the reasons for having a window or an air conditioner which will circulate fresh air to keep the office smelling clean. A counselor should have the upholstery cleaned periodically to eliminate smells. As I said before, God’s people should be clean.

13. The counselor’s desk should look used, but it should not look cluttered. There should be work on the desk, but it should be organized work. Some will have to fake their way through this point. There are others who will have a rude awakening when they find out just how busy the work of God can be.

14. The wise counselor will have a clock visible at all times. The clock needs to be visible in whatever seating arrangement the counselor chooses to use. The clock should be easily seen, but it should not be obvious to the person seeking counsel that the counselor is occasionally watching the time. He should place the clock where he can glance over the shoulder of the person being counseled and notice the time without it being obvious. A clock is better than a watch because the person being counseled cannot help but see a counselor looking at a watch.

15. A counselor must learn to stay on schedule. He can do this by starting the counseling session by saying, “I apologize that our time is brief today, but we do have the next 30 minutes. Let’s not waste any of that time. I am so glad you came.” With some people, no matter how much time they are allotted, it will never be adequate. Because a counselor is busy with other duties, he must learn to stay on schedule.

16. The wise counselor will have personal office supplies. I personally keep all of the following in my office: breath freshener, hairspray, toothbrush and toothpaste, an extra suit of clothing, a lint brush, shoe polish, a comb, fingernail clippers, antiperspirant, washcloth, soap and towel, razor and shaving cream. Of course, the personal supplies another counselor may choose to have on hand would be different from mine.

I trust this list of practical helps will be an aid in planning an office that is first-class and professional.

VIII

COUNSELING

AND

The Counselor's Wardrobe
and Grooming

THE BIBLE SAYS in I Corinthians 14:40, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" Because of this verse, I believe a counselor should show concern for his own wardrobe, as well as his personal grooming habits. A counselor may find occasion to teach and instruct others with this material, but it will be better taught if it is practiced. As I mentioned elsewhere, Dr. Wendell Evans, the president of Hyles-Anderson College, often quotes, "Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks."

1. **To dress well is to represent Christ well.** Counselors are in constant public exposure and should give a good impression to all. They never have a second chance to make a first impression. A person's clothing reveals how he feels about himself, what he thinks of authority and God, and what his attitude is toward others. Therefore, a counselor must dress properly because of Who owns him.

2. **It would be wise for the counselor to give much thought to the planning and preparation of his wardrobe.** Looking our best doesn't just happen. It takes time and motivation. It takes shopping to fit our

wardrobe to our budget. It takes caring enough to be well-groomed and well-dressed. A person should not be in a hurry and buy things that are too cheap. He needs to set money aside and use it wisely for the purpose of looking his best.

3. **A person needs to ask God to help him in this area.** He needs to learn to pray for his clothing.

4. **A person does not need to spend large amounts of money to look nice.** Anyone can window-shop and learn what combinations are put together and what colors and styles are current, and then try on clothes. He should buy classic and basic clothing, i.e., clothing which never goes out of style, such as a basic black suit.

5. **If the counselor is younger, he should wear suits as opposed to wearing coordinates.** A suit looks more professional and lends a look of maturity. Basic darker-toned suits such as charcoal gray, navy blue, or black may aid in achieving the mature look as well. Since clothing is often a self-portrait, a young man should dress conservatively.

6. **A wise counselor will be concerned about his attire.** He should employ many of the following basic wardrobe guidelines:

A. Suits and Sport Coats. He should have a variety of conservative, well-fitting suits. The “leisure suit” should not be worn. A suit jacket or sport coat should fit well and look attractive. The length of the jacket sleeve is important. When bending the wrist, the sleeve should touch the palm of the hand. The sleeve length should come to the end of the wrist when the arm is straight at the side. The wearer should be able to button the jacket comfortably. The seam in the shoulder should fit on the shoulder and not hang off in a sloppy fashion.

B. Sports Clothing. When participating in extra-curricular activities, the counselor should be appropriate. No one wants to see a man of God wearing a suit and tie to play basketball. Sports clothes are necessary. It is fine to project different images for different activities.

C. Suit Trousers and Dress Trousers. The waist should never fit too snugly. The trousers should not hug the hips. A slight flare in the trousers at the ankle and calf looks nice. The leg should fit loosely. Cuffs look good, but they are totally a matter of personal preference. The back hem of the trousers should be at the top of the heel of the shoe. The crease of the trousers should be straight and easily seen.

