

Counselling: A Vital Tool For The Work Of The Ministry

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**What Is
Christian
Counseling?**

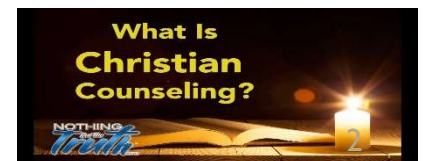
**NOTHING
but the
truth**

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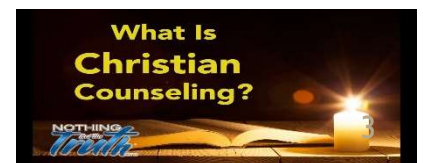
Synopsis

- In this lecture, we will look at the importance of the church in counselling in three segments:
- A Biblical Rationale for Christian Counselling
- Concept of Counselling in the context of ministerial work
- Case Studies
- Desirable Qualities of a Christian Counsellor
- What are Christian counselling Skills?
- Five Advantages of Church-Based Counselling
- Obstacles to effective counselling



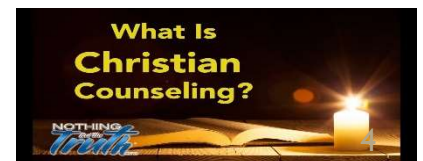
- **Introduction**

- Christian counselling originated from God after the creation of man in the Garden of Eden. It is an integral part of the Christian theological educational system.
- Christian counselling programmes for Christians, theological and Christian education are designed to address the spiritual, physical, emotional and social difficulties of individual or group members of Christendom or theological students.
- Biblical Counselling is making a strong impact in today's churches and community. Counselling is seen as one of the most productive ways of helping a person reach the inner side of themselves to help solve any problems that might be arising.
- Modern counselling traces its origin back to the work of Sigmund Freud in Vienna in the 1880s.
- Others such as Alfred Adler, Sador Ferenczi, Karl Abraham and Otto Rank, were all under the apprenticeship of Freud before becoming psychoanalysts in their own rights.



A Biblical Rationale for Christian Counselling

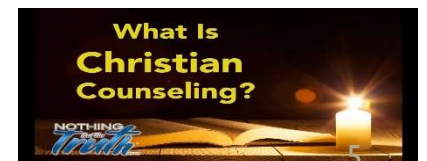
- God gave us His Word to equip us to carry out that ministry to which He calls us.
- Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
- Therefore, if counselling is part of the “every good work” of the church for which we are equipped, then it must be part of the overall ministry of the church.



A Biblical Rationale for Christian Counselling (Cont'd)

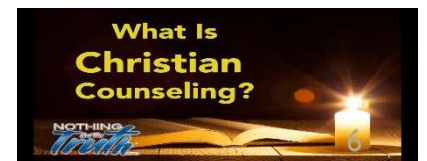
As David Powlison so eloquently stated it:

- *“The church—as the Bible defines it—contains an exquisite blending of leadership and mutuality, of specialized roles and general calling, of truth and love, of wisdom for living, and of flexibility to meet the problems that sinners and sufferers face. The people of God, functioning as the people of God, provide the ideal and desirable institution to fix what ails us.”*
- This type of counselling ministry is part of the broader ministry of the church as summarized in I Thessalonians 5:14: “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”



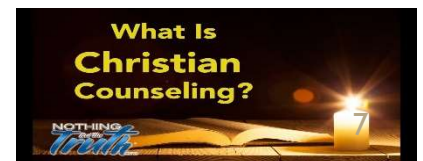
A Biblical Rationale for Christian Counselling (Cont'd)

