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*2 Timothy 2:15*
*"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

# LIFE ISSUES COUNSELING

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*Our Vision is to Empower, Edify & Equip the Body of Christ in*
*The Word of Truth, So that we can be Leaders of Today*
*& Teachers for Tomorrow.*

*"Leaders are those whose aroma lingers long after they have completed the task and others who sniff it, wants to be like them"*

*"Leadership is not a title but a Function*
*& that Function pulls you to its Position*
*& the Position determines your Title"*

*Blessings & Graceful Studying*
*Professor Ronnie Moodley*

# LIFE ISSUES COUNSELING

**ASSIGNMENTS TOWARDS - FINAL EXAMINATION**
***CHRISTIAN COUNSELING FOR MINISTRY LEVEL***

Please complete all assignments in the Manuals

Must be done in typing – According to Questions in Manuals.

MARKS will be awarded for
(1) Presentation;
(2) Research;
(3) Neatness;
(4) Contents.

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**LIFE ISSUES COUNSELING**

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## INTRODUCTION

Before we begin to look at the various counseling issues and topics that you could encounter in the counseling session, it is important that we briefly recap what we learnt in the previous course, Christian Counseling.

Christian Counseling is counseling that is not based upon human wisdom but is based upon the truth, the Word of God. When counseling the person who has come to you for help, you therefore are responsible as a counselor to direct the attention of the person off of their problems, of their faulty belief system and their hurts and to place their attention on the truth that is found in the Word of God. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the counselor will be able to open the eyes of the understanding of the counselee so that they will be able to comprehend the truth and in comprehending and understanding of the truth, they will be set free.

The counselor will take the counselee through the following steps:

- Acknowledge their wrong behavior, feelings, thoughts
- Bring them to a place of repentance where they commit or recommit their lives to God and thereby realize their dependence upon Him as being their Helper, Comforter and Counselor.
- Teach the truth through the Word of God so that they can replace their faulty belief system with the truth and thereby begin to apply this truth to their situation.
- Implement change through changing the thought patterns and through changing their behaviour and actions.

Through this course we will be dealing with the major issues that are common in the counseling session. These issues can be divided into four main areas:

- Wrong thoughts
- Wrong feelings
- Wrong behavior
- Wrong relational patterns

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## PART ONE: WRONG THOUGHT PATTERNS

Most of the problems that we face are because of a faulty thought pattern that we have concerning ourselves. These wrong or false thoughts are usually adapted during the early years of our lives when we have not had our basic needs (of love, security, significance and purpose) being met.

When these false thoughts and beliefs about ourselves begin to motivate our feelings and subsequent actions, we find ourselves in a situation where we seek help so that change can take place. When emotions like anger, rage, vengefulness, hatred, envy, spite, sorrow, despair, regret, arrogance, self-pity, guilt and so on, produce behaviors like using others, lying, manipulation, violence, brutality, impatience, withdrawal and judging we need to come to realize that our irrational thinking and wrong beliefs have taken hold of our thought process.

### NEGATIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS

Negative thinking patterns are learned ways of thinking. The following lists some of the most common types of destructive thinking patterns that occur:

***All or Nothing Thinking***: Sometimes referred to as black and white thinking, or absolute thinking. This is the type of thinking that states, "I've already blown it. I might as well give up on the rest of the day." If a situation falls short of 100% perfection, the person sees it as a total failure. For example, if they have binged for one meal, or didn't exactly follow the plan for the day, they will think that they have blown it completely. This train of thought is easy to get caught up in and it can be very damaging to their success.

***Over-Generalization***: The person sees a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. This type of thinking uses words such as "always" and "never". Though these two words seem harmless, they can distort the view of reality. If one negative event occurs, the person might think, "It's just my luck. Nothing good ever happens to me." While this statement might be true some of the time, chances are there has been at least one exception to it. Holding onto this "always" and "never" attitude simply keeps the person from seeing the truth as it really is. It's negative and self-defeating.

***Catastrophizing & Minimizing***: This type of thinking does two things:

1. It sees the positive results of their actions as smaller than they really are,

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2. It exaggerates the negative results of their actions.

This thinking may also inappropriately shrink achievements down until they seem insignificant, while obsessively dwell on what is 'wrong' with them. Sometimes this is referred to as "making a mountain out of a mole hill."

***Disqualifying the Positive:*** This is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking without the "all"! All the positive messages and actions are deleted or rejected. The positive experiences just "don't count" and the person only attends to the negative. They pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it - discounting any other evidence to the contrary. This negative thought darkens everything else that has proceeded. For example, they may have lost 10 kilograms. But for some reason gained back five of those kilograms. Negative thinking dwells entirely on the five gained back, darkening the entire situation. Discounting the positive takes the joy out of life and makes the person feel inadequate and un-rewarded.

***Emotional Reasoning***: This person assumes that their emotions reflect the way things really are. This thinking states, I feel it, therefore it must be true." In truth, it is most likely the old tapes that are playing in their head that is creating the emotions that they are feeling. This takes emotional reasons as evidence of truth. "I feel frustrated, I'll never get through this."

***Should Statements***: The person will try to motivate themselves with should statements, such as, "I should be eating healthy", "I should not eat that", "I should have lost more weight by now." "I should start exercising." Often it is habit to use words such as "should", "shouldn't", "have to", "must", and "must not" in an attempt to create change. These are negative, action-stopping words. If the person feels that they should do something, then it's something they don't want to do but for some reason feel obligated to do. They will try to motivate themselves with should and shouldn't, as if they had to be whipped or punished before they could be expected to do anything. The emotional consequence of using should on themselves is guilt - which isn't an effective motivator.

***Labeling & Disparaging***: Underlying labeling is the thought that if I hate myself enough, maybe I'll change. Instead of describing their action, they judge themselves harshly. A label or insults are applied such as, "I'm a failure", "I'm fat and ugly", or "I'm such a stupid idiot." Instead of describing their error, they will attach a negative label to themselves. Judging themselves harshly never helps the process of self-awareness or understanding. These statements are likely to cause massive emotional swings of anger, frustration, and low self-esteem.

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***Mental Filter***: The person concentrates so strongly on a single negative detail and dwell on it so exclusively that their vision of reality becomes darkened. An analogy is like the single drop of ink that discolors an entire beaker of water. The automatic thoughts all deal with this one concern. If, for example, you ran out of time on a previous test, you may find yourself so preoccupied with the time limit that you have trouble concentrating on the questions.

***Personalization***: The person will see themselves as the cause of some negative external event, which in fact they were not primarily responsible for.

## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

If a person's thoughts, beliefs and perceptions lead towards destructive behavior, then right thinking and right teaching would bring about behavior modification. As the counselor it is therefore your responsibility to, through the gathering of information to identify the wrong pattern of thinking and then through teaching, correct this wrong pattern to the truth. When a person realizes their faulty thinking pattern and then commits to correcting this, they will then start to behave in a manner opposite to their previous actions. "Your insight and understanding will protect you and prevent you from doing the wrong things". (Proverbs-2:12)

How can change be made to the thought patterns of an individual? Teaching the Word of God is one of the vital steps to seeing the counselee become free in their wrong, negative and false beliefs about themselves. Therefore as a counselor you need to know the Word of God, discern the wrong thinking pattern and then teach them the truth.

- John 8:32 "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

- Romans 6:14, 18, 22 "Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace…Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness… But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life."

- Psalms 119:45 "I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts"

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By the Word of God and His very great and precious promises (II Peter 1:4) the counselee can experience freedom, as He has made provision for complete freedom in Jesus Name and by His Jesus power.

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Explore (without judgment) what they are thinking. This is done through listening and gathering information. What is the counselee thinking? Are their thoughts encouraging and loving, or a depressing mix of fear, doubt, and punishment?

Step two: Allow the counselee to write down what they believe about themselves. This enables the counselee to see what their thought patterns have been like in the past and at present. For example:

- What am I thinking or dwelling on?
- Am I seeing the whole truth?
- How does this thought make me feel?

Step three: Show the counselee through the Word of God what the Bible says concerning them or their situation.

Step four: Bring the counselee to a place where they are able to admit that they have not based their beliefs on what is true. Bring them to a place of repentance. Ask them the following:

- Which of the above thought patterns have you been using?
- Which of the above thought patterns are true?
- Do you believe that the Bible is the truth?
- How can you change you thought pattern to begin to dwell on the truth and not on what you have conditioned your thoughts to believe?

Step five: Provide them with scriptures that they will take home with them that will relate to their negative thinking so as to "set it straight" and to allow them to rebuild their thinking pattern with the Word of God, their plumbline

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## CONSEQUENCES OF THE WRONG THOUGHT PATTERN

Two of the most common problems in the counseling session that are a direct result of negative thought patterns and wrong beliefs about "self" are those that develop in the childhood of a person. These are:

- Low Self esteem
- Rejection

We will be looking at each of these problems and will show how the counselor should counsel in order to bring the counselee to a place where their thinking is right according to the Word of God.

## LOW SELF ESTEEM

Our opinion of ourselves depends largely on how we have learned to think about ourselves from important people in our lives. If we have felt inadequate and unneeded then will have the idea that "something is wrong with me, I don't belong, I don't like myself, I want to hide and I don't compare". These wrong thoughts develop into a bad self esteem/image. Low self-esteem is about not valuing ourselves as human beings. When we always see ourselves as "not good enough" we will begin to perform in the manner in which we think and therefore will fulfill our own false beliefs.

**WRONG THINKING ABOUT SELF = POOR SELF IMAGE = SELF FULFILLING PROPHECY**

## WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD HAVE A POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM.

Does it matter to God if we have a healthy self-concept? A study of His word leads us to believe that God is interested in our feelings of self-worth. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26). This fact alone makes every human being worth much.

Firstly, our self-esteem affects our feelings toward ourselves and others. When a person draws their confidence from God, they will have a proper self-esteem. They will not see themselves as perfect, but they will know that they are special in God's sight. However, with low self-esteem, the person will not view themselves as God does. As a result that will be full of self-pity, fear, criticism and will never use their gifting and talents and thereby reach their true potential.

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Secondly, our self-esteem affects our home. A Christian who has proper self-esteem is more likely to build self-esteem among family members. Consider the worthy woman of Proverbs 31. After describing all her qualities, it closes with these words. "Her children stand and bless her. Her husband praises her: "There are many virtuous and capable women in the world, but you surpass them all!" Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised. Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise". (Proverbs 31:28-31)

Thirdly, our self-esteem affects our work in the Lord. A Christian with low self-esteem is less likely to get involved in teaching programs or participate in spiritual discussion with fellow Christians. He may have the ability and talent to teach or to lead singing, but his inferiority complex is keeping him from doing this.

Fourthly, our self-esteem affects our witness. A Christian with low self-esteem is not likely to evangelize because they fear rejection. Christians with low self-esteem may shy away from all religious discussions because they fear that no one will listen to what they have to say (having a feeling of being insignificant).

Fifthly, our low self esteem affects the manner in which we are able to obey God's commandments. It is important, though, that one have a healthy view of oneself. Jesus said that we should love our neighbor as **ourselves** (Matthew 22:39). That implies a sound concept of self-esteem.

Therefore when we deal with a person's low self esteem, we are helping them not only in their personal life but we are helping them in their homes, in their relationships, in their work for the Lord and in their witness.

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## THE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF SEEING OURSEVLES

No person is one-dimensional. Actually, there are three views of every individual: the view that God has of them, the opinions that others hold concerning them, and the perception they have of themselves. Each of these views is important and has a vital role in developing self image or self worth.

### THE VIEWS THAT USUALLY LEAD TO A NEGATIVE OR POOR SELF IMAGE

1. **Man's opinion of you**:

These are the sentiments that our peers entertain regarding us. Such assessments are only relatively accurate. For example: Jesus certainly did not deserve the hateful reproaches that were heaped upon him. And Paul, the apostle of Christ, suffered a good deal of unmerited character assassination.

Man's opinion of you is usually seen in worldly standards such as:

- Beauty and appearance: We believe what others say concerning what is perceived as being attractive and unattractive. For example: weight, height, race, shape etc.

- Money and possessions: Some people only feel accepted and like they "fit in" when they are part of a certain class or when they have certain possessions.

- Intelligence and education: Some feel badly about themselves because of their limited formal education.

When a person bases their self esteem upon what others think of them they can either,

- Feel completely inadequate and inferior. When we deny that we have value, we are in essence being too proud to accept the value God has placed on us.

- Feel independent and prideful, and indulge in self-worship, which dulls our desire for God. James 4:6 tells us that "God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble." If we only trust in our earthly resources, we will inevitably be left with a sense of worthiness based on pride. Jesus told us, "when you obey me you should say, 'We are not worthy of praise. We are servants who have simply done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

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2. **Your opinion of you**:

This is the appraisal one makes of himself. Some of the causes of low self esteem as a result of our own opinion comes from:

- What you have learned from other's opinions of you as reflected above and what you have chosen to take as the truth and then believe of yourself.
- Low self-esteem may result from the tragic circumstances in one's past. For example, a person may have been conceived out of wedlock, or as the result of rape.
- Any form of abuse - sexual, physical or verbal. Abuse can ravage one's self-esteem. Not infrequently a parent or spouse will berate a child or a companion persistently and viciously, so that the feeling of personal worth in the victim becomes almost nothing. An uncaring husband may tell his wife that she is ugly, fat, stupid, or lazy.
- Divorce in the family: Many children reproach themselves for the break-up of their families.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

A person with a low self-esteem may exhibit the following:

- Consider themselves lost, unworthy of being cared for.
- Are poor risk takers.
- Operate out of a fear of rejection.
- Are typically unassertive in their behavior with others.
- Are fearful of conflict with others.
- Are hungry for the approval of others.
- Are poor problem solvers.
- Are fraught with irrational beliefs and have a tendency to think irrationally.
- Are susceptible to all kinds of fears.
- Have a tendency to become emotionally immobilized.
- Have a poor "track record" in school or on the job; conversely, they sometimes over compensate and become over-achievers.
- Are unable to affirm or to reinforce themselves positively.
- Are unable to make an honest assessment of their strengths, qualities, and good points; they find it difficult to accept compliments or recognition from others.
- Have poorly defined self-identities with a tendency to be chameleons in order to fit in with others.

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- Are insecure, anxious, and nervous when they are with others.
- Often become overcome with anger about their status in life and are likely to have chronic hostility or chronic depression.
- Are easily overcome with despair and depression when they experience a setback or loss in their lives.
- Have a tendency to overreact and become de-energized by resentment, anger, and the desire for revenge against those whom they believe has not fully accepted them.
- Are vulnerable to mental health problems and have a propensity to use addictive behavior to medicate their hurt and pain. Such addictive behavior can include alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, sex, shopping, smoking, work-alcoholism etc
- A poor self-image sometimes manifests itself in materialism. Some people feel that if they can surround themselves with an abundance of nice things, it will overcome the feeling of insecurity that seems ever to be with them. The accumulation of material things will not provide the sense of genuine well-being for which each of us longs. Feeling good about oneself, and feeling good about possessions, are entirely different matters.

**GOD'S VIEWPOINT LEADS TO A POSITIVE SELF IMAGE:**

The last view that we can adopt concerning our self image is the view of ourselves that God has towards us. The view and assessment that God has about me is accurate in every detail. The Lord does not observe people merely outwardly, as humans tend to do; rather, "Jehovah looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). The Lord "knows the hearts of the children of men" (1 Kings 8:39). Christians should attain self-worth and esteem by having a right relationship with God, through fellowship of His Word.

"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does". (James 1:23-25)

What is the purpose of a mirror? It is to show you what you look like. James likens God's Word to a mirror. A mirror talks back to us. The mirror tells us who we are! God tells us who we are! Many have voices echoing through their minds, like a repeated tape player, constantly telling them who they are. These voices come from authority figures—parents, teachers, ministers—or from peers. These voices

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often have not spoken the truth but a lie. The goal of counseling is to differentiate between the lies we have accepted and the truth of the gospel.

**What does the Bible teach us?**

***We are valuable***: We can know we are valuable because of the high price God paid for us through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that God values us enough to purchase us to be His own people (Ephesians 1:14). John 3:16 ""For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life".

- Our self-esteem is based on the value God places on us. "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor."

- God values us based on His character, not ours (Psalm 113:7-8) "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes, with the princes of their people."

- God values us and we're constantly on His mind. (Psalm 139:17-18) "How precious it is, Lord, to realize that You are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, You are still thinking of me!" Luke 12:6-7, "What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Not much more than that. Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And He knows the number of hairs on your head! Never fear, you are far more valuable to Him than a whole flock of sparrows."

***We were created in the image of God***: Man was made in the very image of God. On the sixth day of the creation week, God said: "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness . . . . And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6). We were created in the image of God, out of God's wonderful creativity. This means that we have a certain dignity, given to us not because of who we are, but because God was our Creator. Our dignity is rooted in God's character, His creativity and His love. In and of ourselves, however, we have no value...we are merely the dust of the ground. But because He loves us, we become valuable. Psalm 139:13-16 "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

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Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."

***We are loved unconditionally***: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." (Jeremiah 31:3 ;) Exodus 34:6 "He passed in front of Moses and said, "I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness." 1 Chron. 16:34 "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever." Psalm 6:4 "Return, O LORD, and rescue me. Save me because of your unfailing love." Psalm 13:5 "But I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me."

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTION:**

Write out all of the following scriptures. Compile a list of scriptures that deal with:

- In Christ
- In Him
- In the beloved
- In whom
- Through Christ
- Because of Christ
- With Christ
- or simply expressions that reveal who you are, what you can do and what you have because you are a believer.

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## THE DIFFERENT APPROACH OF A HIGH AND A LOW SELF ESTEEM

| | High Self-Esteem and Humility | Low Self-Esteem and Arrogance |
|---|---|---|
| **Framework for Interpreting Life-Events** | Empathy | Self-Absorption |
| **Motivation** | Contentment | Anxiety |
| **Response to Praise and Criticism** | Honesty | Dishonesty |
| **Response to Risks of Intimacy** | Courage | Fear |
| **Source** | Grace | Legalism |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY SELF IMAGE:

A healthy self esteem says, "I belong here, I can love and be loved, my life has a purpose, I needs other and others need me, I can be anything through the enablement of God"

People with self-esteem:

- Hold themselves as worthy to be loved and to love others, worthy to be cared for and to care for others, worthy to be nurtured and to nurture others, worthy to be touched and supported and to touch and support others, worthy to be listened to and to listen to others, worthy to be recognized and to recognize others, worthy to be encouraged and to encourage others, worthy to be reinforced as "good" people and to recognize others as "good" people.

- Have a productive personality; they have achieved success to the best of their ability in school, work, and society.

- Are capable of being creative, imaginative problem solvers; of being risk takers, optimistic in their approach to life and in the attainment of their personal goals.

- Are leaders and are skillful in dealing with people. They are neither too independent nor too dependent on others. They have the ability to size up a relationship and adjust to the demands of the interaction.

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- Have a healthy self-concept. Their perception of themselves is in synchrony with the picture of themselves they project to others.

- Are able to state clearly who they are, what their future potential is, and to what they are committed in life. They are able to declare what they deserve to receive in their lifetime.

- Are able to accept the responsibility for and consequences of their actions. They do not resort to shifting the blame or using others as scapegoats for actions that have resulted in a negative outcome.

- Are altruistic. They have a legitimate concern for the welfare of others. They are not self-centered or egotistical in their outlook on life. They do not take on the responsibility for others in an over-responsible way. They help others accept the responsibility for their own actions. They are always ready to help anyone who needs assistance or guidance.

- Have healthy coping skills. They are able to handle the stresses in their lives in a productive way. They are able to put the problems, concerns, issues, and conflicts that come their way into perspective. They are able to keep their lives in perspective without becoming too idealistic or too morose. They are survivors in the healthiest sense of the word. They have a good sense of humor and are able to keep a balance of work and fun in their lives.

- Look to the future with excitement, a sense of adventure and optimism. They recognize their potential for success and visualize their success in the future. They have dreams, aspirations, and hopes for the future.

- They are goal-oriented with a sense of balance in working toward their goals. They know from where they have come, where they are now, and where they are going.

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## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

### WRONG THOUGHT PATTERNS ARE TO BE CHANGED THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD

The attitudes that dwell within the mind frequently are reflected in the conduct of a person. An inspired writer affirmed that, as one "thinks within himself, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Jesus himself taught that the state of one's mind is the fountain of his activity. "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed" (Mark 7:21). If an individual harbors an unhealthy view of himself, such can be manifested in their behavior.

As mentioned previously, when our thought process and belief system concerning ourselves is not correct, then we need to ensure that we set this straight. Therefore the role of the counselor will be to show the counselee through the Word of God, not what man has thought or them or displayed to them through their actions, but what God has said concerning them and has demonstrated throughout the Bible. The objective is therefore to show the counselee that the way in which they are to ensure that their needs of significance and love are meet is not in the actions of their parents, their spouse, their teachers, their employers etc, but that their needs of love, security and significance are found in a relationship with God. Knowing His truth and allowing that truth to be revealed to them through the Holy Spirit.

They can work on changing their negative thoughts to positive ones by:

- Replacing the negative thought with the positive one every time they realize they are thinking the negative thought.
- Repeating the positive thought over and over to themselves, out loud whenever they get a chance and even sharing them with another person if possible.
- Writing them over and over.
- Making signs that say the positive thought, hanging them in places where they would see them often - like on the refrigerator door or on the mirror in their bathroom - and repeating the thought to themselves several times when they see it.

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Identify the counselees thought patterns concerning themselves. Identify what has been the cause of these thoughts. Deal with the root problem as well as following these steps. The root of the poor self esteem may be abuse, rejection as a child, words from a teacher etc.

Step two: Show the counselee through the Word of God the truth that the Bible says concerning them. Show them scriptures that will deal with the following issues:

- They are loved
- They are accepted
- They have worth and value

Step three: Ask the counselee whether they think that the thoughts that they are having towards themselves is the truth. Is God a liar? Does His Word lie?

Step four: Bring the counselee to a place of repentance. The next step is to confess before God the sin of not believing God's words. Confession means that we agree with God that our behavior is sin. Too many times we want to excuse ourselves or use another term that isn't as "bad" as sin, but we must be honest before God and ourselves and call sin what it is. Then, since He has already given them forgiveness on the cross, they then need to accept this forgiveness and thank Him for His generosity and love towards them. Then ask Him to help them to choose to believe His statement of love for them and the sacrifice He made for them instead of believing their feelings, others behavior etc. which are false.

Step five: Provide the counselee with homework that will enable them to change their old thought patterns to that which is reflected in the Word of God. Give them scripture memory verses that they will use to replace faulty beliefs.

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**SUMMARY ASSIGNMENT**

After studying the section on "low self esteem" answer the following questions to see whether you have correctly grasped what it is, how to help others who have a low self esteem and what the Bible says concerning it.

**How Should We Feel About Ourselves?**

1. What is self-esteem?
2. Where does it come from?
3. What is man's standard of measuring self-esteem?
4. What is the Bible's standard of measurement? (1 Cor. 4:1-4; 2 Cor. 10:12, 18).
5. Is it always right to feel good about yourself? (Jas. 4:7-10).
6. Is it natural to love ourselves? (Mt. 22:39).
7. In what sense should we hate ourselves? (Rom. 7:21-24).
8. How can "dying to ourselves" result in a new life? (Gal. 2:20).

**By What Values Do We See Ourselves?**

1. How does a poor sense of self-worth affect us?
2. What values do most people use to measure their own self-worth?
3. What does God value in a person? (1 Sam. 16:7).
4. Where should we find our greatest fulfillment? (Jer. 9:23-24).
5. How can we develop an accurate self-image? (Rom. 12:1-3).
6. How can God's values shape our lives and help us to feel good about ourselves? (Rom. 12:4-21; Gal. 6:1-4).

**Who's Opinion Counts?**

1. By human standards, who should be the most significant person in your life?
2. How can we be hurt by "significant others"?
3. By God's standard, who is to be the most "significant other"? (Eph. 3:14-21).
4. In what sense can we start over again with Christ? (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 5:1).
5. How can Christ give us a new past (Rom. 6:1-6), a new future (Rom 8:18-32), and a new identity? (Acts 11:26; Gal. 2:20).
6. How can this relationship help us to feel good about ourselves?