Belt loops are best, as opposed to elastic waistbands. Pleats are helpful, depending on the build of the man.

D. Dress Shirts. A shirt should have a smooth, tidy fit. A shirt with a tapered tail helps to assure this look. The sleeves should come to just below the wrist. The collar should not be so tight that it restricts breathing or wrinkles because of tightness. The shirt collar should not be so loose that it creates an unfinished look, even after tying the tie. Long-sleeved white shirts are always acceptable in the business world. Narrow stripes look nice. A shirt should always be pressed before it is worn. Watch for stains under the arms. A nice-looking dress shirt makes a statement.

E. Neckties. I call the tie a symbol of responsibility. A tie can “make” the suit. It also could be considered the personality of the suit. When a tie is tied correctly, the tip of the tie will come to the belt buckle. One should practice making his knot until it is equal and uniform. The Windsor knot still remains the traditional knot. The width of the tie should be the approximate width of the lapels of the suit jacket. Bow ties give negative signals and should be avoided. Having a tie collection should be a part of a man’s wardrobe. The use of patterns such as polka dots, regimental repetition (stripes), diamonds, paisley, and plaids carefully coordinated with the suit will help a man dress well. Solid-colored ties, club ties, and Ivy League ties are also an important part of a man’s accessories.

F. Shoes and Socks. Acceptable colors are black, brown, and cordovan. Patent leather shoes look nice and require a minimal amount of care. Wing tip and plain lace-up shoes are traditionally most acceptable. Slip-on shoes are fine if they are not gaudy. Shoes should always be kept polished. Find a tailor to help get a perfect fit. Socks should be dark and over the calf. They should be high enough on the leg so that flesh does not show when seated. White socks should never be worn with a suit. A good rule of thumb to follow is for socks to be worn, not seen.

A man of God should care properly for his clothing. His clothes should be washed or dry-cleaned frequently. Shoes should be kept polished and in good repair.

7. A counselor should be concerned about his personal hygiene. Cleanliness is essential.

A. Bathing. If possible, take a shower rather than a bath. Use a

deodorant soap and be sure to use an effective antiperspirant.

B. Teeth. After all meals and snacks, the teeth, as well as the tongue, should be brushed. Often bad breath emanates from the tongue. Brushing before bedtime will lengthen the life of teeth. Use dental floss every 24 hours. If possible, we should see a dentist every six months for a cleaning and checkup. A smile is one of our greatest assets, but only if our teeth are cared for properly. Use breath mints and mouthwash often.

C. Hair Care. Hair should be neatly cut and kept clean. A man should wash his hair daily and keep it combed. He should use hairspray if necessary. Every man should decide how he is going to wear his sideburns and stay with his decision. No man of God will let the world's styles dictate his hairstyle.

D. Fingernails. The hands, as well as the fingernails, should be kept clean. A man's fingernails are to be cut square and neatly trimmed. (Pointed, filed nails are feminine, not masculine.) Cuticles should be cut and clean. A most unsightly habit is that of biting nails. It takes approximately 21 days to overcome a habit.

E. Body and Foot Odor. The best way to avoid body and foot odor is to be clean. After bathing, a man should wear a cologne his wife likes so he will smell nice. The use of powder can help eliminate foot odor. Baking soda and rubbing alcohol eliminate shoe odors. Try to wear a different pair of shoes daily so they can air. Also, wearing shoes that allow feet to breathe will help.

8. A counselor should be concerned about his accessories and how they compliment his appearance.

A. Eyeglasses. A counselor should have his eyes examined from time to time. Should he need glasses, he should purchase frames that blend with his face. I believe he should stay away from tinted lenses because he needs to be able to make eye contact with people seeking counsel. He should keep in mind that security straps are for sport purposes and are not for everyday wear. If the glasses break, have them fixed. Don't be so tacky as to tape the glasses together. We must take care of our eyes; they were entrusted to us by God to read and study His Word.

B. Umbrella. A man's umbrella with a simple handle should be black and preferably not the collapsible type. Golf umbrellas or an emblem of a favorite sports team is not professional. Nice wooden

handles are very impressive and bespeak professionalism.

