

Everything Pertaining to Life and Godliness

Counseling comes in many different forms, including premarital counseling and vocational counseling. I want to talk about professional counseling in a serious vein. We have noticed as we read the research that professional counseling has exploded in recent history. For example, the Barna Group reports that 42% of all adults in the United States have visited a counselor and 13%, or 1 out of every 8 adults, is currently in counseling. Now those are really stunning statistics. That means two out of every five individuals have been in counseling. If you look at a large group, you can conclude that 2 out of every 5 people have been in counseling of some kind for one reason or another. It is reported that the number of counselors has also exploded. For example, in 1999-2005, the

number of professional counselors grew from 15,000 to 50,000. That is an increase of 333% in a matter of 6-7 years. Those are also stunning numbers. In 2018, the number of counselors increased from 50,000 up to 665,000. That

is one counselor for every 450 people in the United States. That is amazing! In 2013, there were 60,000 marriage and family therapists and 50% of them were in California. Today, counseling is really big with the Gen X and Millennial generations. That is more true of them than any previous group. That would span roughly those individuals who were born in 1965 through 1994. The message is that counseling has really exploded.



Counseling has also exploded among Christians. It used to be that pastors of churches were the persons Christians went to for counseling. They went to a pastor for biblical counseling to receive spiritual guidance, but that is not so true anymore. Some Christians avoid the pastor because they are embarrassed the pastor will then know about their problems. Instead, they will go to a secular counselor or to another Christian counselor not connected with their church. Another reason Christians avoid their pastor is that they fear they have done something so wrong the pastor might exercise church discipline and they do not want that to happen. Some Christians avoid their pastor because they doubt the pastor is really qualified. They think he does not have the psychology

degree or the state certification that would indicate he is a qualified counselor. So they look for the pastors who have the psychology degrees. What has happened is that some Christians have the world's perspective that secular training is to

be preferred over biblical counseling. Another reason that Christians avoid pastors is that they are concerned the pastor may be too busy. Sadly, there are pastors who do not want to counsel people in their congregation. One of the reasons is that they do not feel that they are professionally qualified to do the counseling either. Sadly, they also have accepted the world's standard of what is required in order to counsel somebody! They do not realize that they have the very tool

they need in order to counsel someone. Another reason that pastors are avoiding counseling people in their church is that they do not want the trauma and drama that comes with counseling individuals who may become upset with them because they do not like the counseling they received. Unfortunately, that is very common. Pastors will counsel someone who then becomes upset, and leaves the church. They understand that their counselee may leave the church as a result of the counseling. Now we must realize that the reason they are in counseling is that they have some problems that they are not able to cope with on their own. So we should not be surprised they might become upset with the pastor in the process and leave the church.

Tragedy of Most Christian Counseling. As a result, Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries are now offering a four-year course with a psychology degree and training. What is interesting about these colleges and universities is that they teach primarily psychology and salt it with some Bible. I said it correctly, “Salt it with some Bible.” It is sad, but “Christian counseling” is often not Christian. The reason is that most Christian counselors have studied secular psychology. Then they go to the Bible to find Bible verses that will support either their psychology training or they modify their psychology in order to accommodate what they see in the Bible. But, it usually starts with secular psychology first. It is like a fried egg and then you add some salt on it. The egg is the secular psychology and the salt is the Bible verses that are added to the eggs and the result is not biblical counseling. We end up with secular counseling with a little Bible added.

For example in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul makes a very important statement. In verses 18-20 he says,

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS”; and again, “THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.” 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 (NASB)

Secular psychologists believe they have wisdom. They ignore Scripture. They end up with systems that are supposed to help people through their trials, struggles, and problems. I am sure you have all heard the word co-dependency. That is not a biblical term. Schizophrenia is not a biblical term, or compulsive disorder. You cannot find those terms in the Bible. Those are from the secular world. Yet Christian psychologists and counselors use those terms regularly in their counseling. Why? Many of them are largely devoid of a solid understanding of Scripture. I just made a very important comment. Many Christian counselors are usually educated in secular theory and are largely devoid of a solid understanding of Scripture. They have never seriously studied some of the fundamental books of the Bible such as Romans. Biblical hermeneutics is probably a foreign word to some of them. They have probably never gone through a course on biblical hermeneutics. But the Bible is where the answers to life’s problems are found.