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## REJECTION

Rejection is a very common problem. In fact, nearly everyone has suffered rejection at one time or another during their 'growing up' years from family, friends or authority figures at school. Some have even felt rejected by God. God, of course, does not reject anyone, but that doesn't keep some from feeling' rejected by God.

Rejection means to deny someone acceptance, care, or love. The word 'rejection' comes from a Latin word that means 'to throw back.' Imagine a fisherman going through a big haul of fish picking out the best and tossing the rest. He's rejecting the bad fish. It literally means: to deny or toss aside acceptance or care. Rejection is the sense of being unwanted, the agony of desperately wanting people to love you but being convinced they do not. There is an aching desire to be a part of something but never feeling that you are.

Rejection starts as a seed that is planted in our lives through different things that happen to us. It can enter a person's life in various ways at different stages of their development. Let's consider some examples:

- Rejection in the womb: A woman finds out she's pregnant. Perhaps the first thing she says is, "Oh no! That's the last thing I wanted now!" So, she begins to resent the little one in her womb. Her bitterness can adversely affect the child, particularly later in life

- Wrong-sex rejection: "Oh my it's a boy!" a couple might say, "We wanted a girl!" If not dealt with, such feelings can bring much rejection to the child through unspoken attitudes and actions. One of the worst things to tell a child is that you wished they had been the opposite sex. Remember, God never makes mistakes!

- First-born rejection: The first born child almost always receives much attention from the parents. He or she becomes accustomed to being the center of mom and dad's world. So, when the second born comes along, what happens? Because they've been eclipsed by another, the first born often develops a deep sense of rejection. This is why parents must go to great lengths to avoid any favoritism when a new baby arrives. Look at Cain and Abel. There was resentment in Cain (the first born) against Abel (the second born). What did he do? Ultimately, he murdered his brother.

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- Child abuse: Child abuse ranges from the most severe (physical violence or sexual abuse) to the tendency to administer needed correction with rejection. The latter being the most common type of abuse. When a parent corrects with anger, it invariably backfires. The child will think that correction is equivalent to rejection. As a result, they'll spend a lifetime resenting authority. In addition, they may never develop a healthy relationship with God. They'll think He's rejecting them when adverse situations arise. Why? Because they never understood that corrections are really the outworking of love.

- Neglect or abandonment: An absentee parent, be it intentional through (divorce, work situations) or as a result of death, can result in rejection.

- Opposite-sex rejection: This usually happens at puberty.

- Divorce and extramarital affairs

**RESULTS OF REJECTION**

The spirit of rejection causes us focus on us. Rejection breeds hurt, and with it abandonment, and even frustration. Rejection is a root that is planted deep within our heart that eventually will grow into a tree and bear fruit. This fruit could look like:

- Trying to always please others: We find ourselves doing things to please others to gain their attention and acceptance. When that does not work, we blame ourselves and try to do something even greater. This is especially true in your relationships. If a teenager feels that to avoid rejection from her boyfriend (only to cement feelings of rejection further) she has to sleep with him, then she will do so.

- Trying to gain the attention of another: We will feign sickness. We look for symptoms and claim them for ourselves. Some people will even wound themselves to receive the attention they are seeking.

- An inability to get close to people: A person who feels rejection doesn't want to get close, for fear of loss. The person who is living a life of "rejection" will push people away, for fear of getting too close.

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- Wrong attitudes towards self, parents, mates or children, other people. Some people who experience rejection will act out in rebellion. Toward parents, the rejected person may experience resentment, bitterness, refusal to communicate, rebellion against parental authority, ambivalence and distrust. In essence, this person says, "You rejected me; now I will reject you." Or the person may form a codependent attachment to the parents. The adult child may spend a lifetime trying to gain the acceptance and love which deep down s/he has always sensed is missing. Yet the person may never fully understand why there is a lack of closeness or communication in the relationship.

- The rejection of self produces feelings of worthlessness and inferiority, depression, emotional isolation, introspection, perfectionism, irresponsibility, guilt, and self-hatred. The person often has a difficult time expressing feelings, asserting him/herself, or taking control of his/her life.

- Rejected persons often pass on to their families the negative experiences of their childhood. The attitude towards spouse and children often is characterized by the inability to express love or by unwillingness to spend time with them. There may be a tendency to vent hostility through punishment, even abuse--both physical and emotional; to make open statements of rejection or to refuse to communicate; to be over-controlling, making decisions for them and trying to "do everything" for them; to view work or other obligations as more important than the family; and to deny the spouse and children their right to be persons. The negative self-image contaminates relationships in every aspect of life. The rejected person cannot accept love, is programmed to see rejection or to trigger it, tries too hard to please, either expresses what s/he feels the person wants to hear or refuses to communicate honestly, and clings like a leech to a person who does accept him/her.

- A rejected person often views God as a tyrant who relates to His “subjects” in condemnation and judgment rather than acceptance or love. The image of God is distorted because the rejecting parent of childhood takes the place of the loving Heavenly Father revealed in the Bible. The fear and alienation experienced in other aspects of life extends into the spiritual life as well. The anger and resentment which the person feels because of having been rejected may be transferred to God, causing the person to rebel against God and refuse to accept His authority. Or the person may go to the opposite extreme and develop a very simplistic, legalistic faith in which God's

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favor is won by following the rules. There may be a basic inability to trust God and a lack of real fellowship or communication with him.

**WHAT CAN THE COUNSELOR DO?**

We are all prone to disappointment and feelings of rejection and that is especially true in the aftermath of a broken relationship. However, as born again believers we have a resource in God's Word that can, when used, bring comfort and clarity to the situation. One person's rejection does not mean we are unlovable. That is one person's opinion. We can allow that to determine how we feel and allow that feeling to color our idea of who we are, or we can choose to put that behind us and move forward on the basis of something that is far more lasting. What is that? It is what the Bible tells us, it is our position in Christ. Rejection can be overcome through confronting the false beliefs that the counselee harbors and by teaching them the truth concerning themselves through the Word of God.

There are major truths that will give you victory in dealing with rejection. They are found in Ephesians 1:3-14:

***God chose you*** (Ephesians 1:3-4): It is quite normal for us to think that we are of little or no value when we are mistreated by others. We tend to search our own selves for shortcomings. We must choose to remember that God Himself says that He picked us out for Himself as His own – In Christ before the foundation of the world. It is a lie from the devil that the counselee feels little or no value in their life and therefore it is vital that they understand their worth. Isaiah 49:16 "See, I have written your name on my hand". What does this mean? That our names have been tattooed on God's hand. He cannot forget us because we are ever before Him.

***He has adopted you*** (Ephesians 1:5): It was His kind intent. Your parents may not have cared for you and your family may have told you that you weren't wanted. God Almighty wants you and adopted you. You are not without family. Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family. Romans 8:14-16 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Remember that Abba is a term of endearment and closeness, similar to "daddy." We are not God's foster children. We are His children, and all the intimacy that that suggests is ours if we will take it. Galatians 3:26 "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"

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***You are accepted*** (Ephesians 1:6): One of the strongest needs in all of us is the need to be accepted. To be loved for who we are rather than what we do for others. Remember - You are accepted in the Beloved. What we have in this passage is the reality that even though we do not deserve it nor can we earn it (Ephesians 2:8-9), the LORD Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing and has made us accepted in Him. This acceptance is His gift of grace and it transcends any and all other "feelings" we may have because it is not based on "hope so" but on "know so." We know that this is true because God's Word tells us and as we appropriate this truth by faith, it becomes reality in our hearts and lives. The One who matters most accepts you! Not only does He love you, He likes you. He knows you and likes you anyway. John 15:14-15: "You are my friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." Being accepted by God means that He delights in us. We are objects of His love. When He looks at us, He looks beneath the surface to the real, unique, to you that has been redeemed through the Blood of Christ and accepts us. Isaiah 62:4 "Never again will you be called the Godforsaken City or the Desolate Land. Your new name will be the City of God's Delight and the Bride of God, for the LORD delights in you and will claim you as his own."

***You are not alone*** (Ephesians 1:10): He promised to bring us all together in Him. God will never leave you nor forsake you. No matter what you believe about yourself, He is a constant in your life. Psalms 37:25 "I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread."

***He has branded you*** (Ephesians 1:12-13): You have been branded. You may ask if there is any proof that you belong to God. Yes, you have been sealed and branded with the Holy Spirit!

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Gather information so that you will know where the root of rejection is from. Deal with this root problem.

Step two: Allow the counselee to acknowledge that their problem feelings and behaviour are a result of their rejection and their faulty beliefs.

Step three: Repentance of all that they have done in order to achieve their own self worth instead of depending upon God to give them their self worth. Seeking to fulfill their needs outside and apart from God.

Step four: Forgive! "Get rid of all bitterness, anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph 4:31-32) Choose to forgive whoever, whenever, for whatever. Forgiveness has nothing to do with your feelings. It's a choice of the will. Think of forgiveness as a spiritual weapon. Use it to break the curses of bitterness, resentment, judgment, and hurt out of your heart.

Step five: Let them pray and ask God to heal them. Jeremiah cried out "heal us O Lord and we will be healed, save us and we shall be saved for you alone are our praise" (Jeremiah 17:14). God will heal them from the inside out.

Step six: Teach them through the Word of God how they can overcome their feelings of rejection (Especially Ephesians 1)

Step seven: Challenge the counselee to make a choice not to dwell any longer in the rejection. When Paul was forsaken by John Mark he chose not to dwell on the hurt that he received as a result of it. Because of this he was willing to restore the relationship that he had with him. "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry." (2 Timothy 4:11) He didn't stay in the hurt. He continued and forged on. 2 Tim 4:16 "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them."

Step eight: Challenge them to no longer walk by feelings but by faith in the Word of God. Walking by your feelings is like walking through the world with your heart on your sleeve. We are bound to be hurt and we are bound to be disappointed for we live in a fallen world. What we choose to do with that hurt and disappointment will either allow us to grow stronger in our walk with the Lord

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or it will mean that we are walking wounded. Both outcomes are our choice. God makes it possible for us to walk through the disappointments in life with a knowledge that His provision for us works. His grace and His comfort are ours as we rest in it. Every born again child of God has all of these provisions and blessings in Christ but we have to choose to use them.

Step nine: Provide them with memorization scriptures that have been discussed in the session. Let them repeat this: "Rejection has no power over me now because I know who I am in Christ. I know my worth. I know that my value is not in what someone else THINKS I am, but in what I KNOW I am! I am *accepted in the beloved* (Ephesians 1:6). *If God be for* [me], *who can be against* [me]? (Romans 8:31)."

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## PART TWO: WRONG FEELINGS

**UNMET NEEDS + WRONG THINKING = WRONG FEELINGS**

"For in those days Israel had no king, so everyone did whatever he wanted to--whatever seemed right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6)

We live in a society where the words "I feel" have become the catch phrase of communication. What people feel has become the basis of much of their decision-making. For example: "I've lost all feelings of love for my husband, so my marriage is now hopeless." "I just don't feel like reading my Bible (going to church, mowing the lawn, etc.), so I won't do it today." "I feel tense when I feel my husband has wronged me. Then I don't feel like talking to him. Instead, I feel like leaving because I feel he won't listen anyway. I don't feel the Bible applies to our conflicts, so I feel justified in the anger I feel."

The word "feeling" is used to describe emotions. We say, "I feel angry, anxious, lonely, happy, affectionate, fearful, guilty, thankful, excited, ashamed, compassionate, sorrowful, awed, joyful." These are all God-given emotions. They are signals that register what is happening to you and within you, like the red lights on the dashboard of your car tell you what's happening under the bonnet. But the Bible teaches that these emotions can be either justified or unjustified, rightly expressed or wrongly expressed; and they are generally linked with thoughts, attitudes, expectations, words, and deeds. So emotions are not automatically legitimate. They simply register, for good or for ill, what is going on in our relationships with God, self and others. In Scripture our emotions are properly called "feelings," but they may be either right or wrong based on whether they are biblically justified and biblically expressed.

The Bible cuts to the very root of a life lived by "feelings" and by His Word, God judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12) so that we can:

- resist pleasing self and pursue pleasing Christ,
- stop being desire-oriented and start being self-disciplined, replace feeling-centered emotions with self-sacrificial love,
- end the me-generation "live for myself" vision of life and begin the multi-generational "sacrifice for others" vision of life, and
- cease deciding by feelings and commence deciding by Scripture

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## DEALING WITH ANGER

Anger is a feeling of being against something or someone. It is a hostile emotion that sets people against one another and involves feelings of antagonism. It is an inward emotion that produces a negative action.

**ANGER IS AN INWARD EMOTION THAT PRODUCES AN OUTWARD EXPRESSION**

Handling anger is an important topic. Anger can shatter communication and tear apart relationships and ruins both the joy and health of many. Anger is not a primary emotion, but it is typically experienced as an almost automatic inner response to hurt, frustration or fear. Anger is being in a physical state of readiness. It is designed to help us cope with a wide variety of situations.

However, if we do not cope with anger in a biblical fashion, our anger can lead to destruction - physically, emotionally and relationally.

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ANGER

**Anger is not sin:** First of all, anger is not always sin. God is angry (Psalm 7:11; Mark 3:5), and believers are commanded to be angry (Ephesians 4:26). Two Greek words are used in the New Testament for our English word "anger." One (orge) means "passion, energy;" the other (thumos) means "agitated, boiling."[1] Webster defines anger as being "an excessive emotion, passion aroused by a sense of injury or wrong; this injury may be to us or to someone else"[2]. Biblically, anger is God-given energy intended to help us solve problems.

Examples of biblical uses of anger include:

- Paul confronting Peter because of his wrong example in Galatians 2:11-14,
- David being upset over hearing Nathan the prophet sharing an injustice (2 Samuel 12), and
- Jesus getting angry over how some of the Jews had defiled the Gentiles' place of worship at God's temple in Jerusalem (John 2:13-18).

1 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
2 www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary

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**Anger can result in sin:** But anger turns to sin when it is selfishly motivated (James 1:20), when God's goal is distorted (1 Corinthians 10:31), or when anger is allowed to linger (Ephesians 4:26-27). Instead of using the energy generated by anger to attack the problem at hand, one attacks the person instead. Ephesians 4:15, 19 say we are to speak the truth in love and to use our words to build up others, and not to allow rotten or destructive words to pour from our lips. Unfortunately, this poisonous speech is a common characteristic of fallen man (Romans 3:13-14). Anger becomes sin when it is allowed to boil over without restraint, resulting in everyone in earshot being hurt (Proverbs 29:11), leaving devastation in its wake, often with irreparable consequences. Anger also becomes sin when one clams up (Ephesians 4:26-27), doing the "slow burn." This causes one to become depressed and irritable and fly off the handle over any little thing, often things unrelated to the underlying problem. "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control" (Proverbs 25:28).

The Bible says that we need to be careful how we react when we are angry. That means we need to watch what our outward expression is.

- "A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated (Proverbs 14:17).
- "A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly" (Proverbs 14:29).
- "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).
- "A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel (Proverbs 15:18).
- "An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins" (Proverbs 29:22).

In order to have an outward expression that is Biblical, we need to learn the art of self control.

- "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult" (Proverbs 12:16).
- "Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).
- "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered" (Proverbs 17:27).
- "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control" (Proverbs 29:11).

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- "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" (James 1:19-20).
- "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9).

**RESULTS OF ANGRY FEELINGS**

When people become angry they can experience many different thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions. Some people experience strong feelings of resentment or hostility, raise their voice, curse, or throw things. Other people experience physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, and increases in heart rate and blood pressure. For some, angry feelings become so overwhelming they feel ready to explode. Others may not know they are angry about a situation but will feel physically ill, guilty, or will overreact to other situations. Listed below are some direct and indirect expressions of anger.

**Direct signs of anger:**

- raised voice,
- yelling,
- cursing,
- headaches,
- stomach aches,
- tightness in the throat,
- increased heart rate,
- increased blood pressure,
- clenched fists,
- threatening others,
- pushing,
- shoving,
- hitting,
- feeling violated,
- hostility,
- resentment,
- rage.

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**Indirect signs of anger:**

- excessive sleeping,
- chronic fatigue,
- anxiety,
- numbness,
- depression,
- sulking,
- overeating,
- loss of appetite,
- crying,
- constant criticizing,
- mean or hostile joking,
- abuse of alcohol or drugs.

**WRONG THINKING THAT LEADS TO ANGRY EMOTIONS**

Listed below are some of the types of distorted thinking that can lead to our angry emotions and feelings:

- **Labeling:** By placing a fixed, negative label on others without considering that the evidence might more reasonably lead to a different conclusion. *Example:* "He's an idiot." "She's two-faced."

- **Magnification:** When evaluating another person, you unreasonably magnify the negative and minimize the positive. *Example:* "My teacher gave me one low grade mark (and several high ones), she's so unfair!"

- **Personalization:** By believing others are behaving negatively as a reaction to you, without considering more plausible explanations for their behavior. *Example:* "That guy is being cold to me because he thinks he's better than I am." (You are unaware that he just received some upsetting news from home.)

- **"Should" or "must" statements:** You have a precise, fixed idea of how others should behave and you overestimate how bad it is that these expectations are not met. *Example:* "She should have called me by now. She must not care about our friendship."

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- **Tunnel vision:** By seeing only the negative aspects of a situation. *Example:* "My professor can't do anything right. He's critical, insensitive, and a lousy lecturer."

- **All or nothing thinking:** By viewing a situation in only two categories instead of on a continuum. Things are either good or bad; you are either perfect or a failure. *Example:* "My friend doesn't agree with me on this issue, so he's completely non-supportive." "I just know I'm going to get an "F" on that exam!" (when a "B" is most likely).

- **Fallacy of fairness:** You feel resentful because you think you know what's fair, but other people won't agree with you. *Example:* "Why can't my professor see that I deserve an "A"?"

- **Blaming:** You hold other people responsible for your feelings. *Example:* "It's my husband's fault I'm so angry."

- **Fallacy of Change:** You expect others will change to suit you if you pressure them enough. *Example:* "If you just hear me out one more time, I'm sure you'll agree with me."

- **Being Right:** You are continually trying to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any length to demonstrate your rightness. *Example:* "I was totally justified in yelling at my friend for what he did!"

When you are angry, it's likely that many of your thoughts will fall under one of these categories.

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## MISMANAGEMENT OF ANGER

Fundamental to effective anger management is having an understanding of how you respond when you are angry. For example:

- **Exploding**: The pattern of exploding is as follows. Firstly, there is the setting event. It is an event in which you have not felt that things are going as planned. Secondly, there is the trigger event. Something happens that brings everything to the surface. Exploding usually takes place by verbal or physical explosions. The results of this type of response is: Personal embarrassment and a need to apologies, a more damaged relationship (lack of trust), termination of a relationship, job loss or a similar job consequence, costly property damage, guilt, divorce, anxiety, personal injury

- **Somatizing**: A person who is a somatizer is someone who will reveal that they are angry by physical problems in their bodies. For example – headaches, stomach problems, colds, colitis, hypertension. Many people suppress rather than express the anger that they are feeling. This is due to:

    1. Fear of repeating the abuses of the past. We've all witnessed destructive anger. Many are haunted by memories of anger that destroyed relationships, and wounded hearts. Many grew up in homes torn apart by parents who often resorted to angry outbursts or threats to squelch opposition to their plans or opinions. Anger has fueled all kinds of abuse. It has been a devastating component in the epidemic of broken homes that litter the landscape of modern society.

    2. Fear powerful emotion -- passion. The expression of anger is a passionate response. Because we are people who strive for control, we fear anything that is so passionate that it seems to defy control. We feel more safe and secure when everything is (or at least seems to be) under control. For many Christians, expressing anger represents a loss of control, and that's why it must be avoided. The reasoning works like this: "I'm afraid of my anger. I've hurt others in my anger. They've hurt me in their anger. Anger is too volatile. I can't control it so I must avoid it. If I avoid all anger, I won't make the mistake of misusing it".

    3. We haven't learned how to be angry about the things that God gets angry about. Many Christians grew up in homes where healthy anger was seldom observed. All anger was vilified and viewed as sin that needed to be confessed and avoided. We were taught that any

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display of anger was wrong -- that we "shouldn't feel that way". The message was clear whether it was verbalized or observed: Anger is unacceptable and intolerable. By avoiding all anger, some Christians may feel they are honoring God, when in fact they are failing to obey His command to be angry but don't sin (Ephesians 4:26). Anger and sin are not synonymous.

- **Self punishing**: This is when we beat up on our self concepts and therefore diminish our self esteem and image. For example: I deserved that, I must be worth nothing to allow myself to be treated like this

- **Underhanding:** Those who like to make fun of other people or jokingly criticize others. They pretend to be the nicest person but actually take great delight in ridiculing others. By being sarcastic.

**WHAT CAN THE COUNSELOR DO?**

**HELP THEM TO DISCERN BETWEEN SINFUL AND GODLY ANGER**

When monitoring their anger, it is important to understand that much of their anger is fueled by a hatred of injustice, whether real or perceived. Anger over injustice reflects the core longing for justice we all share. We are incensed when life seems unfair. We can know, however, if the anger we feel is sinful or godly by considering the provocation, goal, motivation, and timing of our anger.

1. **Provocation & Goal:**

Selfish anger is provoked when we believe we've been treated unjustly or unfairly. We want something, we don't get it, we feel deprived, and now someone is going to pay for having treated us this way (James 4:1-4). The goal is revenge. When driven by vengeance, we demand that someone pay now for the injustice we've suffered. We impatiently demand immediate execution of justice according to our specifications, and refuse to allow time for God to work in the hearts of those who have offended us (James 1:19-20). Our anger becomes a caustic acid intended to burn those we feel have burned us unfairly. When offended, we can be ruthless, hard, unreasonable, and devoid of mercy in our response.

Godly anger is provoked in us when we witness persistent violations of God's standards of justice (Psalm 119:53). There is an appropriate time to be outraged over those who hold God in contempt. The goal of godly anger is to warn the

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person who has breached God's divine law so that once exposed they can have the opportunity to change (Ezekiel 3:18-21). This kind of anger is like iodine, an ointment intended to purge infection and promote healing in the recipient (Proverbs 27:6). It is painful at first, but in the end, it soothes and heals. For example: God's anger to sin in our lives.

2. **Motivation**:

Godly anger is motivated both by the love of Christ that works in us to extend His love to others (2 Corinthians 5:14), and by the fear of His coming execution of perfect justice (2 Corinthians 5:11). Godly anger is marked by a confidence in God's longsuffering character (Psalm 86:15; 2 Peter 3:9), knowing that only He is qualified to carry out vengeance equitably. Godly anger refuses to resort to personal acts of revenge now, but is willing to wait for God's wrath to be poured out against evil in His good time (Psalm 73:16-19; Romans 12:19). Because we are to be like Christ in every way (Ephesians 4:1; 1 John 4:17), by implication we are also called to reflect His righteous anger. If we are to stand for the Father the way Jesus did, we need to stand for the things He's for, and against the things He's against. Godly anger reflects our Father's passion for justice. While we rely on Him to execute final justice (Romans 12:19-21), godly anger motivates us to work for fairness and justice on behalf of those who are oppressed (Micah 6:8; Romans 12:17-18). It reflects dependence and confidence in God as the ultimate Judge who always executes justice rightly (1 Peter 2:23).

**HELP THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR ANGER BIBLICALLY:**

When we do something with our anger, we have moved to anger expression. How we express our anger is learned and therefore it can be modified. "Important findings from psychological research indicate that how you choose to use your anger is learned. And you can bring it under the control of your thinking and decision making. You can develop the ability to think through how you want to take advantage of all that preparedness. Rather than being relegated to the status of a machine which gets turned on and set loose to run wildly and out of control, you can remain in the driver's seat and direct the action" [3]. Before a person can change their behaviour they need to know what motivates them.