C. Gloves. Dark brown or cordovan gloves have a rich leather look. Wool gloves are also considered professional looking.

D. Briefcase. A plain, simple, functional briefcase is best. It should match the leathers in the carrier's belt and shoes. Cordovan or dark, rich colors are preferred.

E. Hat. A standard style hat, conservative in color, should be worn. It should match the topcoat. The only functional purpose of a hat is to keep the head warm. A man should not wear a hat that is big, floppy, or unusual.

F. Jewelry. Too much jewelry on a man makes him look feminine. Necklaces are an absolute no-no for men. A necklace is "neck lace"; let's leave it for the ladies to wear. Cuff links are not a bad accessory unless gaudy. Tie bars are up to the wearer, but they are virtually never seen on professionals.

G. Watches. Deep-sea watches and sport watches are not to be worn by professionals. Watch faces that feature Hollywood personalities are never appropriate. Expandable bands are usually made cheaply, so leather bands are considered best. Cordovan or leather to match the leathers in the wearer's shoes and belts will promote a well-planned look. Pocket watches are serviceable. The gold in the watch should match the gold in rings. For instance, white gold or yellow gold watches should be matched with white gold or yellow gold rings.

H. Belts. Always keep in mind that suspenders are not for show. The belt leather should match the shoe color in most cases. When possible, purchase a belt with a buckle to match the gold in watches and rings.

In this short chapter, I cannot begin to express how important a counselor's clothing and personal hygiene are. Since people watch a man of God, he is to be an example. "*Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.*" (II Corinthians 3:2) Our church members want to be proud of us. Our family members want to be proud of us. Most of all, we represent a King, and we should look like royalty as His ambassadors.

IX

COUNSELING

AND

Hope

I HAVE FOUND THAT one of the main reasons why people come for counseling is because they need someone to rekindle their fire of hope. In many cases, hope had previously burned and raged in their lives; however, as a result of some disappointment or sin, the embers and coals of hope slowly but surely were being smothered with despair. The following passages of Scripture may be used to help create or recreate hope for people God loves. The lack of hope or the prospect of no hope makes the heart sick.

“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.” (Psalm 31:24) *“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.”* (Proverbs 13:12) *“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”* (Romans 15:13)

The person being counseled needs his counselor to give him hope. To be like God, a counselor personally should abound with hope because our God is a God of hope. The following statements may be of help as one counsels about having hope.

1. **A counselor needs to teach the person seeking counsel that there is no problem so big in God’s will that God cannot solve it.** *“Now*

unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” (Ephesians 3:20)

2. **A counselor needs to tell the one seeking counsel that God never discards anyone.** “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; **he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” (Isaiah 61:1) God is a God Who recycles, much like the modern-day saving and recycling we do of aluminum and paper. God can and will take a life that has been used, abused, or even damaged and recycle that life. He will make something beautiful and useful out of it. In Jeremiah 18, God gives the prophet Jeremiah a lesson from the potter’s wheel. “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it...Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand...” (Jeremiah 18:3,4,6) Just as the potter did not discard the marred vessel, neither does God discard the broken life of one of His creations. If a person will allow Him, God will make him a new vessel that is still useable for His service. What a wonderful and blessed hope!

3. **No matter what happens to the saved person in this life, he has a wonderful Heaven awaiting him.** “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2) Since Christians can trust and rely on God’s Word, they have the hope of a beautiful new home in Heaven—one with streets of gold, a river of life, and a city with gates of pearl.

4. **If Christians pray and get God involved in their problems, He can work in a supernatural way.** Christians must place their hopes in God. The Bible says in John 11:47, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.” God, of course, will not do for Christians what they can do for themselves. But God definitely can aid us and then take what we have done and multiply it many times.

5. **People sleep better if they are offered hope.** Psalm 16:9 says, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.” If a person cannot sleep, many times he is searching for hope. If a counselor can give the sleepless one hope, his rest will be sweet and rewarding.

6. **Giving hope to another is an expression of love.**

“Charity...Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (I Corinthians 13:4, 7) Anyone who knows his Bible knows that I Corinthians 13 is often called the “love chapter” of the Bible. The word *charity* also means *love*. When a counselor offers hope, people receive it and perceive it as love. Even those who are lost look to God, Who is Love, for hope.