A poor biblical foundation will result in poor counseling. Can I put it another way? Actually, it will result in poor results. Did you know that the average secular success rate is 50%? That is according to the latest statistics. The latest statistics say that if you go to a secular psychologist or counselor, the probability at best that you will find a solution to your problem is 50%. That is their success rate. It turns out that the Christian counselors’ success rate is just a little bit higher but not by much. Now why is that? May I make a suggestion that they do not have the right tools? They do not know what they are doing.

Let me give you an example. I found this interesting example of a counseling approach. The author reports that a woman had a compulsive disorder and asked for help. She said, “I heard you refer to obsessive compulsive disorders on your radio program.” She was speaking to a Christian counselor. “There is a problem I have. I feel that I must spin around precisely three times and flip the light switch once before leaving the house, especially when I’m nervous about something. Do you think you can help me?” The Christian counselor said that a lot of counselors would not know how to respond. He then gave her some recommendations. He gave her seven. Here are his seven recommendations that she

needed to follow to work through her compulsive disorder. Number one was to recognize that she had no right to sit in the chair which only God can occupy. Two, she is to claim her death in Christ at Calvary, Galatians 2:20, and that she has no right to be in control. Three, appropriate her identity in Christ, relaxing in the security of His unconditional acceptance of her. Four, begin to look to God rather than her feelings as her barometer of truth. Then he said, "This woman is allowing a part of her that can't even think to control her." Basically, what he was trying to convey to her was that she needed to trust God. She needed to not always worry about everything. Number five, she needed to realize that Satan is controlling her by feeding her obsessive thoughts to her mind using first person, singular pronouns. So now he has added that Satan is really the major problem behind her compulsive disorder. Six, appropriate Christ's indwelling by trusting Him to express His life through her to face Monday morning. And then number seven, begin setting her mind that she is resting in Christ's strength and ability and not in hers.

Now I thought this was really interesting. He gave her seven steps that she needed to work through her compulsive order. The major themes that came through his recommendations were that she was to stop trusting herself, she was to be trusting in Christ, and she needed to recognize that Satan was controlling her by feeding her obsessive thoughts. I thought that was interesting: Satan was controlling her. If she's a Christian, Satan is not controlling her. That is the first thing that's wrong with this counsel. The second thing that is wrong with this counsel is how does he know that Satan is doing that? Maybe he had some additional information that was not revealed in his article. Even if she claimed that there was something going on that might suggest that, how does he know that is really the right answer?

Remember that Jesus sent the disciples out to minister. They returned and told Jesus that there was one demon they could not cast out. Why was that true and what did Jesus tell them? He said this kind can only come out by prayer and fasting! That should have been the solution that her counselor gave her if Satan really was involved with her. The right counsel was not given. Another thing that he should have done is tell her that she needed to confess her sin in not trusting God.

That should have been the recommendation in his counsel. Why? Because Romans 14:23 says, whatever is not of faith is sin. She was having trouble trusting God. She was anxious. She was worried. She was having fear. It is all traced to a lack of faith. So, the right counsel should have been to confess her sin of not trusting God. Then, she should have prayed to be free of the devil's harassment and ask for God's protection. But more importantly, he should have told her how to be filled with the Spirit. When a believer is filled with the Spirit, that really helps to solve one's problems. This is a good example of a man who has psychological training. He was weak in his theology and as a result, he gave poor counsel. Biblical counseling requires that the counselor is steeped in the Word of God. We do not need secular psychology.

Let me give you another example. An author speaks of a woman who had a difficult relationship with her husband. So she rejected her husband and turned to her children. She poured her life into her kids because she could not get along with her husband. Does that sound common? It happens a lot. The counselor's advice was to acknowledge her feelings to God. Secondly, reaffirm her need for security and significance found in Jesus. Third, commit herself to minister to her husband. I was wondering, why did she not start with confession of sin? Did she sin by abandoning her husband and completely focusing on her children? The answer is yes! Where was the counsel to clean up her relationship with God by confessing her sin? It was not there. The author was very big on listening to a person's emotions, sensing emotions.