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3 Make anger your ally by Neil Clark Warren, PDD, Focus on the Family Publication page 78

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**What do I want out of this encounter that will contribute most to the kind of long term relationship I want to have with this person?**

My greatest obstacle to overcoming anger is _____ .

Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires (James 1:20).

I won't have as much trouble getting angry if I am _____ .

- Loving. David had every right to be angry with his son Absalom. After all, Absalom wanted to kill him, yet David loved Absalom passionately, and grieved deeply when he learned of his death. He said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you---O Absalom, my son, my son" (2 Samuel18:33).

- Patient. Look at God's example in 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance". "a hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel" (Proverbs 15:18).

- Eternally-minded. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

- Forbearing. "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

- Understanding of other people. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are---yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

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- Be aware of anger's destructiveness. "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil" (Psalm 37:8). "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

- Secure in who I am in God. Read about Jesus' silence before Pilate in Matthew 27:12-14. Note that Jesus didn't "need" to defend himself. When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge---to the great amazement of the governor (Matthew 27:12-14).

**Personal application**

I will pray to become more: _____

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTION:**

For each of the following scenarios provide a biblical action rather than the sinful action that has been formerly expressed:

- When I am angry I lash out physically
- When I am angry I say things that I should not say
- When I am angry I withdraw into myself and become bitter towards the person that has caused me such hurt
- When I am angry I sever the relationship that I had with the person

For each of the Biblical actions expressed provide scriptures that you would be able to use during the counseling session in order to help the counselee with their sinful behaviour.

1 Tim. 6:11-12 "But you, Timothy, belong to God; so run from all these evil things, and follow what is right and good. Pursue a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."

**TEACH THEM ANGER MANAGEMENT**

Thoughts or beliefs about a situation influence how you feel about the situation. For example, if your co-worker offers to help you with a project, you may think: "This person is trying to be helpful to me." This thought may lead to positive feelings towards the person. On the other hand, the thought: "This person thinks that I can't do it" may lead to angry feelings. Therefore in order to begin to

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teach the counselee to manage their anger and therefore manage sinful actions, they will need to follow these steps:

- Examine the thoughts they have just before becoming angry. The next time they get angry at someone, they need to stop themselves and make a note of their thoughts about the person and the situation. Start writing down each situation and the thoughts until they have several examples that they can evaluate so that they can begin to understand what it is that is triggering their angry emotions.

- Evaluate the anger-producing thoughts. For example: labeling, blaming, personalizing as discussed previously etc.

- Find a more accurate, adaptive way of thinking about the situation. For each distorted thought they have written down, try a different way of thinking about the situation-- one that is more accurate and does not make them feel as angry. This may involve exploring the positive aspects of a person or a situation, identifying other possible reasons for the person's behavior, or looking at "the big picture" rather than focusing on one relatively small incident.

- Practice identifying anger-producing thoughts, finding the distortions, and developing more accurate ways of thinking every day! This final technique to reduce anger must be practiced every day in order to be effective. It is necessary to write down angry thoughts regularly and to practice refuting them. As this becomes easier, they will be able to better identify the thoughts when they are in a situation and begin to feel angry. By identifying distorted thoughts and replacing them with more adaptive ways of thinking, they can keep themselves from becoming overwhelmed by anger in difficult situations.

- Practice reacting Biblically in every "angry" situation

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Acknowledge – "I am an angry person". Face the real issues (Gal 5:13-26)

- Can you admit to having a spirit of anger?
- Do you really want to live as God desires?
- Do you want self-control?

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- Do you want to love one another?

Acceptance of a "problem" is the first step to recovery. Why? Pride does not make it easy to say that we were wrong in our actions, words and judgments. Do I really want to live out God's love in my life?

Step two: Help them to uncover what it is that triggers these angry feelings. Identify what makes them mad.

**Self assessment test:**

1. I get upset when:

__ I'm driving and someone cuts in front of me.
__ I'm driving and someone is a backseat driver.
__ I'm a passenger and someone drives too slowly.
__ I'm a passenger and someone takes a different route than I would.
__ I'm a passenger and someone gets lost.
__ I'm a passenger and someone parks in a different place than I would choose.
__ My spouse lets the car go down to empty.
__ My spouse doesn't load the dishwasher right.
__ My spouse criticizes the way I load the dishwasher.
__ My spouse weighs too much.
__ My spouse says I weigh too much.
__ My spouse is late getting ready for church.
__ My spouse comes home late.
__ My spouse spends too much money.
__ My spouse forgets something I said.
__ My spouse is clumsy or has an accident.
__ My spouse complains or worries.
__ My spouse or my children are noisy when I am trying to sleep.
__ My children are disrespectful.
__ My children fight.
__ My boss makes stupid decisions.
__ My boss gives me too much to do.
__ People are late.
__ Someone says mean words to me.
__ Someone takes advantage of me.
__ Someone ignores me.
__ Someone makes fun of me.
__ Someone accuses me falsely.
__ I think God treated me unfairly.
__ I think I do more than my share.
__ I am unappreciated.
__ Someone breaks a promise.
__ Someone lies to me.
__ Someone lies about me.

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__ I walk into our home and it is messy.
__ We are out of milk or other items.
__ Our television breaks down.
__ My favorite sports team loses.
__ A politician does something wrong.
__ I don't like a sermon.
__ A pastor or board member ignores me.
__ Other _____
__ Other _____
__ Other _____

2. When angry, I sometimes:

__ Yell.
__ Raise my voice.
__ Get irritated.
__ Am upset or grumpy.
__ Make sarcastic comments.
__ Put other people down.
__ Am impatient.
__ Withdraw or pout.
__ Feel bitter.
__ Feel resentful.
__ Feel sorry for myself.
__ Dwell on angry thoughts.
__ Other _____
__ Other _____
__ Other _____

3. Overall, I am upset an average of _____ minutes per day

Step three: Confession of wrong expression of anger. Confess past anger. Anger from the past must be acknowledged and confessed. Anger in the present and future must be cut off. You must recognize man's anger is not going to accomplish the righteousness of God.

Step four: Forgive those who have hurt you and have disappointed you. Examine your underlying expectation of the person. Is it reasonable to expect it Unfulfilled expectations can lead to anger. What are your expectations of yourself and others for this situation? Are you expecting more than is realistic for this person in this particular situation?

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Step five: Give up your right to revenge. Do not return evil for good (Genesis 50:21; Romans 12:21). This is key to altering our anger into love. As their actions flow from their heart, so also their heart can be altered by their actions (Matthew 5:43-48)...that is, they can change their feelings toward another by changing how they chooses to act toward that person. Die to self; live by Christ (Galatians 2:20). An open and deliberate decision to not live according to your old life and consciously to allow Christ to live out His life in you is a special and necessary part of deliverance from anger. There seems to be two aspects to dying to self. There is the initial dedication period which is like starting anew. There is also the regular daily dying to self - a daily morning prayer where we commit ourselves to the Lord.

Step six: Teach them about biblical behavioural change. As one has allowed anger to become entrenched in one's life by habitual practice, one must also practice responding correctly until it too becomes a habit replacing the old ways. Replace anger with acts of kindness (Ephesians 4:31) Anger must go, but I will replace it with fruits of love. Peace and fullness of love will not be activated unless we replace our angry spirit with a loving spirit. We must not focus on what we should not do but on what we should do. Be practical.

Step seven: Make a commitment to deal with all anger before it festers. Fully deal with each day's anger (Eph 4:26) "Before I go to bed, I will deal with my anger". Unresolved anger turns into wrath, bitterness, resentment etc.

Step eight: Provide them with scriptures that they can use when in an "angry situation". These scriptures should be related to the way in which they formerly reacted to an angry situation.

Step nine: Pray that God will give them the strength to be able to act according to what they have learnt through the teaching of the Word and not according to their past learnt behavior.

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**ASSIGNMENT**

Analyze the following case and write an outline of how you would counsel the following person. Be careful to look at the whole person, not only the issues of anger management.

Jesse is 17 years old (in his final year of school). He has recently had to change schools because his parents had to move due to a promotion in work. Lately when he has come home at night and his parents have tried to talk to him about his day at school, Jesse burst into a fit of rage and swears at his parents. Once he has finished exploding, he then goes into his room and locks himself in there until the next morning, often times without food. Both Jesse and his parents have come to you for help. How would you counsel the two different parties? What advice would you give both? What spiritual and practical help would you provide in managing Jesse's anger? What do you believe to be the root problem and how would you deal with this?

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## ANXIETY, FEAR AND WORRY

"An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up" (Proverbs 12:25)

Perhaps one of the most common problems for illness today is related to the nervous system. Many people across the world have breakdowns, acquire incurable illnesses, and even die, simply because of uncontrolled anxiety.

### WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is "an unpleasant, emotional state that involves a complex combination of emotions that include fear, apprehension, and worry" [4]. It is a distress that comes due to uncertainties of the future which is characterized by mental agitation and uneasiness. It primarily has to do with what may or may not happen in the near or distant future. Anxiety affects our whole being. It affects how we feel, how we behave and has very real physical symptoms. It feels a bit like fear but whereas we know what we are frightened of, we often don't know what we are anxious about. Anxiety can either be mild or severe. Mild anxiety is vague and unsettling - severe anxiety can be extremely debilitating.

### WHAT CAUSES ANXIETY?

Anxiety is caused by real or imagined threats to our well-being. We feel vulnerable and inadequately protected against these threats (such as social rejection, physical injury or disease, poverty, death). Anxiety has three main elements

- Insecurity: something bad is going to happen
- Helplessness: there is nothing I can do
- Isolation: there is no one to help me

Anxiety is often triggered by stress in our lives. Some of us are more vulnerable to anxiety than others, but even those who become anxious easily can learn to manage it well. We can also make ourselves anxious with "negative self-talk" - a habit of always telling ourselves the worst will happen.

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4 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anxiety

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Some of the most common things that causes anxiety include:

- money problems
- large amount of debt
- work problems
- stress and bad sleeping and eating patterns
- irregular routine
- family problems (divorce, death, excessive fighting, rebellious children)

**SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY**

Anxiety presents itself in a variety of symptoms. Many people feel like they're dying. Trips to the doctor or emergency room are not uncommon for those suffering from anxiety. Commonly reported symptoms of anxiety include:

**Physical *symptoms such as:***

- Smothering sensations and shortness of breath
- Racing heart, slow heart beat, palpitations
- Chest Pain
- Excessive Perspiration (sweating)
- Shaking or shivering (visibly or internally)
- Pain or numbness in the head, face, neck or shoulders Rapid
- Gastric problems: Indigestion, heartburn, constipation and diarrhoea
- Skin rashes
- Distorted vision
- Headaches and feelings of having a 'tight band around head'
- Sore eyes
- Pain in the face or jaw (resembling toothache)

**Psychological *symptoms such as:***

- Insomnia
- Nightmares
- Fears of going mad or losing control
- Increased depression and suicidal feelings
- Aggression
- Agoraphobia
- Hallucinations

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- Hyperactivity

**EXAMPLES OF ANXIETY IN THE BIBLE**

What kinds of "anxiety" does the Bible specifically speak of?

- Anxiety concerning the staples of life: food, drink, clothing (Matt. 6:25). The word "do not worry…" in this context originally means "do not be distracted …". Therefore it is important that we do not become distracted by our own securities in material things that we neglect the more important things with regards to our relationship with God (Luke 10:38-42)

- Anxiety concerning the coming day (Matt. 6:34).

- Anxiety concerning how to defend oneself when persecuted for Christ's sake (Matt. 10:19).

- Anxiety concerning serving others and meeting their needs (Luke 10:41, I Cor. 12:25, Phil. 2:20).

- Anxiety concerning the things of the world (Matt. 13:22, I Cor. 7:32-34).

- Anxiety concerning resisting the lusts and cares of this life (Luke 21:34).

- Anxiety concerning supporting the needs of the assemblies (II Cor. 11:28).

- Anxiety concerning pleasing one's spouse (I Cor. 7:32-34).

- Anxiety concerning sins of the past (Psa. 38:18). Fear and anxiety can be the result of one's own sin and guilt. For example. If a teenager has had sex outside the boundaries of marriage, they may become anxious concerning: unwanted pregnancy, sexual diseases, people finding out, their parents opinion, their partner's opinion, the condition of the relationship after the fact etc.

- Anxiety concerning anything else in our experience (Luke 12:26, Phil. 4:6, I Pet. 5:7).

Most of us have experienced a lot of these. Some of us have experienced most or all of them. It is clear that God is aware of the cares of this world, and that we need help dealing with them.

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Note:

- Worrying accomplishes nothing. Worrying won't help you solve a problem or bring about a solution. Matthew 6:27-29 "Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are".

- Worrying is not good for you. Worrying is destructive to us in many ways. It becomes a mental burden that can even cause us to grow physically sick. Proverbs 12:25 "Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up"

- Worrying is the opposite of trusting God. The energy that we spend worrying can be put to better use in prayer. Matthew 6:30 "And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?" Philippians 4:6-7 "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Worry replaced by Prayer equals Trust.

- Worrying puts your focus in the wrong direction: When we keep our eyes focused on God, we remember his love for us and we realize we truly have nothing to worry about. God has a wonderful plan for our lives, and part of that plan includes taking care of us. Even in the difficult times, when it seems like God doesn't care, we can put our trust in the Lord and focus on His kingdom. God will take care of our every need. Matthew 6:25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life-whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?"

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## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO

### TEACH THEM TO REFOCUS: THE WORD OF GOD

"That is why we are not discouraged. Though outwardly we are wearing out inwardly we are renewed day by day". (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Worries increase when we become focused on the things of this world. In Luke 10:38-42, Jesus visits the house of the sisters Martha and Mary. Martha was busy with many details regarding making Jesus and his disciples comfortable. Mary, on the other hand, was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to what he said. Martha complained to Jesus that Mary should be busy helping but Jesus told Martha that "…you are worried and anxious about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42) What is this one thing that freed Mary from the business and worries experienced by her sister? Mary chose to focus on Jesus, listen to Him and ignore the immediate demands of hospitality. The writer of the book of Hebrews said that his focus was on Jesus, the Living Word. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith" (Hebrews 12:2)

In order to overcome feelings of worry and anxiety we need to focus on what the Word of God says concerning our lives, our provision, our needs etc. When we focus on the Word of God, and become hearers of it, faith instead of fear will rise up in our hearts (Romans 10:17). Putting precedence on spending time in the Word of God is therefore important in overcoming a lifestyle of anxiety, worry and fear. Put God first and He will free us from worries and take care of the rest of our concerns. Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

### TEACH THEM TO LAY THEIR CARES AT THE FEET OF JESUS: PRAYER

"I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

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"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7) (Also see Psalm 55:22-23)

"Come to me, all who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest". (Matthew 11:28)

"If any of you are having trouble, pray. If you are happy, sing psalms". (James 5:13)

"According to the Bible, there is nothing wrong with realistically acknowledging and trying to deal with the identifiable problems of life. To ignore danger is fooling and wrong. But it is also wrong, as well as unhealthy, to be immobilized by excessive worry. Such worry must be committed to prayer to God, who can release us from paralyzing fear or anxiety, and free us to deal realistically with the needs and welfare both of others and of ourselves." [5]

**TEACH THEM ABOUT THE CARE AND LOVE OF GOD**

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?'" (Luke 12:22-26) (Also see Matthew 6:25-34)

When Jesus was speaking about care of God towards the natural things, such as birds and flowers, He was providing an argument for confidence in the providential care of God. The birds are an example of God's ability to provide. Through His providential workings in nature, God provides for their needs. This does not mean they do not work for their needs (indeed, they are often very busy, gathering insects and worms, preparing nests, caring for their young), but they are not guilty of placing their security and trust in something else apart from God (as the rich fool was in the parable of Luke 12:16-21).

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5 Dr. Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling*, p. 66.

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If God through His providence provides for their needs, would He not for you? Are you not more valuable than birds? You who are created in the image of God? You who were redeemed by the blood of His Son? "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

**TEACH THEM TO TRUST IN GOD**

Fear and anxiety has to do with controlling a situation. When we feel that we cannot control a situation, we feel afraid of the unknown. It is all about what "I can do in the situation". But when we learn to trust in Jesus we learn to lean upon Him and become less dependent on "I can" and more dependent upon "He can".

David wrote, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (Psalm 42:5).

Solomon wrote, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones" (Proverbs 3:5-8).

The remedy for anxiety is complete trust and confidence in God's ability to deal with anything that threatens us. John 14:1 ""Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me. Philip. 4:13 "For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. Deut. 31:7 "Then Moses called for Joshua, and as all Israel watched he said to him, "Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the LORD swore to give their ancestors. You are the one who will deliver it to them as their inheritance. Deut. 31:8 "Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor forsake you."Romans 8:31 "What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

The more we learn about God, the more we know His infinite power and His concern for us. We need to realize that we need to depend on God and not ourselves. When we are trusting in ourselves to remedy a situation we trust in mere flesh, mortal man. But when we are trusting in God to do something in our lives, we are trusting in the Omnipotent One, the I Am Able God who is able to do all that we ask and think. The apostle Paul found his strength in God, He

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reminds us that, "I …have …been in prison …frequently, been flogged …severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. …I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. …Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. …I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. …[God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 11:23-12:10).

**TEACH THEM ABOUT THE PEACE OF GOD**

"May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thes. 2:16-17).

**Why can we be at peace?**

God is always present with us: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters ... they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God" (Isaiah 43:1-3). Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20) So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

God has a plan for our lives: Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

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God has given us the gift of peace: I'm leaving you with a gift: peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn't fragile like the peace the world gives. So, don't be troubled or afraid". (John 14:27)

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Gather information from the counselee as to what they are feeling at present. Allow them to talk by asking questions that will lead to self disclosure.

Step two: Let them come to a place where they will acknowledge the wrong feelings of anxiety and worry. Find out what is the reason for their anxiety and fear and deal with this issue by showing them the truth in the Word of God.

Step three: Repentance is necessary. Anxiety and worry is sin as it places us in "control" or the driving seat of our lives instead of God. We need to repent of trying to take control and relinquish this control over to God once again.

Step four: Find out what their faulty thought pattern is that leads to this anxiety and fear. For example: I worry that I will lose my house because I will not be able to pay the bond due to the rising interest rates. I worry that someone will come and kill me in the night and therefore I cannot sleep.

Step five: Teach them through the Word of God the right way of thinking in the situation that they find themselves in. For example: Teach them about trust in the provision of God.

Step six: Pray and ask the peace of God to infuse their lives. Tell them that the peace of God is a gift that they can either accept or reject. It is free and is offered to them willingly by God. God does not want them to live with anxiety, headaches, ulcers etc.

Step seven: Provide them with scriptures that they will use when they are faced with these anxious thoughts again.

Step eight: Ask them to commit time each day to prayer and reading of the Word. They should write down in a journal for that week all that they are fearful of and then the answer to that fear in the Bible. These fears are to be brought to God in prayer.

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**ASSIGNMENT**

Write down what your counsel will be for each of the following people:

Anne is 59 years old and is very fearful about living on her own. There have been constant break-ins in her area and even though she has all the necessary security systems, she is too scared to go to sleep at night. This lack of sleep has led her to almost lose her job and has caused numerous fights with her family.

Gary and Terresa's son ran away from home when he was 17 years old. Because of this they have found themselves constantly worrying for his where abouts and have even resorted to bickering and blaming each other for this. Their worry and anxiety is affecting the way that they communicate with one another.

Shaun has recently lost his job and needs to pay school fees in the next two weeks. He has been looking for a job every day but has found that they are just not hiring 48 year old men as they are labeled as being "too old". How is he going to meet all his family's needs? He finds as a result of his job loss that he is fighting with his family, has constant headaches and is eating far more than he usually does.

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## BITTERNESS AND RESENTMENT

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:14,15).

## WHAT IS BITTERNESS?

"Bitterness" is from the Greek word pikria, a word which is only found in four New Testament passages (Acts 8:23; Rom. 3:14; Eph. 4:31; Heb. 12:15)[6]. Arndt and Gingrich define pikria as "bitterness, animosity, anger, harshness"[7]. H.A.W. Meyer defines the word as "a bitter, malignant, and hostile disposition" [8] Marvin Vincent defines it as a "bitter frame of mind" [9] John Eadie says that pikria is "a figurative term denoting that fretted and irritable state of mind that keeps a man in perpetual animosity -- that inclines him to harsh and uncharitable opinions of men and things -- that makes him sour, crabbed, and repulsive in his general demeanor -- that brings a scowl over his face, and infuses venom into the words of his tongue" [10]. Bitterness is a hostile disposition and a poisonous frame of mind that causes people to brood and scowl.

## BIBLE EXAMPLES OF BITTERNESS

- Women are bitter because they cannot have children (1 Sam 1:10).
- A foolish son is bitterness to his mother (Prov. 17:25).
- Divine discipline (chastisement) of the Jewish people caused bitterness. This demonstrates the weakness and failure of the people. Bitterness destroyed the people's spiritual lives. The Jews brought on self-destruction by their bitterness (Lam. 1:4; Amos 8:10; Ezek. 27:30; Isa. 33:7; 2 Kings 14:26).
- Slavery causes bitterness (Exo. 1:14.3).

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6 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
7 A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pg. 663
8 Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Acts of the Apostles, pg. 172.
9 Word Studies In The New Testament, Vol. 3, pg. 397
10 Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians, pg. 357

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- Suffering causes bitterness to people who do not give number one priority to relationship with God. (Deut. 32:24).
- Ridicule is a source of bitterness (Lam 3:14). The people ridiculed Jeremiah because of their bitterness toward him. When truth is taught, people react in bitterness.
- Consummate human pride is a cause of bitterness (Acts 8:23).
- Degeneracy is a source of bitterness (Rom. 3:14).
- Husbands and wives are a source of bitterness toward each other (Col 3:19).

**RESULTS OF BITTERNESS AND RESENTMENT:**

***Bitterness can cause trouble:*** Hebrews 12:15 "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" Notice that the Bible says we are to 'look' diligently into this matter of bitterness and examine our hearts closely to see if there is any bitterness in our hearts toward someone! We need to give it utmost attention. Why? Lest 'any man fail of the grace of God'. What does that mean? It does not mean that a Christian can lose salvation. Once we trust Christ as Savior, we receive 'eternal' life, not 'probationary' life (John 10:28-29). However it does mean that it will cause adverse problems in our lives.

***Bitterness can affect our health***: Medical studies have shown that bitterness and resentment can raise blood pressure; affect our immune system and can affect our heart and circulatory system. It will kill you!

***Bitterness can affect us emotionally and mentally***: Mental breakdowns, depression, manic-depressive, bi-polar, and all types of such problems, can be traced back to unresolved bitterness and hurt over past experiences. Bitterness is a devastating mental attitude sin, and it triggers a wide range of other sins, such as: hatred, cruelty, antagonism, self-pity, unteachableness, vindictiveness and desires for revenge, prideful ambition (arrogance).

***Bitterness affects our spirituality***: Matthew 6:14,15 says "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Our fellowship with the Lord will never be right until we forgive the person to whom we are bitter. A bitter person rejects Bible teaching. James 3:14, "But if you have bitter jealousy and strife, stop being arrogant and lying against the truth."

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***Bitterness defiles many***: Bitterness doesn't only affect us, but it 'defiles' many others as well. This word 'defile' means to 'stain'. Bitterness and an unwillingness to forgive and forget a matter, unless it is dealt with, will eventually affect others around you!

***Bitterness causes isolation and loneliness*** because even people not affected directly with the situation do not want to be around someone who is bitter! Bitterness is antisocial. A bitter person is selfish, inconsiderate of others, withdrawn from society, indifferent or adverse to conformity with conventional standards of social behavior. Proverbs 14:10 "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can fully share its joy.

Bitterness and unwillingness to forgive ***leads to divorce and broken families***: There is a particular warning to husbands about being bitter in Colossians 3:19 "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

Bitterness accompanies the ***sin to death***: Job 21:25 "Another person dies in bitter poverty, never having tasted the good life.

