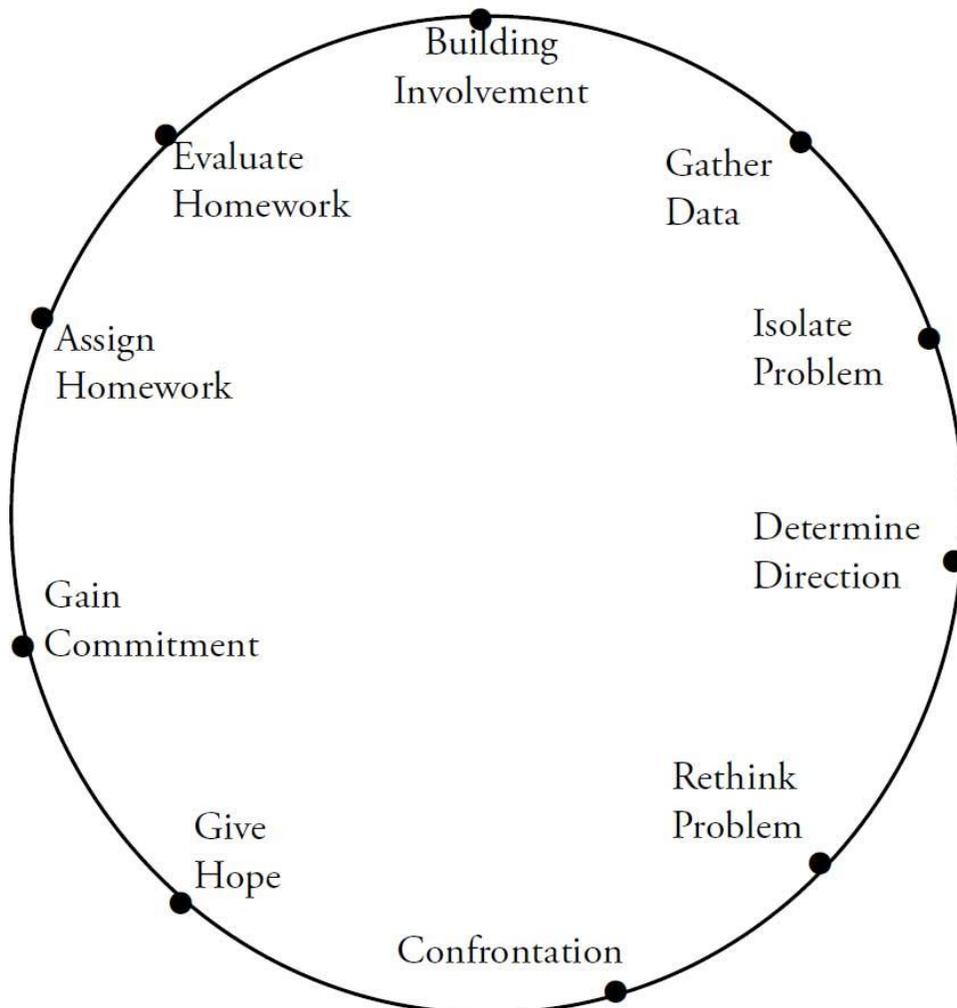


# Biblical Counseling-Introductory Session and Closing Session

**Question #1:** What issues should be covered in an introductory session with a counselee, regardless of the counseling issue?

## Data Gathering (Prior to the Introductory Session).

- We first respond to a request for counseling or referral to counseling by directing the person to complete the counseling form (PDI), either downloaded or emailed to the person. If we attempt to interpret people's problems before we gather adequate data, we will only add to their difficulty rather than relieve it. It is of great importance to gather data. This will be significant to the process of accurate biblical counseling. Thus, this is the beginning of the process.
- James 1:19 says, "Be quick to hear, slow to speak," and nowhere is that command more important than in counseling.
- Review the completed form. Note the issues that will require additional inquiry.
- Pay close attention to the responses to the final three questions. This will often provide directions for the first session.



## Theology Pyramid – How the Foundation Is Built

- Canon of Scripture → Hermeneutics → Exegesis → Biblical Theology → Systematic Theology → Practical Theology

## Welcome – Building Involvement

- Compassion and kindness are essential for counseling and discipleship. “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).
- Jesus’ counseling was marked with compassion (even when His words were rejected). “Seeing the people, He felt **compassion** for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).
- Do be like Job’s friends (initially) when they came and saw the distress of Job and showed concern. (Job 2:11-13).
- Work to put your counselee at ease. Encourage them for taking a step to understand what the Bible says about their concerns. Remind them that seeking Him is honoring to the Lord (Matt 6:33).

## Data Gathering (During the Introductory Session)

- Additional data gathering is essential during the first session. Now you want to hear what they express as the problem. “He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him. The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, But *as for* a broken spirit who can bear it? The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (Proverbs 18:13–15). Here you don’t want to be like Job’s friends (Job 4-25).
  - Historical information – childhood experience, teen years, college/career experience.
  - Influential experiences/people
  - When were you saved? What is your church history?
- Current:
  - When did you first begin to experience this problem?
  - What do you see as the most pressing problem?
  - How did the problem grow in its severity?
  - What would be the desired expectation in resolving the problem?
- Observe the Halo Data—Pay attention to the mannerisms and actions of the counselee during the session.
- Look to identify a focal problem.

## Clarifying Your Counseling Approach

- Biblical counseling should reflect the Scriptures *at every point* (major and minor). That means that every bit of advice you give your counselee should have solid biblical support.
- The Word of God, not the counselor, is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb 4:12).