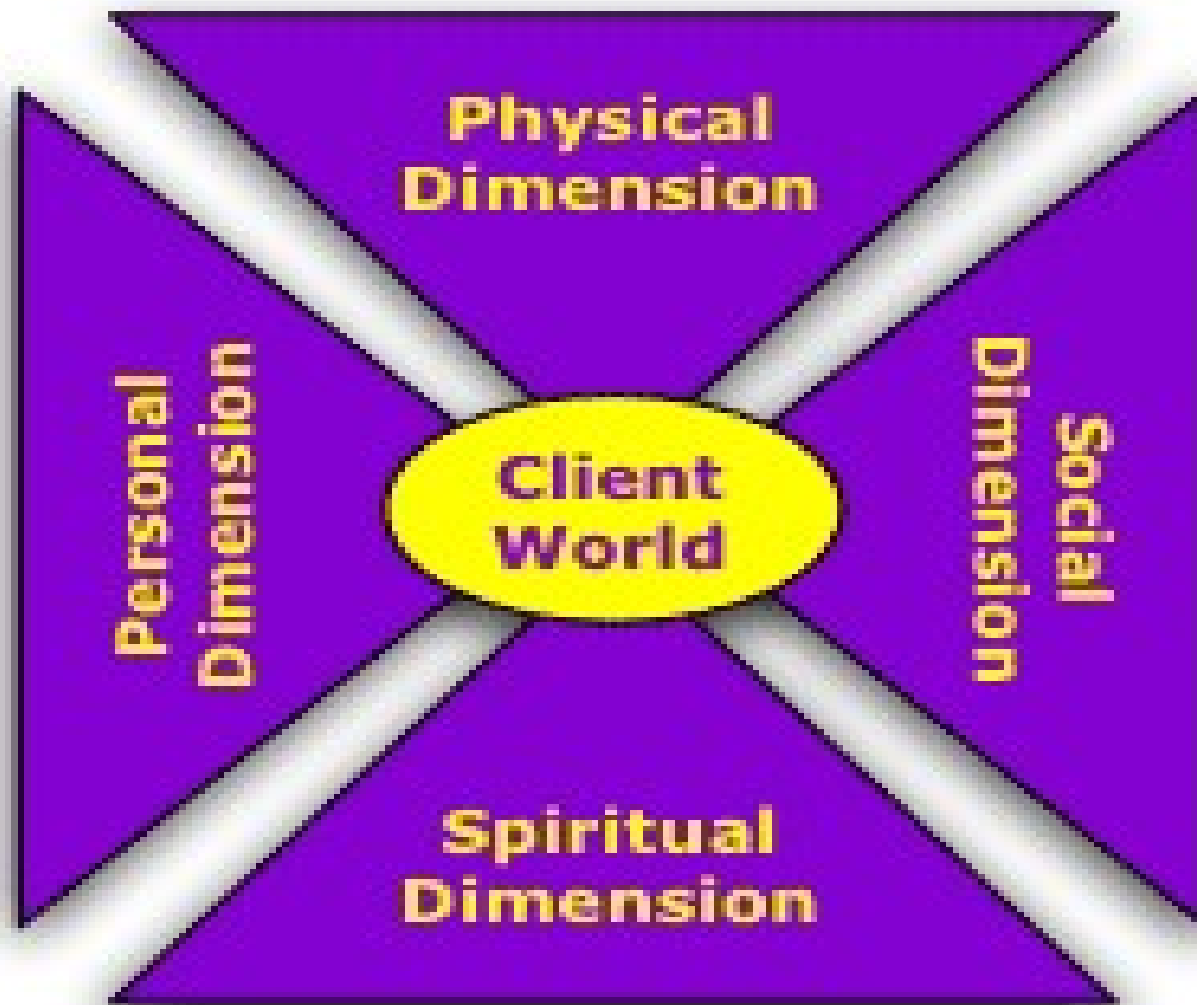
- Counselling is a helping relationship that exists between a counsellor (a professional) and a client.
- It is designed to help the clients to understand and clarify their views of their life-space and to learn their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through resolution of an emotional or interpersonal nature”.



A Biblical Rationale for Christian Counselling (Cont'd)

- Fehtma and Dryden provide a more in-depth definition of counselling as quoted in Mcleod (1998) as:
- **“a principle relationship characterized by the application of one or more psychological theories and recognized set of communication skills, modified by experience, intuition and other interpersonal factors, to client’s intimate concerns, problems or aspirations”.**





- Counselling seeks clarity and meaning in all these four dimension of life

Cases for Christian counselling

- Relationship, parent-child, or marital issues
- Parenting guidance
- Mental illness or psychological distress
- Grief and loss
- Poor goal-setting skills
- Low self-esteem and self-confidence
- Weak faith and/or a poor connection to God
- Substance abuse or addiction
- Anxiety that prevents you from completing everyday tasks
- Panic attacks
- Insomnia or being unable to fall asleep and/or stay asleep all night long
- Social isolation or avoiding spending time with friends and family
- Sudden extreme weight loss or weight gain
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, and/or overwhelmed, or feeling unable to manage your problems on your own
- Out-of-control, irrational anger
- A loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling *disconnected* to your faith or God



Concept of Counselling in the context of ministerial work

- The field of counselling is more broad-based than that of psychiatry and psychology in that a wider array of professionals including psychiatrists and psychologists engage in counselling.
- For example, ministers, primary care physicians, guidance and counselling personnel in schools, chemical dependency counsellors, employee assistance program counsellors, and social workers supply counselling to selected groups.