7. If I can find no hope in one area of a person’s life, I seek to tell him of hope in another area of his life. Allow me to best explain this point by means of examples. A marriage ending in divorce is a reason to some for having no hope; however, I find great hope in their children. Oftentimes, when the death of a child occurs prematurely, the parents lose hope; however, having good health and each other and the knowledge they will see the child again in Heaven are reasons to have great hope. *“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (Titus 2:13) Perhaps a job has been lost; one’s hope is the health to obtain another job. It surely seems to me that God always gives a person a way to have hope; however, I do find that when a person is discouraged, he often needs another to point the way to hope.

8. Any person who has the privilege to influence another should include an element of hope. In one’s counseling, he may find some people who have never had much hope. He may also find others who once had hope but feel now it is lost. Many avenues are available to teach about having hope—a desire accompanied by expectation.

- A. *Parents should teach children to have hope.*
- B. *Sunday school teachers should teach hope in class.*
- C. *Pastors should preach and teach hope.* We must not always be “doom-and-gloom” preachers.
- D. *A husband should give his wife hope.*
- E. *A wife should give her husband hope.*
- F. *The saved should share hope with the lost.*
- G. *In our counseling sessions, we counselors should be sure to give each person with whom we converse the wonderful blessing of hope.*
- H. *One’s discipline of others should include hope.* If, in counseling, a counselor finds the need to discipline, he should always include words of hope.

9. If I personally have no person who offers me hope, I can claim it for myself. God and I make a majority! All true hope comes from God and does not require human intervention. *“And now, Lord, what wait*

I for? my hope is in thee." (Psalm 39:7) My hope doesn't come from others, though God is very good to give me others who care for me. My hope is God-given.

10. Hope is a positive expectation. God is a positive God, and in Him we can expect great things. The Bible says, "...*that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*" (I Thessalonians 4:13) As Christians, we do not need to sorrow as others who have no hope of Heaven and no hope of spending eternity with Jesus. A wise counselor will help a person expect positive things as a result of doing God's will for his life.

X

COUNSELING AND The Importance of Patience

THE BIBLE TEACHES about patience in James 1:1–5, which says, “*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*” Notice in verse 4 the phrase, “*let patience have her perfect work.*” I believe this passage is teaching us that patience is a perfector. One definition of the word *perfect* is *complete or full of age*. The wise counselor will learn to let his decisions mature or develop fully before acting upon them. Anyone who has decisions to make should learn to utilize this principle. Every counselor wants to make mature decisions; therefore, he needs to allow them to mature.

1. **The wise counselor will gain an understanding of the Bible meaning of “mature.”** “*But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*” (James 1:4) As I said before, we need to give patience time to perfect our decisions. We need to allow time to complete our thoughts. We need to let our decisions mature like apples

ripen. We don't pick them from the tree until they are ripe. (How many times did your mother say, "Eating green apples will make you sick"?) We need to remember that *mature* means *complete*. This statement is another way to explain maturity: "Let the cup of your mind be filled with thought before emptying into your mouth to spit out a decision." Many of us are far too hasty in our decision-making process. Certainly, not all decisions must be made immediately. We, as counselors, need to slow down before we make some terrible mistakes with a person's life.

2. The wise counselor will realize that time will mature his decisions.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a

"Let the cup of your mind be filled with thought before emptying into your mouth to spit out a decision."

time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8) Notice the Bible specifically says there is a time for everything. Many important activities of life, from birth to death, are listed in these verses. All have their proper timing. For instance, after Schery and I had been dating for quite some time, I asked my father about getting married. He wisely advised us to wait for six months because he wanted to see if we were mature enough to feel the same way after that additional time. We did wait, and we both found the extra time matured our relationship. In the same way, we need to let time prove the maturity of our decisions.

Let me share a true story using fictitious names. Two singles, Joe and Betty, met at church. After knowing one another for only three weeks, Joe and Betty came to me and wanted to get married within 30 days. Though both were in their late twenties, they were very immature folks. I told them I would have no problem performing a marriage ceremony for them in one year. Joe and Betty said that was far too long to wait. I changed my offer to nine months, which both rejected. Finally, I offered to perform the

ceremony in six months; they accepted my offer. However, Joe and Betty broke up after two months. I allowed time to mature a decision made by immature people.