- The Scriptures provide everything we need for living our lives as followers of Christ (2 Peter 1:3).
- The Lord's solutions provide hope that does not disappoint, for He has given His Holy Spirit to empower us (Rom 5:4-6).
- The Spirit of God and the Word of God are what provide competence to our counseling (Rom 15:14).
- The Scripture is sufficient for both our counseling and our teaching (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- You should expect to hear much (and learn much) about Jesus Christ. The Bible is the written Word. From cover to cover it points in every way to Jesus, the incarnate Word. The gospel of Christ "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Glorifying Him and seeking to do His will ought to be the assumed motivation behind everything you do. From time to time the counselor may inquire as to whether these things truly are the ruling motivations of your heart.
- You should expect to be given counseling homework.  
For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be *filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work *and increasing in the knowledge of God*. (Colossians 1:9–10).

### **Give Hope**

- There are no counselees who do not seek hope. A desire for hope led them to counseling.
- Much of what is done in clarifying the counseling approach should provide hope.
- Reiterate that Scripture speaks to and provides guidance for the trials and tribulations of our lives. Additional Scripture is used to bolster hope in the area where the counselee is struggling.
- Eternal Perspective - We can learn to joyfully endure whatever suffering God may choose for us in light of the great eternal hope Christ has set before us, as laid out in His Word. (2 Cor 4:16-18).

### **Determine Direction**

- The focal problem (Isolate the Problem) will lead to the direction the counselor will want to take.
- This often deals with the presenting problem, but the prevailing problem will become clearer as you walk alongside the counselee—Rethinking the Problem.

### **Assign Homework**

- "Christians don't change by chance—they change by choice!" – Wayne Mack.
- We are to cooperate with the Spirit by working through the truth of what God has spoken. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure" (Phil 2:12-13).
- Homework will have as a priority the importance of three means of grace that should be a part of the believer's daily life: Confession of sin, prayer, and reading/studying the Bible.

- Emphasize the importance of the time spent with the Lord each day as the most important aspect of the counseling process.
- Attend a Bible-teaching church and establish yourself in the community of believers.

### **Gain Commitment**

- Will you commit to coming to counseling for a period of time to work through the current struggle?
- Will you commit to the homework assigned?
- Will you commit to bringing a humble heart to counseling sessions? This is conveyed by having a learner's spirit. We are to humble ourselves before the Lord (1 Peter 5:5-6). He gives grace to the humble.

## **Ending Biblical Counseling**

**Question #6:** List several reasons for concluding a counseling case. For each, describe how you would go about ending the counseling.

### **Failure to Consistently Abide by the Commitments of Appointments and Homework**

- Progressive sanctification requires effort on our part. Time in the Word and doing the homework are key parts of change.
- Failure to keep scheduled times will mean that counseling must be ended (at least temporarily).

### **When They Understand the Real Goal of the Christian Life**

- The goal for all believers is to become more like Christ (Rom 8:28-29).
- This should become the ambition of the counselee. "Therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." 2 Corinthians 5:9
- The counselee has moved from changing the circumstance to glorifying God (1 Cor 10:31).

### **When They Are Focusing on Their Own Sin**

- They have moved from blame-shifting to personal responsibility for sin. "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).
- Seeing your own sin first leads to working on it the most! Daily repentance has become the routine of the Christian life. It changes the direction of one's life.

### **When They See Their Own Hearts and the Idols That Rule Them**

- Prov 4:23 – "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life."
- Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
- James 4:1-3 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not

ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

### **When They Understand the Biblical Process of Lasting Change**

- Change requires God’s grace.
- Change requires personal effort.  
“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me” 1 Cor 15:10).

### **When They’re Willing to Do Whatever It Takes to Please God**

- The believer takes radical measures to mortify sin.
  - “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. “If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell (Matt 5:29–30).
  - You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin (Heb 12:4).
  - “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, <sup>13</sup> and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom 6:12–13).

### **When They’ve Formed a New Habit, by God’s Spirit, of ‘Catching’ Themselves**

- By God’s grace and God’s Spirit, catching themselves in real time just as they were about to think what they always think, say what they usually say or do what they always did.  
“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25)

### **When They’re Formed a Habit of Spiritual Self-Feeding**

- Spiritual disciplines of prayer, confession, Bible reading, and meditation, etc., have become a more consistent and regular part of their daily schedule.

### **When They’ve Learned How to Control Their Emotions by Understanding What Feeds Them**

- God’s Word is what we need to become more like Christ. What we think and believe changes how we react. The end result is emotions that are aligned with the design of our Creator.  
“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:4–5).

### **When They Are Living at Close Range with Other Believers in the Body of Christ**

- Consistently present for corporate worship.
- Plugged into a small group or growth group.
- Have friends who don't just listen but will exhort, encourage, rebuke, and speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful, and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Heb 10:23–25).

### **When They Are Able to Formulate Their Own Plan for Moving Forward**

- So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:17).

### **How You Go About Ending the Counseling**

- The first one was a failure to engage in counseling. The door should be left open to return to counseling when the homework assigned is completed, and there is a renewed commitment to counseling
- The other reasons provided for ending counseling demonstrate the counselee has sufficiently worked through the issue and is equipped in problem resolution.
- Even when someone demonstrates sufficient trust in the Lord and problem resolution, counseling should remain open in case help may be needed.
- Follow-up is recommended to evaluate progress. Six months is a good recommendation.

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