

Basic Counseling Skills

Question 1: What does the Bible say about the ministry of counseling?

- Jesus said: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” John 14:26
 - The Holy Spirit is the Counselor - the role of the pastor is to introduce people to the Holy Spirit.
 - If people can learn to listen to the Holy Spirit - they will receive great wisdom and help from God.
- James 1:19, 20: My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
 - When someone has a problem - the first thing the pastor should do is to listen carefully - do NOT be quick to give advice - just listen and pray - try and fully understand the problem.
- Ecclesiastes 4: 9-13 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
 - The Lord does not want us to face our problems alone. He wants all of us to be part of His family that cares for one another.
 - Whenever I counsel anyone - I always have an assistant with me - this is very important for two reasons: 1. This is a very tiring ministry – it is good to have support. 2. In everything you do, it is important to be training others – your assistant will learn a lot just by watching you in action.
 - Never counsel someone of the opposite sex alone.
 - I always ask the person to suggest a few friends and relatives who can help to solve the problem.

Question 2: What suggestions do you have to help others in the ministry of counseling?

- Listen carefully - listen prayerfully: I try to listen to what the person is saying - but at the same time I am trying to listen to what the Holy Spirit may be saying. This is quite difficult - so after listening for about 10 minutes - I usually say, “Thank you for sharing, before you continue, could we spend about one minute in silent prayer to see if the Holy Spirit wants to say anything to us?”
- After that, I try and summarise what I think the person has said and then ask: “Is this what you have been trying to say to us?”
- I then invite the person to continue describing his problem for about another 10 minutes and then repeat the time of silence and summary.
- Next, I ask the person to suggest a possible solution to his own problem. Where possible, we get extra ideas from a few close friends who are willing to help. I add in my own ideas too. Together, we agree on a plan of action. My assistant will write down this plan of action and make a copy for the person we are trying to help.

- Together, we fix a time to review what happened to that plan of action.
- We spend time praying together.
- I try not to spend more than one hour for the whole session. Here is an approximate guide for the whole session:
 - Opening Prayer - asking the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom (2 minutes)
 - Listening prayerfully (10 minutes) - first round
 - Pause for silent prayer and reflection (1 minute)
 - Short summary (3 minutes)
 - Listening prayerfully (10 minutes) - second round
 - Pause for silent prayer and reflection (1 minute)
 - Short summary (3 minutes)
 - Gathering different ideas to solve the problem (10 minutes)
 - Agreement on action plan (5 minutes)
 - Prayer (10 minutes)