Concept of Counselling in the context of ministerial work (Cont'd)

- For our purpose, the 'work of the ministry' in addition to the word 'counselling' indicates that it is specifically counselling that is geared not only towards the practitioners of the Christian faith, Church workers, or an avenue for the Church to affect its environment positively. This can be done as a form of social work.
- Whichever may be the targeted audience or group for counselling, the basis is that it will be given bearing in mind the tenets of the Christian faith.
- Hence, ministers and other Christian social workers are the ones that are saddled with the responsibility of giving Christian counselling.



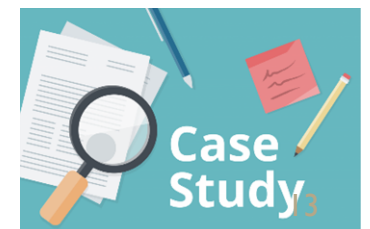
Concept of Counselling in the context of ministerial work (Cont'd)

- The Importance of Counselling When someone that has been normally well-behaved is suddenly reported to have exhibited a negative character trait, then, the need and importance of counselling is suddenly realized. But most often, the deed is already done.
- Counselling is therefore very important because of the following reasons Focus on the individuals needs Pulpit preaching is a blessing, but it may not always meet the specific needs of the individual church members.



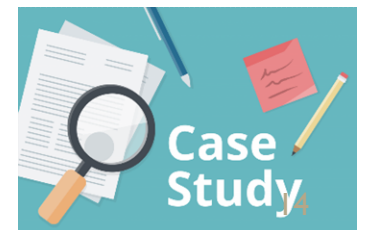
Case Studies

- The following incidents occurred in my church this past Sunday:
- 1. In a Sunday School class, a member asked for prayer and advice about her husband who was struggling with pornography and had stopped coming to church.
- 2. After the morning worship service, in which the pastor had preached on the healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), a church member stopped me and talked to me about his daughter who has a severe liver problem for which we prayed.



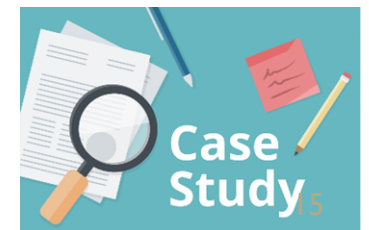
Case Studies (Cont'd)

- 3. Before the evening service, a church member talked to me about the fact that he had lost his job that week, about which I shared some Scripture (including Matthew 6:25-34) and then we prayed.



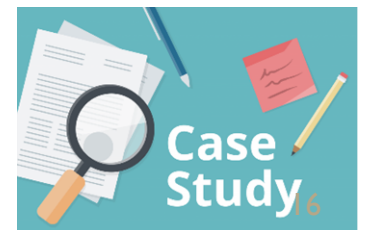
Case Studies (Cont'd)

- 4. Several years ago, I was counselling a pastor whose wife had left him to live with another man. I contacted the church and they became involved in the practice of Matthew 18.
- The result was that when confronted by key leaders in the church, the pastor's wife repented, she later went before the church and asked the entire body's forgiveness, and the outpouring of love and forgiveness was incredible.
- Both a marriage and a church were saved the heartache of divorce.



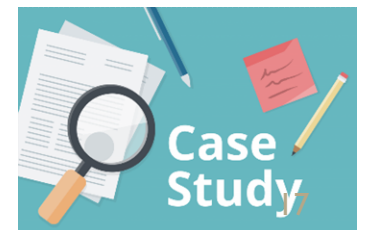
Case Studies (Cont'd)

- 5. Sarah is a Christian and is well committed to her matrimony, but she is currently worried about a matter that stands in the way of her marriage. But she does not get the particular help she needs from a sermon.



Case Studies (Cont'd)

- 6. Ayo, on the other hand, has a very different problem, he is addicted to marijuana. He knows that unless his situation improves he is likely to fall into serious trouble in the nearest future.
- Does he get anything at the youth meeting his mother practically drags him to?
- Yes, but not the individual help he needs for his own peculiar problem.



Case Studies (Cont'd)

- 6. In like manner, the youngest daughter of the Kenamo has just been admitted into the university. But she had recently been calling less often, and has even called to spend her holiday in the campus.
- This was a girl who used to always cherish her family's company. Mrs. Kenamo has realized that her daughter is now slipping away from her and from the Lord.
- She is terribly worried about this development. She needs counsel and individual guidance.
- On Sunday she does not receive much benefit from the message because her mind is pre-occupied thinking about her daughter.