Bitterness ***affects our speech***: It motivates complaining. Job 7:11 ""I cannot keep from speaking. I must express my anguish. I must complain in my bitterness." Job 10:1 ""I am disgusted with my life. Let me complain freely. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul." Bitterness motivates gossip. Psalm 64:3 "Sharp tongues are the swords they wield; bitter words are the arrows they aim."

**HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU HARBOR BITTERNESS?**

A simple test! Ask the following: Is there someone that, when I think of them, I feel hurt and wish revenge? Every time you see the person or think of the person, a sharp pang of resentment flares up as you perceive how they have done you wrong?

Our bitterness can be against:

***God:*** You can become bitter against God in the loss of a loved one, when a friend swindles you out of money, when the boss passes you over for a promotion you really deserve and gives it to someone else, or when your husband walks off and leaves you for another woman. You become angry at your circumstances and say, "Lord, if you love me so much, why did this happen?"

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A second kind of ***bitterness is against other people***. It can be in a child who decides to rebel against his parents, to run away from home because he believes they are unfair to him. It can be in a wife who says, "I'll have a nervous breakdown if my husband keeps treating me like this, and I'll get even with him." It might be a person who says, "OK, if I forgive them for what they did to me, that wouldn't be fair. They don't deserve to be forgiven. I'm going to carry this a little longer and maybe somehow along the way they'll see what it has done to me, and something will happen to them."

Your bitterness can also be **directed against yourself**, and show itself in an inability to forgive yourself, even though God has forgiven you. You carry that load until you say, "I deserve it, but I'm strong enough to take it, and I'll just carry this thing and deal with it myself." Self-centered pride latches onto your heart and you refuse the forgiveness of God and others. This can also cause you to live in self-pity. You say, "OK, I deserve this. God's trying to punish me. I shouldn't have done this or that, and now I deserve what I am getting, and I'm just going to have to be a martyr and carry it."

## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

The good news is, anyone can overcome a bitter spirit. God encourages us to deal with it. Ephesians 4:31"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger..."

### 1. Bitterness Towards God

Begin by dealing with any bitterness toward God. The following steps may help:

First: Teach them to trust God's wisdom. Many things happen in this world because of sin. It does not happen because God has planned it and therefore our bitterness and blame becomes misplaced. Sin is in the world, yet we must believe that God allows things to happen that He may not like, but in His wisdom, somewhere down the line, God will turn it around for good for His children, as promised in Romans 8:28.

Second: Ask God to show you what you could learn. The Bible says we're the disciples of Jesus. What is a disciple?--a learner. The Bible says that the Lord is the teacher, and we are the disciples. We are learners. The experiences of life are teaching experiences. When bitterness comes and you are tempted to be angry with God, ask Him what He is trying to teach you.

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Third: Reject self pity. Become God focused in the situation rather than me focused. Therefore instead of focusing on what you have "lost" through the situation, focus on what God is doing in your life as you lean and rely on Him more.

Four: Put time into proper perspective. Every difficult experience you may be dealing with now, circumstances that tend to make you angry and bitter, will in time pass away.

Five: Be quick to give thanks. It's amazing what praising can do. You can't be bitter against God and praise Him at the same time. The Bible says, "In all things give thanks..."(1Thes 5:18)

### 2. Bitterness Towards Yourself

Many times we get angry with ourselves. It shows up in many forms--we feel rejected, we wallow in self pity, our self image is poor. It may be because of some sin or past, something that, if we had it to do over again, we wouldn't do, but we did do it, and we are having trouble forgiving ourselves. How do I deal with that? Confess the sin and believe His promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1Jn 1:9).

### 3. Bitterness Towards Others

How do you deal with bitterness against others?

- One thing you must do is to keep your anger temporary. In Ephesians 4:26 God tells us we should not let the sun go down on our anger. If you're mad at somebody today, you should get it settled before the sun goes down. If it goes down and you don't deal with it, it will simmer all night, and tomorrow there's a good chance you'll be twice as angry and bitter about it as you are today. So deal with your anger before the sun goes down.

- Keep a short account. Do not allow one event after another to gather against the person in your mind.

- Beware of your tongue. The Bible reminds us that though the tongue is a little instrument, it causes a lot of problems. You can't get into trouble for something you didn't say. Watch your words.

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- We can also pursue peace. We must chase after peace; "seek peace and pursue it..."(1Pe 3:11) If you know someone is harboring anger, hurt or bitterness towards you because of some wrong doing on your part, you can take the positive step of initiating reconciliation.

- Forgive and forget. How can you forget something negative that's stuck in your mind? The Bible says God remembers our sins no more; so how can God forget something when He is Omniscient? How can He know everything and still forget? When you forgive and forget, the forgetting means that you, like God, don't hold that wrongdoing to the offender's account. God forgets the charge against us; He remembers it no more. He knows about it, just as you do, but He will never bring it up again.

**TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31,32).

The dictionary definition of the action of "forgive" is to cease to feel resentment against an offender, i.e., to pardon ones enemies.

**UFORGIVENESS:**

Many people are walking in this world as wounded soldiers. Soldiers that are filled with rage, bitterness and resentment. These feelings however are all a result of the wounded person choosing to remain in unforgiveness towards another. In order to justify their position of unforgiveness, they will make excuses like:

- the offense was too great
- he/she won't accept responsibility for the offense
- he/she never asked to be forgiven
- he/she will do it again
- he/she did it again
- he/she isn't truly sorry
- he/she did it deliberately
- I don't like him/her
- if I forgive the offense, I'd have to treat the offender well

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- someone has to punish him/her
- I don't feel like forgiving him/her
- I can't forget what happened

However the consequences of walking in unforgiveness are great, emotionally, physically and spiritually. A person who chooses to be unforgiving towards another will

- Be robbed of their personal power
- Be trapped in anger, indignation and resentment.
- Feel helpless, stuck and frustrated.
- Harm you physically or emotionally.
- Stop you from enjoying relationships or reveling in your accomplishments.

**WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?**

**FORGIVENESS IS NOT:**

- simple remorse
- forgetting
- excusing
- trusting (trust must be earned)
- just a feeling
- a one-time deal

**FORGIVENESS IS:**

- Surrendering to Jesus our right to hold a judgment against someone

- Release of all indebtedness

- A gift of grace. We cannot forgive on our own; only Jesus can accomplish forgiveness.

- Linked to repentance: True repentance like David experienced was a key to being able to forgive. We cannot blame our parents, perpetrator, observer (or anyone else) for our sinful response

- A choice to obey. Forgiveness does not come easy for most of us. Our natural instinct is to recoil in self-protection when we've been injured. We don't naturally overflow with mercy, grace and forgiveness when we've been wronged. Is forgiveness a conscious choice, a physical act involving the will,

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or is it a feeling, an emotional state of being? The Bible offers insight and answers to this question. Forgiveness is a choice we make through a decision of our will, motivated by obedience to God and his command to forgive. The Bible instructs us to forgive as the Lord forgave us: Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another". How do we forgive when we don't feel like it? How do we translate the decision to forgive into a change of heart? We forgive by faith, out of obedience. Since forgiveness goes against our nature, we must forgive by faith, whether we feel like it or not. We must trust God to do the work in us that needs to be done so that the forgiveness will be complete. Learning to forgive implies that forgiveness is a learned process, not an automatic response. Our sinful nature (our flesh) has a high resistance to laying offenses aside. It prefers to take on an offense and use the energy that the offense brings with it, in every negative way. Every part of our un-renewed mind, our carnal mind, has a preference to take on an offense and a propensity to hold grudges, and seek its own sense of justice. Within the carnal mind, retaliation is most often not an option, but rather it's a driving force, it has to get even! Our flesh, unrenewed, unbridled, lacking illumination and understanding, prefers to be judge, jury, and executioner of the offender even when that offender is our own self.

**WHY SHOULD WE CHOOSE TO FORGIVE?**

- The best reason to forgive is because Jesus commanded us to forgive. We forgive because we do so out of obedience to God.
- We learn from Scripture, if we don't forgive, neither will we be forgiven: Matthew 6:14-16 "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.
- We also forgive so that our prayers will not be hindered: Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you *your sins.*
- We forgive because we have been forgiven.

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS:**

"When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (I Peter 2:23).

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"Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing..." (Luke 23:34).

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14,15).

**WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL MEASURE OF FORGIVENESS?**

- Seventy times seven. In Matthew 18:21-22, we read, Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No!" Jesus replied, "seventy times seven!" What does this mean?

- Unlimited In Luke 17:3-4, Jesus says, "I am warning you! If another believer sins, rebuke him; then if he repents, forgive him. Even if he wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, forgive him."

- As God forgave us. Read what Paul says in Ephesians 4:32

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FORGIVING?**

***It is necessary for our own forgiveness.*** Jesus said, "But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." (Mark 11:25, 26)

***It restores Christian fellowship.*** Now it is time to forgive him and comfort him. Otherwise he may become so discouraged that he won't be able to recover. Now show him that you still love him. (2 Cor. 2:5–10)

***Spiritual cleansing.*** James says that the elders of the church should pray over those who are sick and the Lord will make them well, adding, "And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven." (James 5:15-16)

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**ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:**

- What kind of offense do you find most difficult to forgive?
- Do you meditate on an offense over and over?
- How do you find it in yourself to let go of past offenses even though you "deserve" to hang onto them?
- Does forgiving someone mean that the offense is forgotten and has no further consequences?
- Do you ever feel that you are prisoner of unforgiveness? When? Why? What is the only phrase in the Lord's prayer with a "condition" attached? (Matthew 6:12)
- Do you feel that you will be able to teach someone how to forgive and expect them to obey if you yourself are holding onto unforgiveness?\

**STEPS TO FORGIVING:**

Before we can begin the process of forgiveness, we need to remember the following:

- Realize *our* weaknesses. We are not perfect. Where would we be if everyone never forgave us?
- Meditate on what Jesus did to forgive us. Picture Jesus, bleeding on the cross, choosing to forgive you and me.
- Ask Jesus to empower us with His Spirit to forgive.

Once we have done this, then we can begin to follow the FORGIVE steps.

**F -- Face the facts.** Own up to the reality that you need to forgive another person or yourself. If you don't accept that need to forgive you will not have a fulfilling and enriching life.

**O -- Oust the anger.** Even if you feel that the other person's offenses are real and your anger is justified, you should resolve to shed your fury, resentment and bitterness.

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**R -- Remember the offenses.** Recall the harm inflicted on you. State: "I fully and freely forgive _____ (person's name) for _____ (spell out what the person did)".

**G -- Give the benefit of the doubt.** Realize that, in most instances, the person(s) who harmed you was probably being either selfish or self-involved and was not out to hurt you. But if she or he had underlying, callous, unkind thoughts, then shower that person with love. Looking at these people or even yourself with this kind of compassion and understanding can help to release you.

**I -- Imagine what forgiveness feels like.** Forgiveness always brings peace, good feelings and harmony.

**V -- Value the experience.** Realize that forgiveness can be powerful and effective-perhaps as important as eating nourishing foods, exercising and believing in yourself. Acknowledge that letting go of your acrimony, animosity and antagonism can totally transform and improve your life.

**E -- Embrace forgiveness.** Approaching another to apologize completes your 7-step process and helps you to achieve a joyous, merciful frame of mind.

**TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING UP THEIR RIGHT FOR REVENGE**

If you have ever been wronged you have felt an overwhelming desire for revenge. Revenge is a normal, natural fleshly emotion that we all feel from time to time, when we've been overwhelmed, or wronged, or overpowered, and were unable to resist or prevail. However, revenge is forbidden in the Old Testament. Leviticus 19:18 ""Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. Proverbs 24:17 "Do not rejoice when your enemies fall into trouble. Don't be happy when they stumble". Proverbs 24:29 "And don't say, "Now I can pay them back for all their meanness to me! I'll get even!"

Christ rebuked his disciples for wanting to take revenge in the New Testament. Luke 9:54-55 "When James and John heard about it, they said to Jesus, "Lord, should we order down fire from heaven to burn them up?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them."

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**INSTEAD OF TAKING REVENGE, WE SHOULD**

***Trust in God to do what is right***: Proverbs 20:22 "Don't say, "I will get even for this wrong." Wait for the LORD to handle the matter." Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! Romans 12:19 Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written, "I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it," says the Lord.

***Exhibit love:*** Leviticus 19:18 "Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. Luke 6:35 "Love your enemies! Do good to them! Lend to them! And don't be concerned that they might not repay. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and to those who are wicked.

***Exercise forbearance:*** Matthew 5:38-41 ""You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it.' But I say, don't resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too. If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Christ is the example of forbearance that we should follow. Isaiah 53:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth". 1 Peter 2:23 "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:"

***Bless those who have hurt you***: Romans 12:14 "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not".

***Overcome evil by kindness.*** Proverbs 25:21-22 "If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them water to drink. You will heap burning coals on their heads, and the LORD will reward you."

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**IN THE COUNSELINE SESSION**

Step one: Allow the counselee to think it through. "Is this the type of life I want to live?" Do I want to remain emotionally crippled because of the experience that I had? Do I want to be physically sick because of …?"

Step two: Admit your bitterness to yourself and to God: Our pride often keeps us from admitting we are bitter about something. It is a sin and we need to admit it to ourselves and then need to confess it as sin to God and ask His help to get rid of it!

Step three: Make a list of how you have been done wrong. This helps us put things into perspective when we write down how we feel we have been done wrong and why we should be bitter.

Step four: Make another list of what we have done and said that God has forgiven us. Things we have done to other people; to our spouse; etc. It is a real eye opener to see the terrible things God has forgiven you and I for, and how in the world can we fail to forgive what this person has done to us after all God has forgiven us of? If God can forgive you and I, then why can't we forgive this person for what they've done to us?

Step five: Ask God to show you how He can use this person or incident as a 'tool' to mold you into a better person. This is the key point. If you can see that God has allowed this event to occur, ask Him to let you see how He can use this incident to mold you and make you better because of it! This changes the whole perspective on the event.

Step six: Ask God to forgive you of your bitterness toward this person.

Step seven: Truly forgive that person. Now this may take time. If you broke your arm, you know it takes weeks to completely heal. If you have harbored bitterness for weeks, months, or years...it may take time to really deal with the matter. Every time you still feel hurt, ask God to help you. Psalms 40:2,3: ""He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." Essential Steps in forgiving the offender

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1. REMEMBER how much you've been forgiven (Christ's work)
2. RELEASE the debt (resentment)
3. REFUSE to take it back
4. RECYCLE steps 1 - 3 in case you do take it back

Step eight: Give up your right to take vengeance. Overcome good with evil. Think of one way in which you can demonstrate love and kindness towards that person who has hurt you and do it. Do not do it because they deserve it but rather because it is commanded by God.

Step nine: Give up the bitterness. Forget the matter and move on. Philippians 3:13,14 says, ".....but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Step ten: Provide them with scriptures that they can use to meditate on. Use those scriptures that you have taught during the counseling session.

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:**

Mary is a 52 year old lady who has terrible arthritis. She has been to many doctors in order to fix her problem but has found that medicine only brings temporary relief. On speaking to her at church you have realized that she has recently been through a terrible divorce in which her husband sued her for custody of her children, took half the property and money and is also expecting her to pay alimony. What would your counsel to her be? How would you be able to help her so that her physical problem and emotional problems can be dealt with?

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## DEPRESSION

"The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, But who can bear a broken spirit?" (Proverbs 18:14

Life is filled with a variety of experiences and depending upon life's circumstances it is quite appropriate to be feeling any of a number of positive and negative emotions. Such emotional states include excitement, frustration, fear, happiness, anger, sadness, and joy etc. All of these emotional states are normal reactions to specific life events. Even when they are experienced as unpleasant, they are normal reactions. These same emotions, however, can intensify into abnormal states if they become an overreaction to the circumstances. For example: Experiencing a loss may make you sad, but if the sadness becomes out of proportion to the event then you fall into depression. Sadness is normal, but depression is not. Depression is when you become sadder than sad.

**Depression differs from sadness in its intensity, frequency, and duration.**

- Intensity. While the event would make most people sad, you respond with a much deeper level of sadness. It is too intense. Your sadness moves outside the normal range of response.

- Frequency. Your sadness may not be out of proportion, but it is recurrent. You seem to get over it, and then it comes back. This repetitive cycle becomes a pattern in your life.

- Duration. Your sadness comes and it stays and stays. The sadness lasts much longer than it does for most other people in similar circumstances.

## DEFINITION

The word depression is not used in the Bible. However, synonyms of this word are frequently seen, for example: sorrow, affliction, anguish, and oppression. The word depression has been described as "a condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal; sadness greater and more prolonged than that warranted by any objective reason." depression.[11]

11 www.Dictionary.com.

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It is a prolonged and persistent negative mood which can color and interfere with many aspects of one's life. It is characterized by feelings of worthlessness, excessive guilt, loneliness, sadness, hopelessness, and self-doubt. Suicidal thoughts may also be present. Normal everyday depression can last for a few minutes to a few days. These feelings are a normal part of being human. On the other hand, depression that becomes intense and lasts for extended periods of time may be a dysfunctional form of depression, something beyond the "everyday sort."

**Examples of people in the Bible who suffered bouts of depression**

- Abraham (Genesis 15)
- Jonah (Jonah 4)
- Job (Book of Job)
- Elijah (1 Kings 19)
- King Saul (I Samuel 16:14-23, etc.)
- Jeremiah (Book of Jeremiah)
- David (Psalms 6, 13, 34, 37-40, 42-43, 69, 71, 110, 116, 130, 138, 139, 141-143, 146-147)

## CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

According to Josh McDowell, there are eight major causes for depression:

***Biological factors***: Depression often has a physical basis. At the simplest level, we know that lack of sleep, insufficient exercise, the side effects of drugs, physical illnesses, or improper diet can all create depression. Women experience depression during PMS and some experience postpartum depression following childbirth. "There is evidence that depression runs in families and may have a genetic basis" [12]. In the case of Elijah, depression was a result of exhaustion. Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal was one of the most incredible stories in the entire Bible. There was no doubt whatsoever that the only true God was with him on Mount Carmel. Yet it is immediately after this tremendous victory that we find him praying to die. This depression had two major causes: the aftermath of a great spiritual victory and physical fatigue and hunger.

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12 Gary R. Collins, Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide, revised edition (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1988), p. 107)

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***Learned helplessness*** (sense of being trapped and unable to remedy an intolerable situation),

***Parental rejection:*** Hurts which have been afflicted on a child can cause depression.

***Abuse:*** Physical, mental, sexual and emotional. Tamar, the daughter of David, was depressed when her half brother Amnon raped her (2 Sam. 13:20)

***Negative thinking***: We have a sense of hopelessness because we always look at the negative in a situation instead of looking to the positive.

***Life stress***: For example a change in a job, more work stress, financial problems. 4The faithful of Israel were depressed because of their long captivity in Babylon (Is. 40).

***Anger***

***Guilt***: The first place in the Bible we see depression was in Cain (Gen. 4:6-7). His depression was caused by guilt at not doing what he knew to be right. David was depressed because of his sin of adultery and murder (Ps. 32:3) While it is true that all of our sins, past, present and future, were forgiven when Jesus died on the cross, God still asks us to confess our sins (own up to our shortcomings, agree with Him that we have sinned against Him). This is not for us to receive more salvation, or even maintain our salvation, but it is to clear the air, as it were, between God and us. God already knows that we have sinned; we aren't telling Him something He doesn't already know. But He knows that for us to feel right with Him again it requires us to stand up and take responsibility for our sinful behavior. The sin may be something as obvious as David's sin of adultery and murder or it may be as subtle as Cain's desire to choose his own way over what he knew was God's way. We must be willing to look at our own behavior through the eyes of God's word and admit when our behavior is not all that God commands us to be.

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13 Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, Josh McDowell's Handbook on Counseling Youth (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1996)

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**SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION**

Depression does not only affect us emotionally, but it reaches into all aspects of our lives. The following symptoms will be seen in a person who is depressed:

1. Emotional Symptoms

- Sadness.
- Anxiety.
- Guilt.
- Anger.
- Mood swings.
- Helplessness.
- Hopelessness.

2. Physical Symptoms

- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Overeating or loss of appetite.
- Constipation.
- Weight loss or gain.
- Irregular menstrual cycle.
- Gradual loss of sexual desire.

3. Behavioral Symptoms

- Crying for no apparent reason.
- Withdrawal from other people and new situations.
- Getting angry easily.
- Being unmotivated to set or meet goals.
- Loss of interest in one's physical appearance.
- Loss of interest in activities which were once of interest.
- Turning to drugs or alcohol.

4. Thoughts/Perceptions which may become Self-Defeating

- Feelings of being a failure.
- Criticizing oneself frequently.
- Disappointment.
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.
- Blaming oneself for unfortunate happenings.

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- Being pessimistic about the future.

What are the consequences if depression is not resolved?

- Desire to be alone (I Kings 19:3-4 )
- A sense of being rejected by others (Genesis 4:7; I Kings 19:10,14)
- Feelings of worthlessness (I Kings 19:4,10 )
- Angry at himself and others (Genesis 4:5-6)
- Stop fulfilling his responsibilities (I Kings 19)
- Desire to escape pressures rather than deal with them (I Kings 19:4)
- Sense of being alienated from God (Psalms 51:12, 77:7-9)
- Loss of joy and positive attitude (Genesis 4:6; I Kings 19:4; Psalms 38:6, 51:12, 77:6; Proverbs 17:22)
- Complaining because circumstances seem overwhelming (Numbers 11:14; I Kings 19:10,14; Psalms 38:4; 77:3)
- Desire for God to end his life. For example: Moses (Numbers 11:15 ), Elijah (I Kings 19:4) and Jonah (Jon. 4:3)

**WHAT CAN DO THE COUNSELOR DO?**

**TEACH THEM ABOUT THEIR HOPE!**

Depressions always results in a person feeling helpless and hopeless in a particular situation. For example if a spouse has died, if a person fails to work through their grief correctly, they will feel overwhelmed with hopelessness. Therefore as a counselor you will need to provide them with hope!

There are no hopeless helpless cases with Jesus Christ and therefore the counselee needs to come to a place of acknowledgement that He is able to do something miraculous in their lives. Jesus always invites desperate, helpless, and seemingly hopeless people to come to Him. He issued the greatest invitation to all hopeless and helpless sinners when He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I wil give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "He looked over the multitudes and felt compassion for them because they were distressed and downcast" (9:36).

In the person of Jesus Christ, there is hope for the hopeless.

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**Steps to having hope:**

***Determination***: Be determined that you no longer want to live under the affliction and the oppression of the devil but that you want to live in the "righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit" that has been promised to all those who believe. Set your mind on change.

***Expectation:*** Hope brings expectation; without it you can never fully engage hope. You must expect to be joyful. Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

***Renewal***: Renew your mind and spirit with the Word of God ("faith comes by hearing, and hearing of the Word of God" Romans 12:7). We all need to feed our mind, heart and spirit with the medicine of the Word. Talking with God on a regular basis helps to calm and renew your spirit.

***Belief***: Believe in the impossible for your emotional healing. Believe that you will no longer feel the hopelessness of yesterday but that you will be able to say, "rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice". "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26). See Romans 4.

***Enthusiasm:*** **"**En Theos" means in God. Enthusiasm is directly related to hope in God.

***Persistence:*** Be persistence in your healing. Many times thoughts of depression will come again just as you feel that you have the victory. Persist. Do not go back to the way that you have been but continue to follow the steps that will lead to "life" in abundance.

**TEACH THEM TO CHANGE WHAT THEY REALLY BELEIVE**

"Do you believe God is all-powerful?" We get depressed because we are in a hopeless situation that apparently has no way out. If we are feeling this way, though, how can we really believe that God is in control of everything that happens to us? When we really believe this in our hearts (not just knowing it's true, but actually BELIEVING it), we become confident that God is in control of absolutely everything that happens to us... even the bad things in life.

"Do you believe God is all-knowing?" We get depressed because we feel that nobody knows what we are going through. If we are feeling this way, how can we really believe that God is all knowing and knows everything happening to us

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and every feeling we have? We get depressed because we feel nobody cares about us. If we are feeling this way, how can we really believe that God loves us completely? This gives us the confidence that nothing happens to us without God knowing about it. God knows our feelings, our hurts, our wants, our needs. He knows us better than we even know ourselves. He knows the past, the present and the future. He can see the path ahead of us in a way that we cannot. He knows what things we will need to have in our character for the future. He knows what skills we will need for our future. And He always knows what is going to be for our ultimate best.