In James 1:13, James writes, the Holy Spirit is guiding him,

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. James 1:13 (NASB)

Now watch verse 14.

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. James 1:14 (NASB)

The Greek word for lust is *epithumia*. It refers to emotions.

It refers to a strong emotion. So, what is the author saying? The counselor was saying that she needed to connect with her emotions essentially. Acknowledge your feelings towards God and think about your feelings. James 1:15 says,

Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. James 1:15(NASB)

If you look at the word “lust” in connection with sin, through the book of Romans and other places throughout the rest of the New Testament, you will find that we are always being enticed to sin by lust. Our emotions tempt us to sin. When you get emotional, you need to stop and ask yourself, “Why am I emotional?” Now there are some good reasons to become emotional. You love your wife. You love your husband. You love your kids. You are having joy. Jesus had joy in the Spirit and that is okay. But if you become angry, that is an emotion when you need to stop and ask yourself, “What is my emotion telling me?” Am I dealing with a sin issue or am I not dealing with a sin issue? Is this righteous anger or am I in sin? I struggle with this counselor’s emphasis on emotion.

When the counselor told her to “commit yourself to minister to your husband,” the question is how was she to do that? Do you just gut it out and pull yourself up by your bootstraps? Let me suggest the Holy Spirit is a better solution. There are some fundamental things that are missing. First of all is the need to confess any sin and then to be filled with and under the control of the Spirit. When believers are filled with the Spirit, a lot of good things happen in a relationship. Wives submit to their husbands. Husbands love their wives. There is joy. There is peace. There is kindness. Many wonderful things happen when you are filled with the Spirit. This truth is missing from his counseling.

We Have Everything For A Godly Life. In our last study, we were in 2 Peter 1:2. We learned that grace and peace are multiplied to us as we grow in our knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. Notice what the verse says, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” The idea is that grace and peace are multiplied to us the more we know our God. If you look at verse

3, the word of God is the solution again. Look at what it says,

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 2 Peter 1:3 (NASB)

So, once again, the word of God is important. Now look at verse 3 a little closer. There are a couple things I want you to notice. You will discover why I gave such a long introduction which is most of our study! Verse 3 says, “Seeing that his divine power.” The term, divine power, refers to the fact that this is God’s power. His deity, “has granted to us power.” The word “granted” has the idea of a gift. So by His power, He has given us a gift - “everything pertaining to life and godliness has been granted to us.” Now what does the Spirit mean by, “everything pertaining to life and godliness?” Life is how you live your life. Godliness is behavior. When the author uses the terms life and godliness, we are told that God has given us everything that you need to live your life. It comes through the knowledge of God. The message is that the word of God is all that you need in order to know how to live your life - how to be godly. Watch this – you do not need a secular counselor. You actually do not even need a spiritual counselor, a biblical counselor, pastor or priest. Actually, all you need is the Word of God, but you have to study and know the Word of God.

Now the reason you would want to go to a pastor or biblical counselor is if you did not really know the Scriptures well enough to deal with your situation. If that is true, then you will want to go to a pastor who really knows the Scriptures. You want to go to a pastor who is steeped in Scripture. You do not want to go to a Christian counselor who may pick up the Bible just to support his counseling. You want to go to someone - a pastor or counselor - who regularly, every week, is buried in Scripture, learning Scripture, knowing the principles in order to help you solve your problem. That is what is needed. This verse is powerful. It says, “seeing that his divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.” In other words, Scripture has everything that you and I need for life and godliness. Therefore, you do not need to go any place else.

God Uses Scripture To Transform Us. Notice that 1 Peter 2:1-3 teaches us the same principle. Verse 1 says,

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander . . . 1 Peter 2:1 (NASB)

It is saying to put aside sin. Stop sinning! Then do the following,

. . . like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word . . . 1 Peter 2:2a (NASB)

The Spirit says, “long for the word of God, long for the Scriptures, or long to know the Bible.” Why?