The Lesson:

- In all these cases, the situation left the persons involved who desired reconciliation with few options. Counselling takes place in the church all the time.
- Realistically speaking, everyone has his/her own interesting world. People are not born in groups, and we usually do not solve their problems in groups.
- We help people most when we talk with them individually.



Considerations for Christian Counselling

- ❖ Counselling helps us to have In-depth Aspect of Personal Problems
- ❖ A two-way Communication Counselling is important because it is a two-way communication.
- ❖ The Willingness to be Counsellled One of the signs of a healthy personality is the desire to reach out beyond one's self and become a blessing to others.
- ❖ People usually turn to someone they Know
- ❖ People take their problems to someone they like It is usually not enough to know a person.
- ❖ People take their problems to someone they respect
- ❖ The person who lives an exemplary life, who is wise and discreet in his behaviour, is the one who is respected and held in high esteem.
- ❖ People are mostly likely to seek help from Christian leaders who indicate their interest in counselling.
- ❖ People seek counselling from someone whom they feel is competent
- ❖ People take their problems to someone who observes professional ethics
- ❖ People turn to the counsellor who knows God In time of turbulence and trouble, people want divine help.

Desirable Qualities of a Christian Counsellor

- ❖ Must be a firm Believer in Christian Principle
- ❖ Must Be a Man of Prayer
- ❖ The Counsellor must live Righteously There is nothing that can equate righteousness in the life of a Christian counsellor.
- ❖ The Counsellor must be Peaceable It is easy to come across people who have the right answers but the wrong attitude.
- ❖ The Counsellor must Be Gentle How important is it to be the kind of person who is “easy to be entreated” – approachable, understanding, warm, friendly, sincere.
- ❖ Must Be Merciful.
- ❖ Must be full of Motivational Spirit
- ❖ Must be without Partiality To be impartial is a difficult assignment.
- ❖ Must Be without Hypocrisy.





What are Christian counselling Skills?

- Unlike casual discussions between friends, the helping relationship is characterized by a clear purpose.
- **Attending Skills:** Counsellors must try to give undivided attention to each counselee, even though this can be difficult to sustain.
- Attending is done through:
 - (a) Eye contact – looking without staring as a way to convey concern and understanding.
 - (b) Posture, which should be relaxed rather than tense. (Nobody feels comfortable with an up-tight counsellor).
 - (c) Gestures, including head nods that are natural but not excessive or distracting.

What are Christian Counselling Skills? (Cont'd)

- **Listening Skills:** This involves more than passive or half-hearted attention to the words that come from another person.
- Effective listening is an active process involves: - Being able to set aside your own conflicts, biases and preoccupations so you can concentrate on what the counselee is communicating.
- (a) **Avoiding** subtle verbal and nonverbal expressions of disapproval or judgment about what is being said, even when the content is offensive or shocking.
- (b) **Using** both your eyes and your ears to detect messages that come from the tone of voice, pace of talking, ideas, that are repeated, posture, gestures, facial expressions and other clues apart from what the person is saying.
- (c) **Hearing** not what the counselee says, but noticing what gets left out? Noticing the counselee's physical characteristics and general appearance such as grooming and dress.
- (d) **Waiting** patiently through periods of silence or tears as the counselee summons enough courage to share something painful or pauses to collect his or her thoughts.
- (e) **Looking** at the counselee as he or she speaks, but without either staring or letting our eyes wander around the room.



What are Christian counselling Skills? (Cont'd)

- **Responding Skills:** - There was a time when counsellors were taught to pay attention and listen, but to make only occasional specific comments. These comments were intended to spur the counselee on to more evaluation until he or she came up with solutions to the problem.
- (a) **Leading** is a skill that lets the counsellor gently direct the conversation. “What happened next?” “Tell me what you mean by --?” “Then what?” are brief questions that can steer the discussion in directions that will give useful information.
- (b) **Reflecting** is way of letting counselees know that we are with them and able to understand how they feel or think. Examples, include statements like, “you must feel”, “I bet that was frustrating”, that must have been fun”, all of these reflects what is going in counselling.
- (c) **Summarizing** what has been going on also can be away of reflecting and stimulating more counselee exploration. It also lets you check the accuracy of what you have been hearing.