"Do you believe that God loves you perfectly, 100%, as you are now, and that because of that love, He will ALWAYS do what is for your ultimate best?" We get depressed because we feel like what is happening to us isn't good. If we are feeling this way, how can we really believe that God ALWAYS works things out for our ultimate best? This kind of love can be difficult for most people to understand. With love being so transitory, this type of love and commitment to love can be frightening and unknown.

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTION**

What advice would you give to the following person? In your answer provide the scriptures that you would use when counseling her and the homework that you will give her to ponder on until your next counseling session.

"I am going through a separation and I feel so lonely. I know I don't love my husband, and we have done everything possible to save our marriage, but this is the best thing for both of us. I know for certain that it will help him get confidence in himself and get what he wants out of life. But on the other hand, I've got no-one to turn to. My mother isn't the best of persons to ask for support and neither of my family can understand what I am going through. I have a friend that has listened to me for the last year, but lately, I feel he's not there when I need him. I know I shouldn't count on anyone to go through all this, but days like today, I feel I might not be able to make it. How can I deal with this? How can I not count on anyone to get out of the hole I'm in?

**TEACH THEM ABOUT THE JOY OF THE LORD**

The Bible tells us to be filled with joy and praise (Philippians 4:4; Romans 15:11), so God apparently intends for us all to live joyful lives. This is not easy for someone suffering from situational depression, but it can be remedied through God's gifts of prayer, Bible study and application, support groups, home groups, fellowship

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among believers, confession, forgiveness, and counseling. We must make the conscious effort to not be absorbed in ourselves, but rather to turn our efforts outward. Feelings of depression can often be solved when the counselee takes the focus off of themselves and puts it on Christ and others.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13 - NKJV)

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:4-8).

Our joy comes when we have followed the steps of:

- Giving our hopelessness to God through prayer
- Changing our negative thinking to hopeful expectation of God working in our lives.

**LEARN TO BE CONTENT IN EVERY SITUATION:**

"We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed… Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18 ).

What enabled Jesus to endure all that He did for us and Paul to continue to be a witness for Christ even though he was persecuted and threatened with his life? They remained focused on the eternal rather than the temporary. When we maintain faith and keep our focus on God's love and the hope He has given us for eternity, Christians can weather the storms of life.

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"…I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." 2 Corinthians 11:23b-28 (NIV)

Depression is often a matter of focus. Bad situations are going to be all around us at various times through our lives. James tells us to "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds...." (James 1:2) We are guaranteed that we will face trials and testing during our lives, but we don't have to react to them as the world does. When Peter was walking on the water in Matthew 14, he was fine until he "saw the wind". In other words, he took his eyes off of Jesus and started to look at the situation around him and into himself.

Depression comes when we look inside of ourselves for the answers to the stress. We feel depressed because we are not in control of the situation around us and we feel helpless to change it. Therefore we need to ensure that we change our focus – remove it off ourselves, our situation and we place it on Christ and His ability to work all things for the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Identify the feelings of depression and find out what the cause of this depression is. Once you know what the cause of the depression is, you will then be able to deal with it correctly. For example:

If physical: If their doctor has diagnosed a particular problem, pray with them for God's healing (James 5:14-16). But if they are taking medication for any problem, they must consult their doctor before changing or stopping it.

Loss: The Bible says that Jesus "bore our grief" on the cross (Isaiah 53:4). He feels their pain as strongly as they do and will carry it for them. Show them that they can give their hurt to Him. Then resolve not to dwell on it again.

Sin: They will never be at peace if they ignore something in their life that they know is against God's will (I Timothy 1:19). If they know that they are doing or have done something against God's will, they need to confess to God what they did. If they admit their sin and turn from it, God has promised to forgive them completely, and cleanse them from the sin (I John 1:9). Trust Him to do it.

Wrong thinking: What do they think about right before they feel depressed? Do they think such things as "I'm no good," or "I can't do anything right" or "This situation will never change"? It's vitally important for them to find out what God says is the truth about them and their life. Read the Bible closely to find out what is the real truth (Ephesians 1:18-19). Once they find out the wonderful things God says about them, they need to commit to stop repeating negative things. Instead, memorize and repeat the truths they find in the Bible that contradict the negative thoughts. Fill their thoughts with such truths as : "For I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power" (Philippians 4:13); "It is he who will supply all (my) needs from his riches in glory, because of what Christ Jesus has done for (me)" (Philippians 4:19); "For the Holy Spirit, God's gift, does not want (me) to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them" (II Timothy 1:7). "Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us" (Romans 8:37); "He personally carried the load our sins in his own body when he died on the cross, so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on. For his wounds have healed ours!" (I Peter 2:24).

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Step two: Ask them: "Do you really believe that God is all-powerful and can do absolutely anything He chooses to do?" "Do you really believe that God is all-knowing and is aware of every little detail of our situation, our feelings, our past, present and future?" "Do you really believe that God is all-loving and loves you as you are right now, without you having to change one little thing, and that because of this love, He will always do what is for your ultimate best?" Help them to see God's ability to work out the situation that they are facing. Teach them concerning the sovereignty and power of God in their lives.

Step three: Teach them the principles of trusting and hoping in God. They can trust in God to do what is best for their lives because of His love for them. They can have hope in their future because of plans that God has for their lives. Jer 29:11, 13 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Step four: Teach them the importance of their focus. If they continue to ponder on the negative in the situation then they will continue to be depressed. However if they make a decision to focus on what the Word of God says and what God can do in the situation, then they will have hope. Therefore ask them what they think about in their current situation. For example:

| Their thoughts | Change their thoughts |
|---|---|
| I have no money. How I am going to make ends meet. No one is hiring in our economic climate! I have already been to five interviews and I just get turned down all the time. | I have no money (face the facts)<br><br>BUT:<br><br>Philip. 4:19 "And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. |

Step five: Provide them with practical steps which will help in their "feeling" of depression. For example:

- Avoid being alone. Force yourself to be with people. Encourage them to join a home group, a church support group, a single's group, a grief support group etc.

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- Sing or listen to praise and worship music. Music can uplift your spirit as it did for King Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-23).

- Praise and give thanks. "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Even if they don't feel like it, commit to praising God and trust in Him. Ps 42:11 "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

- Read the Bible – meditate specifically on scriptures that deal with "joy". Commit to the renewing of their mind. Rom 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will." 2 Cor 10:3-6 "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

- Find a hobby that they love to do and ensure that they do it at least once a week.

- Exercise daily. Use self-relaxation techniques whenever they feel tense. For example, slowly breathe in and out for several minutes until their whole body feels relaxed.

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## FEAR AND PHOBIAS

### WHAT IS FEAR?

Fear can be defined as being an unpleasant feeling of apprehension or distress caused by the presence or anticipation of danger. The Webster's dictionary says that fear is "to...expect with alarm." As believer's we are to have a sense of expectancy, but a person who is experiencing fear lays in wait for what seems to be an unavoidable catastrophe. This is a negative expectancy, an expectancy of failure, of harm, of loss etc. This is not the expectancy that God was talking about in Hebrews 11:1

FEAR is:

- False
- Evidence
- Appearing
- Real

Fears are the:

- Irrational beliefs about how an object, event, happening, or feeling will result in negative, disastrous, life threatening, disturbing, or unsettling consequences for you.
- Results of giving power to your objects of irrational belief, letting them rule you rather than you ruling them.
- Underlying motives behind many of your actions and lack of action that block your thinking, problem solving and decision making abilities.
- Negative self-scripts you have either given yourself or that were given to you about how you will suffer dire consequences if you involve yourself in certain activities, behavior, or events.
- Disabling beliefs you carry in yourself that prevent you from living a productive, healthy, and growth-enhancing life.
- Underlying foundation of a weak self-image and self-concept; they keep you from fully asserting yourself, and that hinders your quest for self-actualization.
- Inhibitors, emotional blocks, unconscious messages, and uncovered elements of your psychological make-up.
- "Comfortable" ways of acting and responding. Because of their habitual and well established nature, fears can become second nature; therefore, being extremely resistant to change or alteration.

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- Basis of your negative belief system. If you were no longer the recipient of the negative consequences that the fears predicted, you would have to take off your ``mask'' and become authentic.
- Excuses behind which people hide to avoid change or growth. To rid yourself of your fears is to rid yourself of the lifelong reasons for avoiding personal growth.

Statistics have proven that a vast majority of the things we fear never become reality. But, in our mind's eye, the false fears can sometimes seem more real than anything else around us. But, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of a calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control." 2 Timothy 1:7

There are a few important points that this scripture brings up.

1. Fear is a spirit.
2. It is a spirit that God did not give to us.

**THE ORIGIN OF FEAR**

The ultimate basis for all fear is man's alienation from God. The first mention or manifestation of fear in the Bible was from Adam. While in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had been given a command by the Lord to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden. Satan deceived them and caused them to disobey God. As a result they became afraid and hid from God. Genesis 3:8-10 "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'" The root of so many fear-based thoughts is this alienation between God and man. When man sinned, he no longer enjoyed the close, intimate, loving fellowship with God as at the beginning. Fear of punishment, insecurity, dread of evil events, anticipation of loss all stem from the lost relationship to God and the covering that comes from His loving protection. Inherently, sin makes man feel that he is undeserving of any good from the hand of the Lord and is therefore vulnerable to all kinds of bad things.

Rising also out of the enmity between God and man is the feeling of inadequacy that generates all kinds of fears and is a direct cause of unbelief. Faith and fear cannot be present at the same time. When we trust in the

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promises of God, we are not afraid. After the Children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea and continued on their journey towards the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey that God had promised to them, they came to Kadesh Barnea. Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land of Canaan and ten of them came back with this report: Numbers 13:31 says, "But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.'" Though the children of Israel had received the promise that God would give them the Land of Canaan and had led them through the Red Sea and had promised to be with them, they still feared. They felt inadequate to tackle the "giants" in the land and, rather, forfeited the promise.

**WHAT CAUSES FEAR?**

- Fear is caused by great imagination. Many of our fears are not real but only imaginary. They actually do not exist in objective fact but only in subjective imagination.

- Many fears, however, are real, not imaginary. Where do these fears come from? Some of these can be traced to great traumas. It could be somebody is afraid of dogs because they were bitten by a dog as a child. A person having been hurt in a serious, dead-end relationship may develop a deep fear of the opposite sex. A person who almost drowns may develop a deep fear of water.

- Fear is caused by the great mysteries of life. In the Bible, time after time we read about fear being caused by a mysterious experience in life that was beyond human comprehension. When the sky was filled with heralding angels announcing the birth of Jesus, the shepherds were afraid. (Luke 2:9) When Jesus came walking out to the disciples on the water in the midst of the storm, they were afraid. (Matthew 14:26-27) When Jesus robbed death of the son of the widow of Nain and restored him to life, the Bible says, "Fear clutched them all." (Luke 7:16) When the Gadarenes were confronted about the mysterious power of Jesus that tamed the wild man and made wild tame pigs, they were afraid and they begged Jesus to depart. (Luke 8:37) At Pentecost when the skies were filled with strange signs and the ears of the people filled with strange sounds, the Bible says, "Fear came on every soul." (Acts 2:43) The same is true of us today. When we look into the vastness of an immeasurable universe, when we stare into the dark chasm we call "death," when we stand before the great unknown forces of life, the mysteries that are somehow beyond our comprehension, fear can clutch us all.

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- Fear is caused by great responsibilities. In Numbers 13, the Israelites were afraid because they didn't feel adequate to the responsibility God had placed on them to enter the Promised Land. In 2 Samuel 10:22, Saul was afraid because of the awesome responsibility of being king. When he was to be anointed as King of Israel by Samuel, he could not be found. He was hiding in the baggage.

**WHAT DO WE FEAR?**

There are three different groups of things that we can fear. These are non personal things, personal things of intra-personal things.

**Non-personal things:** For example fear of the

- unknown,
- unfamiliar,
- lack,
- want,
- loss,
- unemployment,
- economic instability,
- loss of support,
- confinement,
- isolation,
- loss of health,
- cancer, incomprehensible,
- future, death,
- end times,
- judgment,
- war, nuclear warfare,
- bodily harm,
- social decay,
- governmental decline,
- lack of freedom,
- being dependent,
- exposure,
- darkness,
- guns,
- air travel,
- closed places,
- mice, spiders, dogs, snakes,

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- fire, storms, earthquakes, catastrophe,
- heights,
- work,
- suffering, pain, tribulation

**Inter-personal:** For example, the fear of

- relationships,
- love,
- broken relationships,
- disapproval,
- what others think,
- what others might do,
- rejection,
- sexual desirability,
- what will happen to our family (spouse, children),
- strangers,
- abandonment, desertion,
- people,
- pagans, other races, crowds,
- opponent, enemies,
- being ridiculed or embarrassed,
- loneliness,
- having nothing to say,
- offending someone

**Intra-personal:** For example, the fear of

- Failure,
- inadequacy,
- inability,
- responsibility,
- success,
- our capability to hurt,
- being out of control,
- security,
- being dependent,
- being fearful,
- being exposed,
- cracking up,
- insignificance,

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- impropriety,
- ignorance...

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF FEAR:**

Physically:

- Muscular tension,
- diarrhea,
- sleeplessness,
- indigestion,
- hyperactivity,
- sleep,
- headaches,
- cardiovascular problems,

Psychologically:

- Demoralizing,
- debilitating,
- disorganized,
- distorts reality,
- warps perception,
- false self-confidence,
- procrastination,
- avoidance.

Spiritually:

- Question our relationship with God,
- doubts our salvation,
- question God's love, His ways, His provision,
- question our ability to live as Christian

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## HOW DO WE RESPOND TO FEAR?

We respond to fear through natural responses such as:

- Denial,
- Defying it,
- Suppressing it,
- Avoiding it,
- Insulating against it and being self-protective,
- Rationalizing it
- Escaping

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS**

Provide an outline of the counsel that you would give to this person. Please note that in this instance there is more than one "problem". Be sure to address each issue and provide the scriptures that you will use in changing their behaviour and thought patterns.

"I had an experience with attempted rape about 2 years ago. I have not even been on a date since then, and when I do have a random date I just want to scream "ok, now get away from me, don't talk to me and don't touch me". I will be 25 next month and I am still a virgin and would like to be able to get in a relationship. Tonight I had a date with a guy that I really liked and I was all ready and everything but had to call and cancel because I just feel like I am going to be mauled. I am missing one of God's given pleasures and a time in my life when I am supposed to be having fun. How do I get past this? Should I just get it over with like a phobia? What do you think?

## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

First and foremost, understand that a person always has a choice about how to respond to and deal with fear. You can cave into it, struggle with it, accept it, or work around it. You always have a choice, a choice you can make again and again or that you can change based on your assessment of what is best for you. Once the counselee has come to a place where they are willing to deal with their fear, a choice in which they will be willing to change, the counselor can then lead them through the steps of recovery. However, teaching is vital in their recover.

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**TEACH THEM THAT GOD IS PRESENT WITH THEM AT ALL TIMES**

- Genesis 15:1 "Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

- Psalm 23:4 "Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me."

- Psalm 34:4 "I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me, freeing me from all my fears."

- Psalm 118:6 "The LORD is for me, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

- Isaiah 41:10 "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

- Isaiah 43:5 ""Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west

- Matthew 14:27 "But Jesus spoke to them at once. "It's all right," he said. "I am here! Don't be afraid."

- John 6:20 "but he called out to them, "I am here! Don't be afraid."

- John 12:15 ""Don't be afraid, people of Israel. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt."

Our chief source of strength that enables us to withstand fear will always be the knowledge that God is with us. Throughout the Bible, God commanded individuals to "fear not, or, do not be afraid" by assuring them of His presence and help on their behalf. God wants us to know and be assured that if, and as long as He is with us, we need not be afraid. The knowledge of His presence is the certainty that He will help us.

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**TEACH THEM ABOUT THE LOVE OF GOD**

- Romans 8:15 "So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him "Father, dear Father."

- 1 John 4:18 "Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.

- Romans 8:35-39 says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Another weapon against fear is realizing the value that God places upon each one of us. If God loved us so much to redeem us back to Himself with the precious blood of Jesus, how great must be the worth that He has ascribed to man.

The love of God drives out all our fears. When we have an intimate relationship the Father, we will experience the love that will drive out all our fears of the unknown, of mysteries, of traumatic events, of responsibilities etc. As you develop that intimate relationship with Him, His perfect love will become more and more real to you, and your fears will become more unrealistic than your faith. God says that if we are tormented by fear, "this shows that we have not fully experienced His perfect love." (1 John 4:18b). When a fear creeps up inside of you, it should be a red flag that you need to continue deepening your relationship with God.

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For example:

| Fear | Love |
|---|---|
| **Fear of snakes** | Just as a natural father will protect his children from harm, so our Heavenly Father protects us from harm. Psalm 91:9-16 If you make the Most High your dwelling — even the LORD, who is my refuge — then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; … You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." |
| **Fear of failure** | God loves us so much that He not only provides us the opportunity of success, but He provides us with ability so that we will be a success. Philip. 4:13 "For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need." Joshua 1:8 "Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed." |
| **Fear of salvation** | God has provided us with the assurance that once we have confessed the Lord as our Savior that we are saved (eternally). 1 John 5:11-13 "And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life. I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life." "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory". Ephesians 1:13-14 |

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**TEACH THEM TO EXCHANGE FEAR FOR FAITH**

Both faith and fear are an unshakable belief in an unseen future. Neither is merely emotional, but both are spiritual forces.

One of the amazing things about Jesus coming to earth is that He revealed the exact will of the Father to us. We are able to look at how He responded to His disciples while He was here on earth, and understand how God probably reacts to us in similar situations. One of the best examples of Jesus responding to the fear of the disciples is in Mark 4.

"But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with His head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you are that we're going to drown?"When Jesus woke up, He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then He asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 4:37-40

**What exactly is Faith?**

Hebrews says that it is "the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]" (Hebrews 11:1b AMP).

Just like fear, faith is our conviction, or belief, in a reality that we can't yet see. The only difference is that faith assumes God will come through for you, and fear assumes that He will not. It is for this reason that fear is so displeasing in the eyes of your Heavenly Father because it doubts His love and character. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him".(Hebrews 11:6)

Many Christians have mastered the first half of that verse - We believe that God is. But, it is the second half where we fall short - We must believe that He rewards those that seek Him with their whole heart. That is a part of faith and, without it, we are not fully pleasing our Lord. As Christians, when we realize we are afraid, we must stop and ask ourselves an important question. At that very moment - Do we believe God or Satan?

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God says He will reward you for your desire to seek and obey Him. He says He's counted the very hairs on your head and that He is your provider and your protector. But, Satan says, you are unworthy of God's rewards, and that He must use His wrath to teach and train you. He says that the details of your life are too trivial for God to be bothered with, and that you must ultimately fend for yourself. When you choose faith or fear, in all reality, you are ultimately choosing who you will believe.

| **Fear says:** | **God says:** |
|---|---|
| God will not help you this time. | Psalm 121:1-4 "I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth! He will not let you stumble and fall; the one who watches over you will not sleep. Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps." |
| Your finance will never improve | 2 Kings 4:3-6 "And Elisha said, "Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting the jars aside as they are filled." So she did as she was told. Her sons brought many jars to her, and she filled one after another. Soon every container was full to the brim!"Bring me another jar," she said to one of her sons."There aren't any more!" he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing. |
| Your marriage is ruined. | Amos 9:11 ""In that day I will restore the fallen kingdom of David. It is now like a house in ruins, but I will rebuild its walls and restore its former glory. |

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**WHAT NEW BEHAVIORS ARE NEEDED TO OVERCOME FEAR?**

To overcome fear a person needs to:

- Refute irrational beliefs: Stop or "turn off" obsessing thoughts about the feared objects or events. Put it into a realistic perspective, so that it is not seen as the major focal point of their energy, efforts, and attention.
- Choose to "let go" of fear. Remember that fear is a choice. Therefore choose to have faith rather than fear.
- Identify the fear, label it, visualize it, and deal with it as if it were an object or entity to be remolded, changed, or altered.
- Make an honest assessment of the fear and create a consistent, systematic plan of action to overcome it.
- Relax physically, reduce anxiety and tension.
- Establish a sense of confidence in their ability (with the help of God) to overcome and deal with the feared objects or events.
- Let go of insecurity, develop trust in themselves and others, and permit themselves to be vulnerable to change and growth.
- Be persistent in their efforts, recognizing that it may take a lifelong effort to eliminate some fears.

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**ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:**

Some counselee might have one or more of the following attitudes when dealing with their fears. How will you respond to these thought patterns? For each of the following negative and wrong thinking patterns, provide one thought that is positive and that is biblically based:

- No matter what I do, I'll never be able to overcome that fear. Things are always going to be this way, so there is no use in trying. I'll never change. It is just a waste of time to try.
- Everyone in my family had the same fears. Why should I be different?
- I'm so scared of these things. It is impossible to feel differently.
- I am a useless specimen who deserves no better than this.
- I've never been able to get rid of these fears, and I can't do it now.
- No one can help me with this.
- It is impossible not to think about these fears.

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: The first step in overcoming fear is recognizing and identifying what fear is and its origin. Fear is the response of the emotions to uncertainty of things unknown or anticipated, insecurity and guilt. The everyday things of life provide many opportunities to fear: *"Will I lose my job? Will I have enough money to pay my bills? Will I, or one of my loved-ones get sick and die? Will my spouse leave me?"*

- Ask the counselee to list the fears they believe are active in their life. Once this has been done ask them to rank them in order of greatest intensity, with #1 being the worst fear.

- Once they have rank ordered the fears, explore the level of motivation to confront these fears by answering the following questions: How real are these fears to me? How much power in my life do these fears have? How do these fears explain past or current actions in my life? How do these fears determine my self-image, self-concept, self-esteem? How do these fears disable me? How do these fears inhibit me? What emotions do these fears block? How long have I had these fears? What have I done to overcome these fears? How convinced am I of the need to confront these fears? How do your fears influence your decision making process? How do your fears encourage and exacerbate your sense of insecurity? How do your fears keep you from making a change in your life? How do your fears influence your response to offers of help from others? How have your fears kept you chained down and locked in? How have your fears influenced your educational, career, and work pursuits? How have your fears contributed to your self-destructiveness? How have your fears affected your belief in a healthy future for you? How have your fears kept you from growing as a person? How have your fears contributed to an unhealthy life-style for you?

Step two: In order to overcome fear we need to resist it by faith. Once we accept that fear is generated by lies, we can begin to resist it. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith. . ." (1 Peter 5:8-9). Faith is not just asking and receiving, faith is acknowledging who God is and fully accepting Him. When we realize that God is our Father, that He is all powerful and that He loves us, we will realize that there is no situation in life, real or imagined, that God will not be able and willing to help us. Through the love and

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power of God anything can be conquered. "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father"' (Romans 8:15).

Step three: Get rid of all your guilt through confession. Often we live in fear, because we accept the lie that we will have "bad things" happen to us because we have done "bad things." We believe that sickness or loss will come on us because we have sinned. The Bible lets us know that, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). God is not seeking to punish us for our sins; He has already laid our sins upon His Son, Jesus and the penalty has already been paid. We have the right to rest in the knowledge that we are children of God and God will provide for us. "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

Step four: Stand on God's Word, His promises. God is as good as His Word. He will do whatever He has promised. This is our security and anchor; we can know that whatever does come into our life does not have to shake us because of what Jesus has done. "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul. . ." (Hebrews 6:19). If fear is a problem in our lives, we can turn fully to the Lord who is always waiting to help us: "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalms 50:15).

Step five: Make the decision and commitment to cast all their anxieties, worries, concerns, once and for all on Him and trust Him. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Step six: Provide the counselee with a list of the "fear not" that they can use when they are being overcome with fears.

Genesis 15:1 "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Genesis 21:17 "And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

Genesis 26:24 "And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake."