. . . so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation . . . 1 Peter 2:1 (NASB)

Now the Spirit is not talking about becoming saved. He is talking about the fact that you are already saved and now need to grow spiritually. The principle is that the serious study of the Word of God results in spiritual growth.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 is another important verse. It tells us that as you are buried in the study of the Word of God, you will grow spiritually. It says,

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

What does the Word of God do? As we read and study the Word of God, it changes us. It transforms us. How does it change you? The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to transform us. In addition to teaching us more about God, He applies the Word of God to our heart, convicting us of our sins so that they can be confessed and forsaken. These two verses tells we ought to be longing for the Word of God so

that we can grow.

The third verse about how He transforms believers is found in Philippians 1:6. It says,

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NASB)

What does this say? This says that God began a work in you. He is continuing to work in you and He is going to do that until the day of Christ or until He comes. The verse describes what God has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will do in the future. The message is that God is working in us.

What Happens If I Am Sinning? You ask, “What happens if I am sinning?” The answer is He is still working on you. You ask, “What happens if I am having problems in my family, at my work, at my church, or wherever the problem might be, is God still at work in me?” The answer is, “Yes!” He is. In fact, He is probably using all of that in your life to transform you. When we do not cooperate, when we refuse to be obedient, He then disciplines us. You can read Hebrews 12:4-11 later. It makes the point that God disciplines us as a father disciplines his children. So when we refuse to cooperate with the work God is doing in our lives, then He disciplines us to get us back in line because God is at work changing us and transforming us. Watch this: He is doing everything that is necessary for our life and godliness. He is at work in us.

How Do We Work Out Our Salvation? But how does this work? We will answer that in a minute. Philippians 2:12-13 gives us the same message. Verse 12 tells us that God expects us to participate while verse 13 says that God is doing the work through us. Verse 12 says,

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling . . . Philippians 2:12 (NASB)

I have to admit that in my younger years, when I finally realized that if I did not obey God, I would be disciplined, I had

a lot of fear. Because here it says, “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” That is talking about a fear of being disciplined for sin. Have you ever sinned and you knew somehow that God was disciplining you? That is what this is talking about. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” is not about losing your salvation. The message is God has a big stick. He knows how to motivate us to obey. If we refuse, His discipline becomes worse, if you really belong to Him. He is going to make your life painful until you decide to obey. Verse 13 says,

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:13 (NASB)

Here we are told that God is the one who is at work in us. He is the one who is transforming us, changing us.

I stumbled across Hebrews 5:14 some years ago. It is a very powerful verse. It says,

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:14 (NASB)

So, who is able to discern good and evil? The mature! Who are the mature? It says, “solid food is for the mature and as a result of practice they have learned the difference between good and evil.” Now think about our passage in 2 Peter 1:3. It says God gives us everything pertaining to life and godliness. How do you discern what is good and evil? By the Word of God! If you are serious about digging deep in Scripture as opposed to just wanting to skim the sugar off the top, then dig deeply into it. Do you see that God gave us the Word of God to transform and mature us? He is using it to accomplish that.

Benefits of Being Filled With the Spirit. The next very important passage of Scripture is Ephesians 5:17. Verse 17 tells us that we need to understand the will of God. Verse 18 tells us what the will of God is. It says the will of God is that we be filled with the Spirit. Some people ask, “What do you mean by ‘filled with the Spirit?’” In summary, I would just say that it is referring to richly dwelling in the Word of God

and obeying it. It includes confessing our sin and being in prayer. It is amazing how many times I say that because it is the solution to our problems in the Christian life. God wants us to know Him and know we are given everything that pertains to life and godliness.

Notice the results of being filled with the Spirit in verses 19, 20 and 21. The results are terrific. As you read it, ask yourself if it sounds like somebody who needs to go to counseling. It says,

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:19-21 (NASB)

Verses 19 - 21 describe the results of being filled with the Spirit. Verse 22 is also describing the results of being filled with the Spirit.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Ephesians 5:22 (NASB)

Verse 25 is still a result of being filled with the Spirit. It says,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Ephesians 5:25 (NASB)

Chapter 6:1 is another result of being filled with the Spirit, “Children obey your parents.” Verse 5 adds, “Slaves be obedient to those who are your masters.” In today’s culture, that would describe the employee and employer working relationship. These positive relationships are all the results of being filled with the Spirit.