My father taught me never to make a major decision, such as buying a house or car, without sleeping on it. He was saying that time matures decisions. Door-to-door salesmen must follow a law that in essence gives a customer the right to return an item within so many days of the purchase date. Again, time is given for the maturing process. I wonder how many times I wanted to quit my secular job as a machinist (before I joined the pastoral staff at First Baptist Church). I planned my resignation; but because of my dad's advice, I always waited overnight to turn it in, and I never did resign because time matured my decision.

Someone has wisely said, "Everyone will sooner or later rise to his true character level." Time and patience will aid in the revealing of a person's character. Too many of us learn patience in our decision-making the hard way. We make a decision, then act upon it immediately. Then, after we have acted promptly, we learn the facts which we should have known before acting!

3. The wise counselor realizes that time will make decisions for him. *"He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace."* (Proverbs 11:12) A man of understanding has rule over his own spirit, and in his wisdom he has learned to be quiet rather than give expression to his negative feelings. He maintains his peace. *"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."* (Proverbs 4:26) We must take time to consider our ways—past and present—and act accordingly. Sometimes people want to make immediate decisions because of their time schedule, or perhaps someone issues an ultimatum. When I personally face this issue, I ponder my path and logic through the situation. Invariably, I nearly always come to the same conclusion: If I cannot make a decision and be sure the answer is right within someone else's time frame, I let them disqualify me. I would rather be disqualified by patience than be disqualified for being wrong or too hasty. Far too many people worry about issues that only time will decide.

4. The wise counselor will learn to request more time to make his decision. If a decision needs to be made in any given area, and there is not enough time to confidently make a decision, the counselor should ask for more time.

5. The wise counselor will exercise patience in decision

making. The following 11 *Be*'s are areas for the counselor to exercise extra caution in making decisions:

- A. *Be patient when helping someone select a mate.*
- B. *Be patient when helping someone concerning employment opportunities.*
- C. *Be patient when helping someone decide about a resignation.*
- D. *Be patient when deciding to hire or terminate people on your church staff.*
- E. *Be patient when giving marital counseling.*
- F. *Be patient about spending large amounts of money.*
- G. *Be patient in the disciplining of children.*
- H. *Be patient in the rehabilitation of people.*
- I. *Be patient in changing long-term, previously established rules.*
- J. *Be patient with the impatient.*
- K. *Be patient when starting something new.*

6. **The wise counselor will decide slowly what is right and then act upon it without procrastination and with deliberation.** When deciding what is right or wrong, we must let time be our friend. After we know what is right, too much time can then become our enemy.

Too many Christians are guilty of the old cliché, "Lord, give me patience, but I want it right now!" However, James 1:1-4 tells us the way to have patience is by enduring testings. James 5:11 says, "*Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job...*" Our example of patience is Job, who lost all and passed his tests with patience.

XI

COUNSELING

Thoughts

*“Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,
and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.”*
(Proverbs 22:17)

- As a counselor, I not only want to use all the wisdom I possess, I want to use all I can borrow as well.
- It takes a wise man to give sound counsel and a wiser man to accept and live by that counsel.
- Biblical counsel is free, but the price one pays for not following it is quite costly.
- I never become satisfied with just giving counsel; I want to give good counsel or none at all.
- I believe everything that mankind needs to hear has already been said. The problem is that few people ever listen. I want to spend my life as a counselor repeating what I have heard.
- I love the people I counsel. If I can articulate to my people how much I love them, then my love is too shallow. True love will often find itself at a loss for words.
- In my counseling, one of my great heartaches is to see the long journey one must take back to usefulness as a result of just a short detour off of the road of right.
- I have often said the following to a person seeking counsel: “Success

in your case will not be determined by how well you overcome this difficult situation. It will be determined by whether or not you must overcome it again.”

- The most difficult problem I counsel is the one that does not exist.
- The wise man, in my opinion, is the one who has the wisdom to find out what he does not know.
- I have learned in the years of my counseling that many will listen to my counsel, but few will let it transfer from their ears to their hands and feet.
- Worry is the abuse of the mind's capacity. Worry has never changed a situation from bad to good, but it surely has unnecessarily changed a good day into a bad one.
- Most of the sins committed by people are more easily solved and counseled than is the problem caused by the way they try to hide them.
- I try to convince the one with whom I am counseling that it is not what happens **to** us that brings victory or defeat; it is what happens **in** us.
- I must remind myself to be patient when counseling youth. They do not usually admit guilt until the counselor has exhausted all the other possibilities.