Genesis 46:3 "And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation."

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Exodus 20:20 "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

Deuteronomy 1:21 "Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged."

Deuteronomy 20:3 "And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them."

Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Deuteronomy 31:8 "And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

Joshua 8:1 "And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land."

Joshua 10:25 "And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."

Judges 6:10 "And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice."

Ruth 3:11 "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."

I Kings 17:13 "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son."

II Kings 6:16 "And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

I Chronicles 28:20 "And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD."

II Chronicles 20:17 "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you."

Isaiah 35:4 "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you."

Isaiah 41:13 "For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

Isaiah 41:14 "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

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Isaiah 43:1 "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Isaiah 43:5 "Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west."

Isaiah 44:2 "Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen."

Isaiah 54:4 "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more."

Jeremiah 46:27 "But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid."

Daniel 10:12 "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."

Daniel 10:19 "And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."

Joel 2:21 "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things."

Zechariah 8:13 "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong."

Matthew 1:20 "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Luke 1:13 "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."

Luke 2:10 "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Luke 5:10 "And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Luke 8:50 "But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole."

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Luke 12:7 "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Luke 12:32 "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

John 12:15 "Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."

Acts 27:24 "Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

Revelation 1:17 "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last."

Step seven: Teach them the 5 steps to controlling their fear.

- Recognize the fearful thought as a threat.
- Think of God's promise for that situation (if you don't know what it is, find out!) Quote scripture against this fear.
- Pray and tell God your concern.
- Praise God for His promise to provide your needs.
- Refuse to worry about it anymore. If it comes to your mind again, confess that you have given it over to your Heavenly Father in prayer. Then begin praising God that He heard your prayers and that the prayers of the righteous availeth much (James 5:16)

**WHAT ARE PHOBIAS?**

A phobia is an excessive or unreasonable fear of an object, place or situation. Simple phobias are fears of specific things such as insects, infections, flying. Agoraphobia is a fear of being in places where one feels "trapped" or unable to get help, such as in crowds, on a bus, or standing in a queue. A social phobia is a marked fear of social or performance situations.

When the phobic person actually encounters, or even anticipates being in the presence of the feared object or situation, s/he experiences immediate anxiety. The physical symptoms of anxiety may include a racing heart, shortness of breath, sweating, chest or abdominal discomfort, trembling, etc. and the emotional component involves an intense fear - of losing control, embarrassing oneself, or passing out.

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Commonly people try to escape, and then to avoid the feared situation wherever possible. This may be fairly easy if the feared object is rarely encountered (e.g. fear of snakes) and avoidance will not therefore restrict the person's life very much. At other times (e.g. agoraphobia, social phobia) avoiding the feared situation limits their life severely. Escape and avoidance also make the feared object/situation more frightening.

With some phobias the person may have specific thoughts which attribute some threat to the feared situation. This is particularly true for social phobia where there is often a fear of being negatively evaluated by others, and for agoraphobia when there may be a fear of collapsing and dying with no one around to help, or of having a panic attack and making a fool of oneself in front of other people.

With some phobias there may be accompanying frightening thoughts (this plane might crash; I'm trapped; I must get out). However with other phobias it is more difficult to identify any specific thoughts which could be associated with the anxiety (e.g. it is unlikely that a spider phobic is afraid of making a fool of themselves in front of the spider). With these phobias the cause seems to be explained more as a conditioned (learned) anxiety response which has become associated with the feared object.

**HOW TO COPE?**

There are two components in treating a phobia effectively: firstly, confronting the feared situation, and secondly, dealing with any frightening thoughts that are associated with the anxiety.

***Confronting the feared situation***: It is important to stop avoiding the feared situation; rather it needs confronting whilst managing the level of anxiety. Because it can be very difficult to start in the midst of the feared situation, the usual approach is by a graded exposure. This means drawing up a hierarchy of threatening situations and confronting the least feared situation first before moving on to the more threatening ones. For example, somebody with a phobia of spiders might use the following hierarchy:

1. Reading about spiders
2. Looking at and then touching a photograph of a spider
3. Looking at/touching a plastic model of a spider

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4. Looking at/touching a jar with a small spider in it
5. Picking the spider out of the jar
6. Picking up a large spider.

To help manage the anxiety experienced during the exposure exercises, relaxation and breathing exercises can be used. It is important to stay in the situation until the anxiety has gone and not to "escape" when the anxiety is high (to do so would only reinforce the anxiety). This might take up to 20-30 minutes, but the anxiety *will* diminish and eventually disappear if you stay in the situation; you then start to learn that you can survive and even feel relaxed in this situation.

***Dealing with frightening thoughts***: If you can identify any threatening thoughts associated with your phobia, it is very helpful to try to write them down and "challenge" them. For example:

| **Frightening thoughts** | **Rational thoughts** |
|---|---|
| This plane will crash | I've flown many times before and nothing has happened. This is the safest way to travel statistically. |
| I'll make a fool of myself | I've done this before and managed to cope - there is no reason why I cannot do so this time. |
| I'll collapse and die | I have felt like this before and nothing terrible happened to me - this is just anxiety - it won't harm me. |

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## HATRED

Leviticus 19:17 "Do not nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives. Confront your neighbors directly so you will not be held guilty for their crimes.

Hate or hatred is a feeling of strong antagonism and dislike, generally malevolent and prompting to injury (the opposite of love); sometimes born of moral resentment.

Hate is inconsistent to:

***The knowledge of God:*** 1 John 2:9 "If anyone says, "I am living in the light," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is still living in darkness. 1 John 4:20 "If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen?"

***The love of God:*** 1 John 4:20 "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

**WHAT CAUSES HATRED?**

Hatred toward a person or a group of people is rooted in my belief that they have:

- Treated me unfairly or abused me.
- Acted in such a way that my future success was imperiled or adversely affected.
- Unjustly accused me of wrong doing.
- Laid a guilt trip on me, preventing me from taking care of myself in a healthy way.
- Never given me a chance to be my own person and to feel good about myself.
- Adversely affected my personal development and contributed to my lowered self-esteem and self-worth.
- Said things about me that I can't forgive or forget.
- Acted in such a way that my resentment and rage are the only possible responses.

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- Exhibit qualities, behavior patterns, or characteristics that have great physical or emotional danger to me.
- A horrible reputation, stigma, or myth about them that is hard to refute or disprove.
- Had something better than what I have and are unwilling to share it with me.
- Had life easier than I, they haven't had to work as hard as I to survive.
- No desire to help me reach material or emotional success in life.
- Wretched, vile, loathsome personalities that breed misery and pain for me.
- Attacked my reputation or honor, in reality or imagination.
- Been obstinate, unwilling to submit to my control, power, supervision, or guidance.
- Been a threat, either real or imagined, to my sense of security, well-being, and contentment.
- Never understood my needs and have ignored me because of this.
- Never given me approval, recognition, or reinforcement for the "good" person that I am.
- Only pointed out my failures.
- Betrayed the trust and faith I once placed in them.
- Been the underlying reasons for my unhappiness today.
- Been controlling, manipulative, sneaky, ruthless, and scheming in their dealings with me.
- Hostile, hateful, and hypercritical ways of dealing with me.
- Been "power mad" in their attempts to control me.

**THE NATURE OF HATE**

- Hate is a characteristic of the unregenerate state. It is part of the old nature and is a work of the flesh. Col. 3:8 "But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language". Titus 3:3 "Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy. We hated others, and they hated us". Galatians 5:20 "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies"

- Hatred causes quarrels, dissension and disunity: Proverbs 10:12 "Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love covers all offenses.

- Hatred is likened to murder: 1 John 3:15 "Anyone who hates another Christian is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

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- Hatred is often cloaked by deceit and falsehood. Proverbs 10:18 "To hide hatred is to be a liar; to slander is to be a fool." Proverbs 26:26 "While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, it will finally come to light for all to see.

- Hatred is cruel: "Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred" (Psalm 25:19). Cain killed his brother because of hate Genesis 4:5 "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell". Genesis 4:8 "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him". Esau desired to kill his brother because of it: Genesis 27:41 "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob". Joseph's brothers eventually sold their brother, Joseph, into slavery because of it. Genesis 37:4 "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him". The men of Gilead rejected Jephthah and expelled him from his house because of it. Judges 11:7 "And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?" Haman tried to kill all the Jews because of it: Esther 3:5-6 "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai".

- Hatred is an evidence of immaturity. Matthew 5:43-48 ""You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect". The word "perfect" in this text comes from "teleios" [14] and means "mature". Hence, to be mature we must love, not hate, even our enemies. Conversely, if we hate rather than love, we indicate our spiritual immaturity.

14 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

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- Hate leads to sins of the tongue. David said, "They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause" (Psalm 109:3). Solomon said, "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips" … "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it" (Proverbs 26:24, 28). Lying, gossiping, faultfinding, etc. all too often generate from a heart of hate.

- Hate leads to bitterness, resentment and retaliation, all of which are forbidden by God.

**When I hate a person or a group of people, I:**

- Harbor the most extreme level of anger possible against them.
- Ignore and avoid them; they don't exist for me.
- Am easily aggravated by their behavior, looks, or attitudes.
- Get agitated when I think about them;
- Have an antagonistic attitude toward them.
- Find myself being cruel, vicious, vindictive, or revengeful with them.
- Exhibit in-flamed, incensed, ill-tempered, or disagreeable behavior if the topic of conversation turns to them.
- Become rude, belligerent, combative, enraged, or intolerant with them.
- Fantasize murderous, violent, bloodthirsty, inhuman, sadistic ideas about them.
- Become dogmatic, critical, malicious, and severe in my judgment and statements about them.
- Look unfriendly, unfeeling, unlikable, unmerciful, sullen, sulky, or spiteful whenever I talk to or about them.
- Become enraged, wrathful, and piqued when I hear their name mentioned in any positive way.
- Find myself being cold, distant, aloof, uncaring, and obstinate in my discussions with them or about them.
- Act offended, opposed, provoked, or irritated when they speak to me.
- Deliberately misunderstand them.

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**NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF HATRED**

The negative effects of our hatred can be seen in:

- Never being fully happy or content.
- Being bitter and cold toward almost everybody in my life.
- Being socially isolated and lonely.
- Exhibiting an attitude that is caustic, hostile, sarcastic, and cynical.
- Being embittered, saddened, and desolate a good part of the time.
- Being cold, distant, and aloof in my dealings with others.
- Being mistrusting, paranoid, and suspicious in my relationships.
- Being continuously guilty over the negative feelings that I can't let go of.
- Being easily provoked to anger and my "hot buttons" are pushed when the person or group of people I hate is mentioned in any positive way.
- Being prone to over-compensate by behaving in a completely opposite way from those I hate (falsehood).
- Being unable to get on with my life; I tend to dwell on or blame everything on my past.
- Being touchy, highly emotional, or overly sensitive when my "hateful" behavior is pointed out to me.
- Being defensive about my right to hold on to my hateful beliefs.
- Being closed to the suggestion to forgive and forget the past and get on with the present.
- Being overwhelmed by my bitterness and anger.
- Being unwilling to believe that it is my choice to feel hatred.

Hate will rob you of happiness. As long as you hate you will be miserable. Hate will make you a slave to the person whom you hate. When you hate someone they will control your thoughts and dreams. Hate will harm you physically.

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**ASSIGNMENT QUESTION**

How will you be able to counsel the following people:

When I was ten, I was abused by my uncle. Every Christmas we have to go to his house for supper but I hate going. I usually get a terrible migraine headache just before we have to go. I really enjoy being with my aunt and cousins and wish that my uncle would die so that I could spend more time with him.

Last year I was hijacked by a gang or men outside my home. Ever since this I hate being around any men and feel that I can't trust any of them. Is this normal? Surely not all men are bad?

## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

### TEACH THEM TO LOVE THEIR ENEMIES

Love is the cure for hate. With the Bible writers there is no middle ground between love and hate. It is either love or hate.

- 1 John 2:9-11 "If anyone says, "I am living in the light," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is still living in darkness. Anyone who loves other Christians is living in the light and does not cause anyone to stumble. Anyone who hates a Christian brother or sister is living and walking in darkness. Such a person is lost, having been blinded by the darkness."

- 1 John 3:14-15 "If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to eternal life. But a person who has no love is still dead. Anyone who hates another Christian is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

- Proverbs 10:12 "You have heard that the law of Moses says, `Love your neighbor' and hate your enemies. But I say, love your enemy! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too."

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- Matthew 5:43-44 Anyone who says, "I am in the light" but rejects another Christian is still in darkness. But anyone who loves other Christians is walking in the light and does not cause anyone to stumble. Those who reject other Christians are wandering in spiritual darkness and don't know where they are going, for the darkness has made them blind.

Why is love important?

- love is the badge of discipleship (John 13:35)
- love is a command (John 15:12)
- love is to be maintained above all things(1 Peter 4:8)
- love is the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39)
- love is a fulfilling of the law (Rom 13:8)
- love will prevent stumbling (1 John 2:9-11)
- love is a mark of divine sonship (1 John 3:10)

What is the nature of the love we are to have for others (even those who have hurt us)

- We are love as the Lord loved us (John 13:34)
- We are to love as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39)
- We are to love fervently (1 Peter 4:8)
- We are to love without hypocrisy(1 Peter 1:22-23).
- We are to love in deed and not word only (1 John 3:18)

Is it possible to someone who has abused us, hurt us, rejected us etc? Yes it is! How? We have to change our focus.

**Our focus must change from "the hurt of the past" to the Biblical action that God commands**

**FOCUS ON GOD'S LOVE FOR US:**

- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,[a] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" .(John 3:16)

- "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me". (Galatians 2:20)

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- "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands" (Deuteronomy 7:9)

- "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another". (1 John 4:9-11)

Did we deserve the love of God? Did we hurt God and abuse His love for us? Yes we did. We were all sinners and therefore we hurt God, rejected Him etc. However, He still loves us. When we realize how much God loves us, and how undeserving of this love we truly are, we will be able to see that just as we did not deserve the love that we received from God, we to in the same manner are to give our love to those who are undeserving. Why? Because we choose to walk in obedience to the Word of God and become more like Jesus every day that we live. Remember that God's love is unconditional. It is not based on feelings or emotions. He doesn't love us because we're lovable or because we make Him feel good; He loves us because He is love. He created us to have a loving relationship with Him, and He sacrificed His own Son (who also willingly died for us) to restore that relationship. The emphasis of Agape love (God's love) is not on how deserving a person is, but on whether or not we will make the choice to live in obedience to the will of God, which is to love.

**FOCUS ON LOVING OTHERS**

- "You shall not hate your brother in your heart ... You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19:17)

- "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34)

- "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)

- "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:11)

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- "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7)

**HOW CAN WE LOVE OUR ENEMIES?**

Without any question, one of the hardest commands that the Lord has given us is that we have to learn how to love our enemies. And when He says our enemies - He is including the worst of our enemies. How can we love this person?

- We simply have to rely on the love of the Holy Spirit to be transmitted and imparted into us as one of His 9 fruits.

- The only way you can even begin to try and do this with the worst of your enemies is that you have to attempt to see things from God's point of view and perspective. In other words, you are going to have to learn how to see your enemy through God's eyes and how God looks at him. The most perfect example of someone truly loving His enemies in the way God the Father would really like is Jesus Christ Himself. After Jesus had been beaten to a pulp before His actual crucifixion, and then nailed to a cross to die a slow and torturous death over a 6 hour period - Jesus makes one of the most mind-blowing statements ever made on being able to love and forgive your enemies. Before He dies, Jesus speaks out and tells His Father to forgive all of those who had just got done crucifying Him to that cross because they really didn't know what they were doing! "Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34) This statement and this action by Jesus speaks volumes of revelation on this one issue. You can tell by the words and tone of Jesus' statement, that He was really feeling the love of God for these people - even as they watched and jeered as He was dying. In other words, Jesus was still loving all of these people even after they had just got done committing the worse crime that the world has even seen or will ever see again - crucifying the living Christ! The Bible says that we are to think and act life Jesus. We now have the mind of Christ as born-again believers. This means we are to imitate Jesus in our words, in our thoughts, in our actions and in our deeds in our walk with the God the Father. If you carefully study the actual wording in the above verse - you might be able to pick up some deeper revelation as to how Jesus could have made this kind of a statement after He had already been nailed to the cross and was experiencing the most extreme pain imaginable. The clue might be in the words "... for they do not know what they do."

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- Be doers of the Word: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22) "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:17) "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law." (Romans 13:10) "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17) "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16) "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13)

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Identify feelings of hate in the counselee's life. Bring them to a place where they are willing to acknowledge this hatred so that it is out in the open. Ask them to answer the following questions:

- I feel hatred for:
- I hate this person because:
- This person's behavior toward me resulted in:
- How real are these events? When did they occur? Is this a perception, an assumption, or just imagined?

Step two: Find out what the cause of the hatred is. When counseling people concerning hatred you will not only be counseling the issue of hate but will also be dealing with the cause – that which is the root. For example: divorce, abuse, rejection etc. Counsel each of these issues as well as the issue of the "hate".

Step three: Teach them on what the Bible says concerning the feeling of "hate" and what the Bible requires, love

Step four: Bring them to a place of confession of the sin of hate. Keeping in mind at this time that you are dealing with their personal feelings. They have disobeyed God and therefore need to first make right with Him.

Step five: Ensure that they make a commitment to focus on their obedience to God rather than on the events of the past. When they have made a commitment to rather please God than to take revenge they will be able to let go of their hate feelings.

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Step six: Bring them to a place where they will be willing to forgive the person who has hurt them so that the person no longer can control their emotions with hatred, bitterness and resentment. Forgiveness will allow the release of energy, get them unstuck from the past and move them on toward health.

Step seven: Provide them with scriptures that they can meditate on that will help them to overcome the cycle of hate. Teach them practical steps in overcoming their hatred. For example:

- Praying for them
- Find something good to do for the person who is resented
- Try to understand the person who they hate. Ask God to show them how He sees them.

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## GRIEF

### WHAT IS GRIEF?

People often think only of grief as the result of the loss of a loved one. But, grief can come from any significant loss. It may be from the death of a loved one, but could also be from the break-up of a marriage, the result of being robbed, or from things such as the loss of a job, or the loss of an item that has sentimental value to the person. Anything a person loses that is near and dear to them will cause grief to some degree. Grief is a natural process that we experience after suffering a significant loss. While grieving is difficult and painful, it does not have to be immobilizing.

The intensity of grief may relate to the following factors:

- Whether the death was sudden or expected
- Your feelings about the person who died
- Your personality, family background, coping style and life experience
- Your belief system and view on death
- How those around you react and support you

### THE FOUR PHASES OF GRIEF:

There are four phases of mourning that takes place during the period of grieving for a loved one:

***Shock versus reality***: This is a period of numbness occurring close to the time of loss. When a counselee has come to you soon after the loss, it is the task of the counselee at this stage to help them to accept the reality of the loss/divorce. The person is gone and will not return vs. denial/unbelief of the loss.

***Protest versus experience.*** In the next phase the counselee will come to a place of yearning: for lost one to return. Here the counselee is denying the permanence of the event. The counselor must encourage the counselee to experience the pain rather than suppress or avoid it at this stage. One needs to face the loss, feel the pain and express their grief rather than run away from it.

***Disorganization (despair) versus adjustment***: A bereaved person finds it difficult to function in any environment. It is therefore necessary to help the counselee to adjust in their environment without the person. For example: coming to terms with living alone, raising the children alone, facing an empty home, managing the finances etc.

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***Attachment versus reorganization***: This is the process of detaching from the person (deceased), the memories and hopes and reinvesting in other relationships (for example relationship with your children and family)

**THE SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF**

People grieve in different ways. However there are some common feelings associated with grief that people often experience.

- Shock: This occurs immediately after discovering the loss, and often for some time afterwards. It is a mechanism that God has given us to help us cope with our loss for a time until we are better able to deal with it

- Stress due to the changes in life and the roles and responsibilities that are now to be part of the person who is grieving. For example if the husband has died, the responsibility of now being the financial manager of the home. If it is the wife, then it the responsibility of the husband to take on the role of being the mother, care giver etc.

- Fears concerning what the future will bring. This is especially true in financial burdens that the death, divorce etc will bring.

- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness,

- Difficulties with your faith: Grief often causes anger towards God. This makes it difficult for a person to continue in their times of prayer and reading the Word

- Fatigue and lack of sleep is often a result of the fear and anxiety that comes after the death.

- Guilt: Even though the loss suffered may not be the fault of the person, it is not unnatural for them to think it is. They may begin to think that if only they had done something different, maybe it wouldn't have happened. Even if they did contribute to the loss, the only thing they can do is to forgive themselves and allow others and God to forgive them.

- Depression: Bouts of "depression" are common, and it may come and go throughout the grieving process. A certain amount of depression is normal. Don't listen to people when they tell you it isn't right or healthy for you to be depressed. But, severe depression or staying depressed for too long is not

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good.

- Anger and hostility. It may seem unfair to them that they have suffered the loss, this is not wrong. However, it becomes a problem when we allow this anger to cause us to act in inappropriate ways. The Bible says, "be angry and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). It doesn't say that it is a sin to be angry.

- Sadness: Grief is often experienced as an all-encompassing sadness that touches most areas of the individual's life, and the experiences that she or he may have. While it is not always apparent why the sadness is present, it is typically the most prominent feeling associated with grief.

- Appetite: An individual's appetite may change during the grieving process. Most often a loss of appetite occurs, although it is possible to have an increase in appetite during this time.

- Sleep: Another symptom of grief is a change in sleeping patterns. Lack of sleep is often associated with grief, but it is also possible to suffer from too much sleep as a result of the grieving process. This could be due to depression or could because they feel physically drained from all the crying and worry.

- Confusion: Some people when experiencing grief may become forgetful and unable to think clearly.

**THE PROCESS OF GRIEF:**

Grief forces a person to deal with and face the pain of loss. Grief does not just "go away" with time. Rather, grief helps you to get through your loss. Doug Manning compares grief to a wounded finger: "a cut finger is numb before it bleeds. It bleeds before it hurts. It hurts until it begins to heal. It forms a scab and itches until finally, the scab is gone and a small scar is left where once there was a wound." [15] Grief is like that finger. It will heal, but only after a period of time. And just like that cut leaves a scar, losses often do as well. But, just like we must care for a cut finger so it doesn't get infected, so we should work through the grief so that the counselee can eventually come to accept their loss as well as the scars it may leave.

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15 Doug Manning, Don't Take My Grief Away, Hereford, TX: Insight Books, 1979

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**PHASE ONE: DENIAL**

This is where the person will say, "there must be some mistake". It is when the counselee is unwilling to face problems on either a conscious or subconscious level and acting as if there were no problems to face. The purpose of denial is to protect the person from the pain and the hurt. It is a defensive response that they use in order to put off the pain for another day. It is a means by which the person feels that they will be able to retain their sanity through the unbearable pain.

**A person who is in denial will?**

- Appear to be irrational to those who know the problems and loss they have suffered.
- Appear to be calm and relaxed to those who do not know the problems and losses they have suffered.
- Are a cause of frustration to those who want them to confront the truth of the problem or loss honestly.
- Appear to be unemotional, apathetic, or indifferent in the face of loss.
- Appear to be excessively involved in fantasy thinking about the loss or problem.
- Appear to be childlike, very dependent on others to nurture them and reassure them that everything will be all right.
- Appear to be running away from the truth concerning their problems or loss.
- Appear to be avoiding or rejecting those who are intent on confronting them with their problems.

**Effects of unresolved denial:**

Even though denial is a normal phase of dealing with the shock of a loss, unresolved denial can result in

- Delusional thinking, leading to a feeling that everything is OK,
- Greater conflict between the deniers and the non-deniers.
- Fantasy or magical thinking, allowing distorted thinking to become a habit.
- Poor problem-solving and decision-making abilities for the denier.
- The denier totally avoiding or withdrawing from everyone
- The denier becoming a social recluse.
- Others avoiding the denier to avoid upsetting them
- Frustration for those who want to help the denier.
- A maladaptive pattern of coping with the loss or problem for the denier.
- Resentment by the denier of those who are confronting him
- Prolonging the time before the denier must confront the pain,

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**How can the counselee confront the person who is in denial?**

Firstly, teach the counselee that denial is a natural stage in the loss/grief response. But in order for them to maintain their sense of perspective, they need to allow themselves to go through the problems as a growth experience. Therefore this means that they need to be willing to confront the grief.