Benefits of Walking in the Spirit. Galatians 5 is the next passage of interest. Being filled with the Spirit is a moment in time event. Walking in the Spirit is repeating the moment. So as you go through your day living in obedience, you are con-

tinually being filled with the Spirit. As you continue doing that, you are walking in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 tells us,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

Now what is the desire of the flesh? Sin! You can read that in verses 18 - 21. Notice that verse 22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit ..." Remember what verse 16 says. Verse 16 says, "Walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." Verse 17 says,

. . . the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh . . . Galatians 5:17 (NASB)

This describes a battle. But if you are walking in the Spirit, if you are being filled with the Spirit constantly, giving your life to the Spirit, you have asked the Spirit to take control, you are in the word, praying, confessing your sins, then look at what happens. You will have the fruit of the Spirit blossoming in your life. What is the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ... Now *can* you imagine a counselor ignoring that piece of advice? Why?

If someone is struggling with loving people as they should, why not tell them to walk in the Spirit? Why not tell them to be filled with the Spirit? Why not explain to them to be confessing their sin, praying, studying the Word of God and letting the Spirit take control? The benefits would be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Have you ever encountered somebody who has difficulty with self-control? They need to walk in the Spirit. That is the solution. Peter says, "We have been given everything for life and godliness." The Holy Spirit is the solution. We need to do our part.

Conclusion. Let me share a couple of verses and then we are finished. In John 4, Jesus was talking to the woman in Samaria and He introduces water to her. John 4:13 says,

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again . . ." John 4:13 (NASB)

Jesus is talking about water that springs up to eternal life. The message is that when a person becomes a Christian, they receive this living water. John 7:37-38 also speaks of this living water. It says,

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' John 7:37-38 (NASB)

The imagery is incredible because Jesus is saying that living water is going to gush out from your inside. Does that sound great? Does that sound wonderful? If it is not happening, something is wrong. Verse 39 adds,

But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:39 (NASB)

The water that Jesus was talking about is the Holy Spirit who comes and lives within and empowers us to avoid sin. He empowers us to behave correctly. He solves our problems with everything that pertains to life and godliness. In John 10:10b Jesus promises,

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. John 10:10b (NASB)

Jesus came to offer abundant life. Look at John 14:25-26. He says,

These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. John 14:25-26 (NASB)

I want you to notice the word for Helper. This refers to the

Holy Spirit. Did you know that the Greek word is *parakletos*? Some of our Bibles say, "Counselor." What have we been talking about tonight? Counseling! Who is "The Counselor"? The Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is "The Counselor." We do not need a secular counselor. We do not need a Christian counselor unless you need help in learning the Word of God and you need somebody who really knows the Word of God to teach you. May I suggest that you need a knowledgeable pastor - not someone who is trying to be a "Christian" counselor but is steeped in secular psychology and trying to make the Bible fit with their training. You need somebody who knows the Word of God, who knows the Bible. That is who you need. Now verse 27 says,

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. John 14:27 (NASB)

This is the abundant life provided by the Holy Spirit. He helps us, and counsels you via the Word of God.

In John 15:11 Jesus says,

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 15:11 (NASB)

Jesus said that our joy may be full, not just be a little trickle. John 16:13 adds,

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13 (NASB)

What does the Spirit do? He guides us into truth! Have you ever prayed for wisdom? Have you ever prayed for knowledge? Wisdom is the application of truth. The Spirit is the one who helps. Watch this. 2 Peter 1:3 says that God has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness. The Word of God is all we need because we have resident within us the divine Counselor who applies it to our lives and transforms

us. Interestingly enough Isaiah 9:6-7 also refers to Jesus as the "Wonderful Counselor!"

Now you have discovered the only Counselor you really need.