What are Christian Counselling Skills? (Cont'd)

- **3. Questioning Skills:** If done carefully this can bring forth a great deal of useful information. The best questions are those that require at least a few sentences to answer (e.g.: “Tell me about your marriage” “What sort of things are making you unhappy”?) rather than those that can be answered in one word.
- **4. Prompting and probing** are special forms of questioning that help people talk in more details about themselves.
- **5. Challenging Skills:** Sometimes, it is not enough for a counsellor to show empathy, to express understanding, or to give encouragement.
- **6. Teaching Skills:** In many ways, all counselling techniques are specialized forms of spiritual and psychological education.
- **7. Informing:** Is not the same as advice-giving that we raised caution about earlier. Advice – givers often lack enough accurate knowledge of a situation to give competent advice.
- **8. Filtering Skills:** Counsellors are not innately sceptical people who disbelieve everything a counselee says, but it is wise to remember that counselee’s don’t always tell the whole story and don’t always say what they really want, need, intend.

Five Advantages of Church-Based Counselling

- “God knows me well,” a friend once said to me. “He knew that, apart from the accountability and love that comes from a Christian community, I would not survive in this world.”
- God never meant for Christians to live alone. Through the church on earth, therefore, he created a place where Christians could gather for corporate worship, accountability, fellowship, instruction, and godly exhortation. I would even dare say that the fullest expression of our faith cannot occur apart from loving communion with other believers in a local church.
- **1. Church-based counselling means submitting to leaders who already have watch over your soul.**
- “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account” (Heb. 13:17).
- **2. Church-based counselling reaffirms our commitment to build one another up in the faith.**
- And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11–13)
- **3. Church-based counselling is a natural extension of our covenant to one another as members of the same church.**



Five Advantages of Church-Based Counselling (Cont'd)

- **4. Church-based counselling allows for deeper relationship.**
 - It allows the counsellor to live as a Christ-like example both inside and outside the counselling setting.
 - It shows the counselee that the counsellor doesn't just "talk the talk" but also "walks the walk."
 - It provides the counsellor with greater insight into the most important dimension of the counselee's life—their spiritual life.
 - It allows the two to serve together in a variety of ministries.
 - It allows them to serve each other and pray for each other.
 - It allows them to grow together through the same corporate experiences. As they sing, worship, hear the Word preached, pray, study Scripture, carry burdens, care for the community, and exalt God together, they share in the experiences that builds them up together in their faith.
- **5. Church-based counselling provides the potential for greater accountability of shared problems, as well as the opportunity to know who else in the church can share the care-giving load.**



Obstacles to effective counselling


- Not giving your best attention and divided attention.
- Fixing appointment with many people at the same time
- Failure to pick up vital information from clients
- Jumping at conclusions
- Lack of knowledge about their real problem
- They may be unsure whether the counsellor is capable of handling their particular difficulty
- They may find it too painful to discuss a serious difficulty is usually several years in the making.
- People may not be sure of your attitude
- Oversharing information or unnecessarily violating the patient's right to privacy
- Failing to inform the client of essential information
- Failure to refer client to a more qualified person.
- Violation of confidentiality
- Sexual or other harassment






Conclusion

- This paper has only touched on the vital issue of returning counselling to the church.
- It is hoped that this brief entreaty will be an encouragement for ministers and lay persons alike to study these ideas more, to allow God to convict them concerning this topic, and prayerfully, to begin learning how to bring the process of helping people to the church where it belongs.
- God help us if we continue to send church members to those outside the church to find answers that only God can provide.

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- **Dr. Ray Guarendi wrote a book, Jesus, the Master Psychologist. He directs us to the root of all healthy counselling:**
 - The lordship of Christ over all of a Christian's life is an assumption basic to Christianity.
 - An understanding of the kingdom concept in Scripture suggests that Christians are inevitably called to work towards the expression of Christ's lordship in psychology.
 - This occurs as the Christian pursues psychological knowledge and practice before God, aware that all true truth about human nature is an expression of God's mind, that sin and finitude limit one's ability to grasp the truth, that the Scriptures are needed to properly interpret human nature, and that kingdom activity involves a faithful response to Christ's lordship in one's work with others and one's knowing of human nature.
 - Consequently, everything the Christian does is to be done in Jesus' name to the glory of God (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31).

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- Submitting to the authority of Christ in all of one's life was a distinguishing mark of an early Christian and it is fundamental to Christianity.
 - In fact, Jesus is two millennia ahead of what psychology is only now coming to understand. As such, every tool and counselling guideline worth pursuing can find its roots directly in the words of Christ.
 - Therefore, counselling should take place in Sunday School classes, in worship services, in hallways. The church is where it should take place.

THANK YOU

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