Secondly, ask them the following questions:

- Why do they feel they are in denial?
- What are the benefits to be gained by the denial?
- What is too painful to face?
- When do they get caught up in magical or fantasy thinking about the loss?
- What are the negative consequences that result from their denial behavior?

Thirdly, create an atmosphere where they feel that it is okay for them to express negative or embarrassing emotions as they confront their loss (e.g., crying, feeling lost, feeling confused, or feeling scared). Provide them with scriptures that they can use at these time to bring them encouragement and comfort.

Fourthly, ensure that they understand that they need to be willing to accept the help of others in the aftermath of our loss.

**PHASE TWO: ANGER**

"Why me?" A person's anger during grief can range from being angry with the person who died to being angry with God. This stage of grief is probably the cause of the most pain from grief. Anger can cause deep and sometimes permanent wounds that are totally unnecessary.

How can they deal with this anger?

- Teach them to become AWARE of their feelings.
- ACKNOWLEDGE those feelings openly and honestly. How does your anger feel? What does your anger look like? Writing their feelings down or talking about them often helps.
- Once they have become aware of their anger and acknowledged it, then they can ACT. Allow them the opportunity to express why they are angry and with whom they are angry and then teach them how to move past this

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anger. This can be done by forgiving yourself, the person who died, the person responsible for the death, God etc.

Anger is as normal, natural and necessary as all the other emotions of grief.

**PHASE THREE: BARGAINING**

Bargaining is used in an attempt to postpone the inevitable – moving on with life without your loved one. Bargaining is where we try to make deals to gain back what we lost. Everyone bargains over a loss in some way, trying to somehow regain what they've lost. Some people get married too fast after the loss of a spouse to "replace" them. This is the bargaining part of grief and is normal but it has potentially harmful consequences. It prevents you from healing from your grief and it opens you up to picking someone who is not your lost loved one. Once reality sets in, both people are usually deeply hurt. Try to finish processing your grief (usually 2-3 years) before entering a serious relationship.

**PHASE FOUR: DEPRESSION**

After denial, anger and bargaining, the inevitability of the news eventually sinks in and the person reluctantly accepts what has happened. From the animation of anger and bargaining, they slump into despondency. In turning in towards themselves, they turn away from any solution and any help that others can give them. This is the most dangerous stage of grief. It is during this stage that the counselor needs to ensure that the counselee has hope through the Word of God. Without hope they may tend to have feelings which can be suicidal or may lead to ways of escape for example, drug addiction (sleeping tablets) or alcohol.

**PHASE FIVE: ACCEPTANCE**

Acceptance is often confused with the notion of being all right or okay with what has happened. This is not the case. Most people don't ever feel okay or all right about the loss of a loved one. This stage is about accepting the reality that the loved one is physically gone and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality. It is the new norm with which the counselee must learn to live. This is where the final healing and adjustment can take a firm hold, despite the fact that healing often looks and feels like an unattainable state.

Healing looks like remembering, recollecting, and reorganizing. The counselee may cease to be angry with God; may become aware of the commonsense reasons for the loss, even if they never actually understand the reasons. The

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survivors begin to realize sadly that it was the loved one's time to die, even though it was too soon for the counselee and probably too soon for him or her, too. It is a place where the counselee comes to realize that it is not a time for them to die, even though their loved one has died, but it is a time for them to live, a time for them to experience healing. They must learn to reorganize roles, reassign them to others or take them on themselves. The more of their identity that was connected to the loved one, the harder it will be to do this.

**WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO**

The goal of grief counseling is for the counselee to:

- accept the loss and talk about it.
- identify and express feelings related to the loss (anger, guilt, anxiety, helplessness, sadness).
- live without the deceased
- separate emotionally and form new relationships.
- identify ways of coping for the future.

**TEACH THEM THAT THERE IS A HOPE!**

***Firstly, grief does not last forever.*** Psalm 30:5 "Weeping may go on all night, but in the morning there is joy."

***Secondly, God will heal your grief***. Psalm 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds."

***Thirdly, they have been given a comfort:*** Jesus promised a Comforter. John 14:16 "If you love Me, obey Me; and I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter [the Holy Spirit], and He will never leave you." We learn how to deal with grief in accepting comfort. This comfort comes from:

***God:***

- "The Father of mercies and the God of all consolation consoles us in all our affliction" (2 Corinthians 1:3,4)
- "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

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- "I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psalm 18:1-2).
- "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:5-8).

***Others:*** The Apostle Paul spoke of comfort, which is so very important in the process of dealing with grief. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). The comfort we need often comes through others who have been in the same place. There is a comfort in knowing that others have been through what we face and have survived by God's grace and comfort (1 Corinthians 10:13). The touch of a hand, the hug, the shoulder to cry on, the ear to listen, and the grace to come along side in whatever capacity that is needed are all the result of one who has been through the process of reaching out to someone else and giving the comfort that they themselves have already received.

**TEACH THEM TO DRAW CLOSER TO THEIR ANCHOR - GOD**

In the face of loss, hardship and uncertainty we can discover power in grief by allowing the pain of grief to move us towards God and to learn to rely totally on Him. When we discover that only God can comfort and His presence is more of a reality than ever we will be moving towards recover.

2 Cor. 12:9-10..."When I am weak, then I am strong."

**THE THREE STEPS TO RECOVERY**

- Grieve:

Though grief is bitter, we must let sorrow run its natural course. Isaiah 53:3b describes Jesus as "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Denying or repressing pain can lead to emotional problems.

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- Believe:

We need to put our faith in God's promises, trusting that our Heavenly Father knows best and that His understanding is perfect. Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

- Receive:

God desires to give us comfort, but we must reach out and accept it. Through prayer and meditation on His Word, we can find a place in God's presence where He will wrap His arms around us as a loving father would console a hurting child.

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Let the counselee talk without interference and judgment. Allow them the opportunity to express their anger, guilt etc. without placing any condemnation on them if they feel angry at God and have stopped going to Church.

Step two: Help them to express where they are emotionally. For example: accept their loss. "I admit I am powerless over my loss--that my life has become unmanageable".

Step three: Show them that only God can help restore "sanity" into the situation and that they have come to the right place to receive the help that they need. Psalm 61:1-5 "O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I will cry to you for help, for my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me. Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings! For you have heard my vows, O God. You have given me an inheritance reserved for those who fear your name". Psalm 139:1-5 "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away. You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You both precede and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head".

Step four: Walk through the steps of the grieving process with them:

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**Stage one: Denial**

- Help them to acknowledge that they have lost someone whom they love
- Help them to express what they are feeling
- Show them the comfort of God through the Scriptures so that they can lean upon His comfort when they are feeling inconsolable.

**Stage two: Anger**

- Show them that anger is not sin and that it is a natural expression of the grieving process. However, if sin lingers too long then it can cause problems in relationships with family members, friends and God.
- Help the person to recognize what their anger has done to their relationship with family, friends and God
- Confess their angry behavior which may have resulted in hurting others deeply.
- Forgive any person whom you feel is responsible for the death.
- Forgive yourself for all the things you believe you should have said or done. Also forgive yourself for the anger and guilt and embarrassment you may have felt while grieving.
- Ask God to remove all guilt that you may feel concerning the relationship that they had with the deceased.
- Show them ways that they can express their anger that will not cause them to behave in a negative manner. For example: talking about it with someone, writing the deceased person a letter etc.

**Stage three: Bargaining**

- Explain to the counselee that no matter what they may bargain, they will not be able to get the deceased person back.
- Help them to place all decision making on hold until they have grieved properly and have gotten rid of all feelings of guilt, anger, etc.

**Stage four: Depression**

- Work through their sadness with them. Explain to them that being sad is natural after the loss of someone however when their sadness affects their

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health or their relationships with others, then they may need help.

- Show them through Scripture that through Christ they can be comforted and that they need to "Come to Me" (Matthew 11:27)
- Walk through the steps given on "Depression"
- Deal with all behavior that may be used as a means of escapism (sleeping pills, drugs, alcohol, sleep etc)

**Stage Five: Acceptance.**

- Help them to come to a place of adjustment where they take on new responsibilities and roles which the deceased person used to do.

- Make a list of all persons related to the person lost and be willing to love again, and to make amends to those who you had harmed. Make an effort to reconnect, and make direct amends to any person harmed. Wherever possible, say, "I love you."

- Eat Well and Exercise. Grief is exhausting. To sustain your energy, be sure to maintain a balanced diet. Exercise is also important in sustaining energy. Find a routine that suits you - perhaps walks or bike rides with friends, or in solitude. Clear your mind and refresh your body.

- Prepare for Holidays and Anniversaries: Many people feel especially "blue" during these periods, and the anniversary date of the death can be especially painful. Even if you think you've progressed, these dates may bring back some of your painful emotions. Make arrangements to be with friends and family members with whom you are comfortable. Plan activities that give you an opportunity to mark the anniversary. Do not isolate yourself of you may go back into a state of depression.

- Encourage them to do something for themselves. For example: get a hobby, meet with friends for lunch, join a book club etc.

Practical pointers: Consider the following ideas for managing the grief process:

- Give your body rest. When possible, go to bed earlier.
- Get together with friends and meet new people. Focusing on others will help you deal with the pain.
- Be patient. Grief is a process that will take time.

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- Look for comforting activities.
- Learn to express your feelings, talk, write, sing, exercise, and cry.
- Learn more about grief recovery; a greater understanding helps us cope.
- Good nutrition is important. Avoid junk food.

Step five: Don't forget to rely on God's resources. There are many good people and many good books that may help. But no book is better than the word of God, and nobody more helpful than God. God gives us comfort through the Bible, through prayer, and through His children helping each other through the tough times. James 5:13 says, "*If anyone...is suffering, let him pray.*" Don't forget God's help.

**PRACTICAL ADVICE TO THE COUNSELOR OR SUPPORT GROUP LEADER:**

Be there to listen. It's always tempting to give advice, but don't. Ask God for guidance about when to speak and what to say. Encourage the bereaved person to share his or her feelings, and then be a good listener and don't judge what is said. Romans 12:15b says, "Weep with those who weep." Avoid platitudes. Let the person feel sorrow without implying that he or she should "cheer up" or "be joyful in the Lord," as this could give the impression you are questioning the person's spirituality. Don't push or preach, but if the person indicates an openness, pray and share meaningful Scriptures.

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## LONELINESS

**DEFINITION:**

According to Les Carter, "Loneliness is a *feeling* of separation, isolation, or distance in human relations. Loneliness implies emotional pain, an empty feeling, and a yearning to feel understood and accepted by someone." [16]

"Loneliness is not the same as being alone. Loneliness is feeling alone . . . no matter how many people are around you. It is a feeling of being disconnected, unplugged, left out, isolated." [17]

The Webster's Dictionary defines being lonely as "being without company, cut off from others, not frequented by human beings, desolate, sad from being alone, producing a feeling of bleakness or desolation" [18]

**GOD NEVER WANTED US TO BE ALONE:**

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him"' (Genesis 2:18).

In the beginning of the book of Genesis, we notice that God recognized Adam's need for contact with another human being -- a need God had built into him. Because of this, God provided Adam with Eve. More than just a fellow inhabitant of Eden, Eve would be the object of Adam's love and would love him in return. She would share the wonders of creation and the responsibilities of stewardship. With the creation of Eve, Adam's intimate relationship with God was complemented by communion and companionship with someone like himself.

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16 Les Carter, Mind Over Emotions, 121.
17 Tim Hansel, Through the Wilderness of Loneliness (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook, 1991), 59-60)
18 www.merriam-webster.com

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**CAUSES OF LONELINESS:**

By God's design we have an innate need to be loved and belong. As children we learn to give and receive affection and are taught the skills that will help us find acceptance in society. Through our relationships with family, friends, co-workers and others, we form our sense of individuality and find our place in the mosaic of life. It's when that need for affection and fellowship goes unfulfilled, that we become restless, unhappy...lonely.

Everyone experiences seasons of isolation for one reason or another. Usually we are overcome by loneliness when we have to meet new friends or when we are entering new social circles, going to a new school or a new job. However, a variety of personal factors and other circumstances can sometimes short-circuit our ability to connect with others. Loneliness at this time becomes not so much circumstantial but it becomes a choice that was made in our inner man. For example: An insecure person may feel that they do not have anything worthwhile to give into a friendship or relationship and therefore they short circuit their relationships so that they only ever remain superficial. This results in feelings of loneliness.

**Spiritual factors:** Both a Christian and a non-Christian can be lonely due to spiritual factors: For example:

- We were created to have our basic needs met by God. When a person is not reconciled with God through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, their needs are unfulfilled. This leads to them having a deep sense of loneliness.
- Guilt over sins in our lives can lead to feeling separated from God. Psalm 25:16 "Turn to me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and in deep distress".

**Emotional development:** Loneliness doesn't develop overnight. It can be the result of a lifetime of influences that shape our personality. Or it can evolve after a major transition or trauma. Often we are unaware of the subtle forces that can slowly lead us into self-imposed isolation. Some people tend to be loners because of circumstances in their childhood development. For example:

- growing up with an unaffectionate or overly critical parent may make one shy away from intimacy with others.
- Some people simply never learn to communicate well or get along with their peers.

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- Others have overly aggressive or demanding personalities that make people withdraw out of intimidation.
- people with low self-esteem often withdraw from social situations they believe will lead to rejection.

Loneliness can become a lifestyle for the person who struggles with poorly developed interpersonal skills.

**Social factors:** There are also many social factors that contribute to loneliness. For example:

- We live in an age in which modern technology has made it easier to do things without other people and without leaving our homes. Television is the chief culprit that robs us of time with relatives and neighbors.
- For some, especially the elderly, the increased likelihood of becoming the victim of a crime keeps them from venturing out of their homes.
- Because our society is more mobile than in the past, families may relocate several times for career advancement or other reasons, which tends to discourage the development of deep friendships.

**Situational factors:** Loneliness can result from "situational factors," circumstances in life that increase the possibility of isolation. People who are unmarried, divorced or widowed are more likely to encounter loneliness simply because they are more likely to be alone. However, loneliness can also occur when a marriage relationship doesn't produce the closeness we expect. The student separated from home, the leader who must remain aloof from his subordinates, the individual with a disability or disease -- all face a greater chance of loneliness due to a situation in their lives.

Often loneliness brought on by developmental, social or situational factors leads to problems that only worsen loneliness. Alcoholism, drug abuse, family breakdown and other social ills are frequently rooted in loneliness and usually lead to greater alienation from meaningful human contact.

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**THE EFFECTS OF LONELINESS:**

What we do when alone can have an eternal effect upon our life and the lives of others - either positive or negative, depending on our degree of self-discipline and the response of our spirit.

**Negative experiences can yield positive results**:

If the agony of loneliness drives us to seek God, to search for Him in the Word, etc., we will find an inner strength upon which others will be able to draw.

- We can help others: 2 Cor 1:3-7 "We can comfort others with the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God".

- David expressed his feelings of loneliness in song and poetry - which have blessed multitudes for centuries (Ps 25:16; 102:7; 142:4)

The failure of others to meet our needs can emphasize our need for dependence upon God alone - essential for any successful ministry. Mat 14:23 "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone."

**However, not all solitude yields a positive spiritual impact.**

Loneliness can lead to suicidal thoughts, even for the most spiritual of men.

- Job felt so misunderstood and rejected by his friends, he wanted to die. Job 7:16 "I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning."

- Elijah felt so alone he wanted to die. 1 Ki 19:3-5 "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life ... he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat Down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'"

- Because of his isolation, Jeremiah said he wished he had never been born. Jer 15:17 "I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me..." Jer 20:14-18 "Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him very glad, saying, 'A child is born to you - a son!' ... For he did not kill me in the womb,

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with my mother as my grave, her womb enlarged forever. Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?"

Loneliness can drain us of all incentive, if we allow it to warp our perspective and purpose for being. Eccl 4:8 "There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil ... 'For whom am I toiling,' he asked, 'and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?' This too is meaningless - a miserable business!"

Spending too much time alone, with "self," can throw us off balance. (It is unnatural; man is a social being.) Evidence of this can be seen in self-centeredness, self-pity, etc.

**RESPONSES TO LONELINESS**

The first response to loneliness may be to self-medicate - to try home remedies to make it go away. For example:

**Busyness:** You may think that if you fill your life with so many activities that you don't have time to think about your loneliness, you'll be cured. But busyness misses the message. It's like trying to heal a toothache by taking your mind off it. Busyness is only a distraction, not a cure.

**Buying:** Maybe if you purchase something new, if you "reward" yourself, you'll feel better. And surprisingly, you do feel better - but only for a short while. Buying things to fix your loneliness is like an anesthetic. Sooner or later the numbing effect wears off. Then the pain comes back as strong as ever. Buying can also compound your problems with a mountain of credit card debt.

**Bed:** You may believe that intimacy is what you need, so you make an unwise choice with sex. Like the prodigal son, after you come to your senses, you're horrified to discover that this attempt at a cure not only makes loneliness worse, it also makes you feel desperate and cheap. This is the false cure of our modern culture, which promotes sex as a game, as recreation. This response to loneliness always ends in feelings of alienation and regret.

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## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

### ENSURE THAT THEY ARE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH A RELATIONSHIP:

The root problem of all loneliness stems from the spiritual loneliness of being separated from God. Each of us has a need to connect with something larger than ourselves in order to fill the spiritual vacuum that exists within us. The Bible is God's plan for developing the most important relationship in our lives.

As the story of Adam and Eve illustrates, God intends for us to share our lives with other people. The importance of personal relationships in God's eyes is evident in the amount of space devoted to them in the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments have a lot to say about marriage, parenthood, friendship and church fellowship. But it is also clear from God's Word that there is one relationship that is preeminent from God's point of view. That is the fellowship He wants to have with us, which forms the foundation of all other relationships.

When we accept God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, we enter into communion with the Creator of the universe. God becomes our Heavenly Father and He places His Holy Spirit within us. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the "Counselor" (John 14:16), whose presence would guide us into all truth (John 16:13). The Apostles Paul and John said God's Spirit would fill believers with assurance of our membership in God's family (Romans 8:16; I John 14:13). Day by day, through prayer and Bible reading, we can experience the wonderful fellowship that God wants to have with each of His children. He is never too busy to listen.

Before the counselee will be able to establish meaningful and fulfilling relationships with others, they need to realize that only God can remove their loneliness. If they do not begin to trust in God to satisfy their inner needs of love, security, self worth etc, then they look to a human (who is unable to fulfill these needs like God) to satisfy their needs. This may result in:

- Becoming suffocating or overpowering in the relationship
- Becoming jealous when the person does not want to spend time with them
- Becoming involved in premarital sex, wrong relationships

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**JESUS IS THE ANSWER:**

***He understands loneliness*** and knows how we feel because HE experienced it. Isaiah 53:3 says, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows ..." And John 1:11 says, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He lived a life of loneliness. When He died upon the cross, He was suspended between heaven and earth. Because He had taken the sin of the world upon Himself, even God His Father, in holy righteousness, could not look upon Him. Even His disciples forsook Him. Jesus died alone.

***He's always there***. You may be lonely, but you're never alone. He promised never to leave us (Hebrews 13:5). If no one else understands, He does. If everybody else fails you, He will not. And when you get to the bottom line, He alone will meet the needs that you have. Jesus alone is the answer to loneliness.

**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?**

The Word of God provides us with several consolations to our loneliness.

- We are never truly alone: Deut 31:6, 8 "Be strong and courageous... The Lord himself ... will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you..." Psa 22:1, 11, 16 "... My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? ... Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help...." Jn 8:16, 29 "... I am not alone.... The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone ..." Jn 16:32 "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me." Josh 1:5 "... As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." Jas 4:4 "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." Heb 13:5 "... God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

- God sees; He knows: 2 Ki 14:26 "The Lord had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel ... was suffering; there was no one to help them."

- God cares: (Psa 34:18; 55:22; 103:13) Psa 72:12 "For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help." Isa 41:17 "The poor and needy search ... But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." Isa 42:16 "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along familiar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth... I will not forsake them." Isa

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49:13-16 "... the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.' Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she as borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!'... 1 Pet 5:7 "... Cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you."

- God alone can meet our deepest needs. Psa 62:1 "... My soul finds rest in God alone..."

- God's answer may be practical.

    A. Family: Psalm 68:6 "God sets the lonely in families..."
    B. Marriage: Gen 2:18 "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Gen 24:67 "Isaac ... married Rebekah. So he became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."
    C. Friendship: Eccl 4:10 "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and as no one to help him up!"
    D. Ministry: 2 Corin 7:6 "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus." 2 Corin 1:3-7

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Get them to admit the problem. Only after they have acknowledged that they are lonely can you take the steps necessary to help them escape from this isolation.

Step two: Find out what is the cause of their loneliness: spiritual, emotional development, social factors or situational factors.

Step three: Ask them to honestly evaluate their relationship with God. Are they saved? Are there any hidden sins in their life that is causing them to separate themselves from fellowship with God? How can they improve their fellowship with God? What commitments can they make to effect this change?

Step four: Accept what cannot Be changed - The death of a spouse, relocation away from old friends, and other unalterable circumstances must be faced squarely. God can use transitions in our lives to open doors to new experiences, but we must be willing to let go of the past and move on.

Step five: Alter what can be changed - Many of the causes of loneliness discussed above can be overcome. Do you fear rejection because you feel inadequate? Do you stay in your home watching television when you could be at a social function? Has your best friend just moved away? Regardless of the reason for your loneliness, you owe it to yourself to take measures that will meet the problem head-on.

- Work on developing self-esteem and stopping all destructive self-talk, such as telling yourself that you are unlikable.
- Practice looking at yourself from God's perspective. Study the Scriptures and meditate on verses that depict God's view of His children.
- Make it a point to get out of the house at least once a week. Attend church activities; participate in community functions; take a class, etc...
- Get involved in a cause. There are many groups looking for faithful volunteers who want to make a difference. Of course, working for a ministry or charity is also a great way to meet people.

Step five: Develop new habits that build up your inner self - As you become a stronger, more self-assured person, you'll find it easier to make new friends and encounter new situations. Try some of these strategies for self-improvement:

- Meditate on God's Word for relaxation and to ease the effects of stress on

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your life.

- Establish a schedule for a day, weekend or a week. Loneliness often seems more intense when we have nothing to do.
- Organize your time and be sure to include some outside activities.
- Start exercising regularly. Take walks around your neighborhood, a local park or a shopping mall. You'll feel better physically and emotionally.

Step six: Make the most out of your time alone. Aloneness (as opposed to loneliness) can be a very positive experience. Aloneness, or solitude, gives us a chance to reflect on our lives, to meditate on God's will for us and to find healing for the wounds inflicted by the world. Many experts feel that we spend too little time alone and that we would all be better off by planning regular times of solitude in our lives.

Step seven: Make an effort to make new friends - Often all that is required to escape loneliness is the determination to seek out a new friend. Overcoming shyness and the fear of rejection are usually the biggest obstacles to initiating a friendship. Keep the following in mind as you try to establish new relationships:

- Look for someone with whom you share a common interest.
- Take the initiative and give the person a call. Chances are that person may be looking for a friend as well.
- Build a friendship slowly. Don't overwhelm a new acquaintance with your problems and opinions. With time the openness to express feelings will develop. Give compliments and be thoughtful. Refrain from giving unsolicited advice. Be a good listener.

Step eight: Pray that God will send people in their lives that will be their friends, husband, wife etc.

Step nine: Encourage them to start to give. This can be done by joining a voluntary group for the old aged, orphans etc. Look around you. What concerns and needs do you see? Don't just think of people you know. Consider people at church or in your community whom you may have heard about but have never met. What skills, interests or resources has God given you? What can you do to reach out and help others? Even little acts of kindness and little deeds of love are no longer little when God is in them.

Step ten: Provide them with scriptures that they will be able to encourage themselves with when they are feeling lonely.

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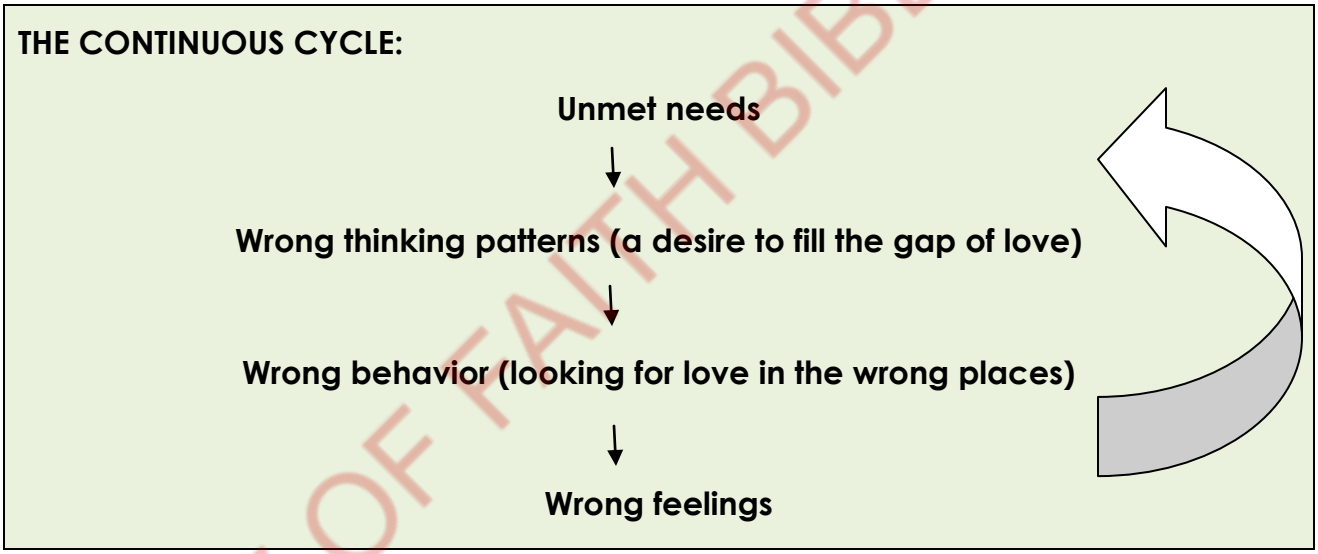
**PART THREE: WRONG BEHAVIOUR**

Wrong behavior is a result of wrong thought patterns that have been established due to needs that have not been met, needs that only God can meet. The desire to fill the needs that the person may have for love, security, self esteem and recognition, drives them to seek fulfillment in a person or a behavior that is other than God. This drive to receive fulfillment is seemingly uncontrollable even though at times it only brings more grief, loneliness, depression and even when it reestablishes the wrong thinking of the person. Unless the counselee comes to a place of acknowledgement of being in need of help, they will continue to be on the spiral of wrong behavior that will eventually lead to loss of relationships, loss of health, loss of finances and eventually even death. What wrong behavior do we use in order to fill the love needs that we have? What methods do we use in order to escape the pain that we feel? What means do we use in order to "kill" that part of us that we hate so much due to rejection and pain in our past?

**THE CONTINUOUS CYCLE:**

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## ADDICTIONS

### WHAT IS AN ADDICTION?

An addiction is a seemingly unquenchable thirst for something to satisfy, something to take away pain, something to bring excitement. In any addiction there is emotional pain that needs numbing, a psychological and physiological need for a high, and a deep spiritual thirst for answers to life and relationship with God. At the root of all addictions is the desire to seek fulfillment in a place that is other than God.

The Webster's Dictionary says that an addiction means to "to surrender oneself to something obsessively or habitually." [19] Gerald May the author of *Addiction and Grace defines an addiction as* "compulsive, habitual behavior that limits freedom of human desire" [20]. The characteristics of addictions are "must have," "want more," "no problem," "can't stop."

An addiction is any thinking or behavior that is habitual, repetitious, and difficult or impossible to control. Usually the addiction brings short-term pleasure, but there may be long-term consequences in terms of one's health and welfare. Most experts believe that all addictions have two components.

- The first component is the obsession, which is a mental preoccupation or craving. For example, the workaholic may obsess about the tasks that need to be completed and the constant guilt feelings that whisper, "You need to be doing more." Or an alcoholic may obsess or crave after a drink.

- The second component of the addiction is the compulsion, which is behavior that lives out or acts out the mental obsession. For example, the workaholic works twelve-hour days at the office to satisfy his craving for work. An alcoholic has his drinks to satisfy his craving for alcohol. A compulsive spender buys things that he cannot afford to satisfy his craving.

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19 www.merriam-webster.com
20 Gerald May, Addiction and Grace, HarperOne

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**Addiction can take many forms:**

- Substance abuse is a dependence on alcohol, narcotics, and/or prescription drugs.
- Problem gambling is a repetitive behavior which leads one to spending money on lottery tickets, video lottery terminals, slot machines, and other betting schemes.
- Pornography
- Eating
- Shopping

There is a difference between a habit and an addiction. Habits shape our personalities and enrich our lives, but when they become obsessive and harmful, they turn into addictions. When these addictions hurt us, and those we love, we need to get help to break the addiction and restore health and happiness.

**How to know whether you are addicted or not?**

Do you:

- spend money my family or I are counting on to gamble or buy drugs and/or alcohol
- break promises to spend time with loved ones, or hurt them in other ways, so I can feed my addiction
- suffer from drug or alcohol consumption when my losses increase
- am unhappy because I can't stop my addiction
- cannot reach my goals

**WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF ADDICTIONS?**

Mentally the addiction affects the way we think and feel, and how we live our life. The addiction will literally stunt the growth process, and the addict will remain childish, selfish and insensitive to the needs of others.

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Psychologically the addict remains in denial, and will do just about anything to justify bad behavior to others while under the control of their addiction.

Emotionally the addiction makes the addict become overly defensive to anyone who tries to take away what he or she so desires. Addicts have a difficult time suppressing their negative emotions and are immature and childish. If they become too dependent on the addiction, they will justify reasons of why they think they are better people when abusing their substance of choice. Their low self-esteem keeps them very sensitive to how others feel about them. They are prone to finding faults in others to get any attention off of them.

Spiritually the addict is at a loss. He is desensitized to the spiritual self within him. The addiction keeps the addict from becoming the whole and complete person that God intended him to be. True potential is stunted. The addict does and says things that he normally wouldn't if he were living his life without the neediness of addiction. The addict is missing out on so much in his life that he "wants and needs" too much, making him unable to give of himself.

Relationally the addict will slowly begin to destroy all the relationships that he/she is in. It causes the addict to begin to:

- Lie to cover up drug use from parents, teachers, police, and other authorities.
- Be disobedience to parents: Most people start drug abuse while still subject to their parents' authority, knowing that their parents object.
- Fail to do ones job or schoolwork: Drug users lose interest or ability to do work or schoolwork. They become negligent, are often absent and make careless mistakes.
- Stealing: Addicts steal to pay for their habit, especially when they cannot get a good job because they have neglected their schoolwork or their job
- Neglect of Bible study, prayer, worship, church work, etc. People involved in abuse lose interest in spiritual things because they feel guilty and because they are more interested in getting high.

Physically addictions can cause problems with your health. For example substance abuse can lead to some of the following short term and long term health problems:

Short term problems:

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- Blurred vision,
- sleeplessness,
- anxiety,
- moodiness,
- produce hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not present),
- delusions (irrational thought),
- paranoia (thinking people are out to get you), or violent behavior.
- overdoses can cause death
- slurred speech, staggering, and poor judgment and reflexes.
- Unconsciousness
- Impairs memory, concentration, coordination

Long term problems:

- Ulcers,
- malnutrition,
- brain damage,
- lung disease,
- heart disease,
- stroke,
- kidney disease.
- If pregnant mothers use sedatives, babies may have birth defects,
- mental confusion.

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**WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?**

**TEACH THEM THAT THE ANSWER TO ALL THEIR NEEDS BEING MET IS FOUND IN CHRIST:**

Jeremiah 2:13 "My people have committed two sins: they have turned from Me the living water and dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Since the fall in the Garden of Eden, men and women have tried to fill the thirst that was placed in them with everything but God. They have dug trenches, bigger, longer and wider, trying the same things that don't work, don't quench their thirst.

Jesus said:

- John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

- John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

People need to realize that Jesus, not any of their forms of addictions, is the answer to their need. A life of addictions is a life of despair, hopelessness, guilt, sorrow, and eventual death physically and eternally. Jesus is the real answer. His way is a way of life, hope, salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life. John 10:10-11 "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." James 1:17 "Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows."

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest".

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**TEACH THEM THAT CHRIST BRINGS THEM FREEDOM!**

"Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope." (Ephesians 3:20)

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15).

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free (Gal 5:1). Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed". (John 8:34-37). When a person trusts Christ as their Lord and Savior, he or she can be set free because Jesus is God and has promised in John 8:36 "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." and in John 10:10 "I have come to give you life and give it more abundantly."

**TEACH THEM WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS CONCERNING ADDICTION**

**The Bible teaches us that we are not to be mastered by anything.**

Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Cor. 6:12). The word mastered (exousiazo) means "to control, bring under the power of." Paul would not allow himself to be brought under the control of anyone or anything.

Why? Because His body was meant for the Lord (v13). Our bodies are considered a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. Many people say they have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies. Although they think that this is freedom, they are really enslaved to their own desires. When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit fills us and lives in us. Therefore, we no longer own our bodies. "Bought at a price" refers to slaves purchased at auction (v19-20). Christ's death freed us from sin, but also obligates us to His service. If we live in a building owned by someone else, we try not to violate the building's rules. Because our bodies belong to God, we must not violate His standards for living. We must not pollute God's temple with the addictive sins of the flesh. If we love

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God, then we will do everything in our power to honor Him by taking care of our bodies. Since our bodies do not belong to us, we should not abuse them with harmful addictive agents. These verses should inspire us to stop abusing our bodies with the addictive sins of the flesh.

**The bible teaches that we must not get drunk with alcohol which is one of the most addictive agents.**

- ***Drinking affects the family uni***t: Genesis 9:20-27 "After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward into the tent, and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. Then he cursed the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham: "A curse on the Canaanites! May they be the lowest of servants to the descendants of Shem and Japheth."

- ***Drinking will bring misery***: Proverbs 23:29-35 "Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Don't let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you. For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like a viper. You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can have another drink?"

- ***Drinking alcohol can cause bad decisions***. Xerxes made a rash, half-drunk decision, based purely on feelings. His self-restraint and practical wisdom were weakened by too much wine. Poor decisions are made when people don't think clearly. Base your decisions on careful thinking, not on the emotions of the moment. Impulsive decision making leads to severe complications (Esther 1:10-2:1).

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Instead of drinking alcohol, we should do what (Ephesians 5:18)? Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul contrasts getting drunk with wine, which produces a temporary "high," to being filled with the Spirit, which produces lasting joy. Getting drunk with wine is associated with the old way of life and its selfish desires. In Christ, we have a better joy, higher and longer lasting, to cure our depression, monotony, or tension. We should not be concerned with how much of the Holy Spirit we have, but how much of us the Holy Spirit has. Submit yourself daily to His leading and draw constantly on His power.

**TEACH THEM TO RESIST TEMPTATION**

**1 Th. 5:21-22** "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

What are these tools that will help us resist temptation? Following are a few of the tools:

***Maintain an intimate relationship with God***. Having an intimate relationship with God is different from "spending time in prayer." For many Christians, "prayer" is a quick trip to God to commit certain problems and issues to Him. Fellowship, on the other hand, is the friendship and relationship you develop with God. You develop a personal relationship with God the same way you would develop a personal relationship with someone here on earth. You talk to them continually and share with them your feelings, desires, dreams, etc. This fellowship with God will provide you tremendous spiritual strength.

**The more time you spend with God, the more your needs will be met and the less you will desire to satisfy them yourself.**

***Bathe yourself in the Word of God.*** This is an often-neglected resource. Even Jesus realized the importance of using the Word of God. He consistently used scripture when He was defending Himself against the temptations in the wilderness (Mark 9:14-29).

***Commit every area of your life to God.*** Some people have said that since God is aware of all of our needs, there isn't any reason to pray for them. This isn't true. Although God knows about our needs, He still wants us to ask Him for help. More important, when we commit something to God, we are actually giving Him full control (or ownership) over it.

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***Guard your thought life***. Simply put, the more you dwell on a sinful thought, the greater are your chances of falling into its temptation. There is a very direct correlation between the two. For example, if you continually fantasize about having sexual encounters outside your marriage relationship, you will find it very difficult to resist an adulterous temptation when the occasion arises. "After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin (James 1:15)

**Practical application:**

The thought patterns that lead up to my destructive behavior are _____. To eliminate these, I must _____.

Sinful acts begin as attitudes or temptations in your mind and emotions. "

For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly" (Mark 7:21-22).

"Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15).

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1).

We should try to act properly, but it's even more important to deal with our thoughts and emotions, since they are the source of our sinful actions. "Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean (Matthew 23:26). Don't fantasize about sin, thinking that your thoughts are harmless. When you cherish sin in your heart, you put a wedge between yourself and God. "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18). You can become ensnared by sinful thoughts. "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Romans 13:14).

Reject sinful thoughts:

- Learn to identify and reject unwholesome thoughts. Don't allow yourself to fantasize about sin. Don't continually brood about how someone irritates you, fueling your anger toward him or her.

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- Repent of "pleasant" sinful memories. Some people think about early sinful sexual experiences or other sins with fondness or nostalgia. If you do this, ask God's forgiveness for the original sins and for enjoying their memory. Confess your early actions as sins and ask God to cleanse and purify your memories.
- Choose wholesome thoughts. Do you think you can't control your thoughts? You can discipline your mind and decide what to think about. Make it a habit to think about things that are pure and true. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5). "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things (Philippians 4:8). "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess" (Hebrews 3:1). Pray to choose wholesome thoughts.

***Run away from temptation:*** "Run away from her! Don't go near the door of her house! If you do, you will lose your honor" (Proverbs 5:8–9). See also Proverbs 5:1–23. Know the steps in falling prey to temptation. James says, "But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15). We get into trouble when we allow our desires to dictate our actions.

- Stay out of certain places. If you have a problem with alcohol, don't go to a bar to prove how strong you are. If you make the sin you enjoy available, you're going to be in trouble.

- Flee immorality. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says you've got to run the other way. Fill your life with positive things that God can use to help you develop to be who He wants you to be.

- With whom are you tempted to sin? Are you more likely to sin when alone or when with certain people? Do you give in to peer pressure? Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies (Psalm 141:4).

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- When are you tempted to sin? Is there a certain time of the day or week when you are more likely to sin?

**TEACH THEM HOW TO EXERCISE SELF CONTROL**

To avoid and overcome bad habits and addictions, we must exercise self-control. Jesus teaches us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). To do this, we must control our mind, by which we control our bodies. He says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matt. 15:19). Paul expresses these thoughts with an athletic metaphor, saying, "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (1 Cor. 9:24-25).

Like an athlete, we must exercise self-control in all things. If we do, we'll control our minds, which controls our bodies, and overcome bad habits and addictions. If we walk by the Spirit, we'll avoid and overcome bad habits and addictions. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). Since we walk by the Spirit, we exercise control over sin, bad habits, and addictions. We walk by the Spirit because we belong to Christ, having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24). We don't engage in bad habits and addictions because Christ doesn't engage in sin. "We've been crucified with Christ, who lives in us; and the life which we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself up for us" (Gal. 2:20). Walking by the Spirit empowers us to avoid and overcome bad habits and addictions.

**TEACH THEM HOW TO CREATE A POSITIVE HABIT**

In order to overcome a bad addiction, you must teach the counselee to form a positive habit that will help them resist and overcome their temptation to once again fall into the pattern of their sin.

**What is a "positive addiction"?** Usually when we hear the word ADDICTION, we think of NEGATIVE ADDICTIONS which is simply another word for BAD HABITS. We become dependent on it, either emotionally or physically. POSITIVE ADDICTION is when you become dependent upon a good habit. A positive addiction is a habit which is: Good for you, either physically, mentally, or spiritually. A source of pleasure and satisfaction and one that should you neglect it, begins to give you "withdrawal pains". Our positive addiction should be the reading of the

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Word of God. Why is a "positive addiction" to daily bible reading necessary? It will help you maintain the practice of reading the Bible

How to create a "positive addiction" for daily bible reading? You must make the experience a pleasurable one. Start slow, with small goals. Many try to start by reading through the Bible in one year and get very discouraged when they reach parts in the Word which appear confusing or "boring". Begin each session with prayer. Ps 119:18: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your Law."

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Bring them to a place where they are willing to acknowledge that they are addicted and that in themselves they are unable to "control" their behavior.

Step two: The counselee must make a commitment and a choice to change. The counselee must make a choice to no longer be under the controlling power of the addiction and the drive to meet their own needs. It is their choice – they have been given the free will of choice by God. They must choose whether to subject themselves to bad habits and addictions (Rom. 6:16-18) or whether they will relinquish all control of their lives to God. In making this choice they need to consider the following:

**The consequences of holiness** (choosing not to sin). It's encouraging to realize that just as there are consequences to sin, there are consequences when we choose righteousness.

- You please God: Each time you say "yes" to God, He is pleased, much as an earthly parent takes pleasure in his or her child's obedience.
- You grow in the Spirit: When you are tempted, it is an opportunity to grow in the Spirit. It's exciting to see the power of God working in your life as you say "yes" to God and "no" to sin
- You build resistance to further sin**:** When you overcome temptation, you learn that you have the strength to say, "No." That makes it easier to say "no" the next time
- You are a good example to others: When you obey God, you provide a great example and encouragement to others.
- You experience joy: When you obey God and break free from the power of sin, you experience the excitement and joy that come from spiritual victory. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I

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have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (John 15:10-11).

- You avoid the negative consequences of sin: When we follow God's Word, we avoid all sorts of problems

**Consider the consequences of sin:**

- Sin grieves God**:** (Ephesians 4:30-31).
- Sin harms your walk with God. A tragic consequence of sinning is that you put a wedge between God and yourself. **"**The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk." (1 Timothy 1:5-6) "Fight the good fight holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith" (1 Timothy 1:18-19).
- Sin gives Satan an opening. When we sin, we give Satan an opening. For example, when we are angry and speak unwholesome words, we "give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27) and open ourselves up to further temptations.
- God punishes sin. Sin has consequences. God often punishes (or disciplines) us when we sin, usually to help us learn (Hebrews 12:5-11). Paul referred to God's punishment when he warned the Thessalonians about sexual sins: "The Lord will punish all men for such sins" (1 Thessalonians 4:6). Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished (Proverbs 6:27-29).Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7-8).
- Sin harms others.
- Sin harms your witness for Christ. When you sin, you may put a stumbling block in others' paths and your ministry may be discredited. We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited (2 Corinthians 6:3).
- Sin harms your potential. If you give in to temptation, you can miss out on the exciting life God wants for you. You can waste your life without developing your gifts or touching this world for Christ.
- Sin results in natural consequences. If you overeat, you may get sick. If you continually overeat, you probably will get fat. If you engage in immoral

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sex, your spouse may divorce you and you may get a sexually transmitted disease. If you gamble, you are likely to lose money.

- Sin results in guilt and misery. You may think sin will make you happy. But, although you may experience temporary pleasure, you will end up miserable because of your guilt, natural consequences and God's punishment. He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment. He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made (Psalm 7:14-15

Step three: Realize that the answer to the real craving is not for the addiction itself but it is for Jesus. Ask the counselee to commit or recommit their hearts to Jesus. The Only Answer to all addictions.

Step four: Bring them to a place where they confess their sins. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). To overcome an addiction, they need to stop the sin that is causing their addiction. They need to say "no" (Titus 2:12) to sin and live for righteousness.

Step five: Ask those people who they have hurt by your behavior to forgive them.

Step six: List preventive actions to overcome temptation. "Steps I will take in my daily life to avoid dangerous situations: _____" Make them write down how they will resist when tempted.

Step seven: Pray and ask God to help them and strengthen them during times of temptations: Psalm 138:3 "When I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me the strength I need" "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Cor. 10:13)

Step eight: Choose Scripture verses to read and memorize. Identify Bible verses that speak about holiness and the particular sin they want to overcome. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). "Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13. Read scriptures about how to be strong in the Lord and put on the full armor of God such as Ephesians 6:10-18. Read scriptures which teach Christian living and virtues such as Colossians chapter 3: "Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above.....set your minds on things

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above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ... put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry..... Put on the new self.....let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. (and in verse 17): and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,....."

Step nine: Replace the addiction with time spent praying and reading the Word. If they want to get rid of bad behavior, they have to replace it with something positive — something that will make them stronger instead of weaker. Work on identifying positive behaviors that would make good replacements for their addictions.

- Daily reading of God's word.
- Daily prayer and communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Fellowship with other believers.
- Establishing prayer warriors.
- Establishing accountability partners.
- Seeking to help other people.

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## EATING DISORDERS

### WHAT IS AN EATING DISORDER?

Eating disorders -- such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder – include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. Eating disorders are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males.

### FORMS OF EATING DISORDERS

**Anorexia Nervosa:** Anorexia Nervosa is the relentless pursuit of being thin. People who suffer from this refuse to maintain normal body weight for their age and height. They usually weigh 85% less than what is developmentally expected for their age and height. This person is characterized as being terrified of becoming fat even when they are under the required weight.

**Bulimia nervosa:** This is the diet-binge-purge disorder where a person will diet, become hungry and then binge eat in response to powerful cravings and feelings of depravation. They are characterized as being out of control when they eat and when they realize what they have done, try and undo the binge by vomiting, misuse of laxatives or fasting.

**Binge eating disorder:** This is characterized by eating in order to "feed the pain". This person is usually characterized as being overweight and obese.

### SYMPTOMS OF EATING DISORDERS

Because everyone today seems concerned about weight, and because most people diet at least once in a while, it is hard to tell what is normal behavior and what is a problem that may escalate to threaten life and happiness. No one person will show all of the characteristics listed below, but people with eating disorders will manifest several.

***Food behaviors:***

The person who is anorexic will exhibit the following food behaviors: They will

- skips meals,
- take only tiny portions,
- will not eat in front of other people,

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- eat in ritualistic ways, and mix strange food combinations.
- always have an excuse not to eat. For example: "I am not hungry, I just ate with a friend, I am feeling ill etc.
- eat only a few "safe" foods and will constantly boast about how healthy the meals s/he does consume are.
- become a "vegetarian" but will not eat the necessary fats, oils, whole grains, and the denser fruits and veggies (such as sweet potatoes and avocados) required by true vegetarianism.

The person who is bulimic will exhibit the following food behaviors: They will:

- gorge, usually in secret, emptying cupboards and refrigerator.
- buy special high-calorie binge food.
- If panicked about weight gain they will purge to get rid of the calories.
- Sometimes the person uses laxatives, diet pills, water pills, or "natural" products from health food stores to promote weight loss.

***Appearance and body image behaviors*:** Both the anorexic and the bulimic could exhibit the following:

- The person loses, or tries to lose, weight.
- Has frantic fears of weight gain and obesity.
- They will wear baggy clothes, sometimes in layers, to hide fat or hide emaciation and stay warm.
- They will spend lots of time inspecting self in the mirror and usually find something to criticize. They insist that they cannot feel good about themselves unless they are thin, yet they are never thin enough.

***Exercise behaviors*:** The person exercises excessively and compulsively. They will maintain a harsh regimen only through sheer will power.

***Thoughts and beliefs***: "If I am thinner, I will feel better about myself." They lose the ability to think logically, evaluate reality objectively, and admit and correct undesirable consequences of choices and actions. They become irrational and deny that anything is wrong always arguing with people who try to help, and then withdraws, sulks, or throws a tantrum.

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***Feelings***: They have trouble talking about feelings. They become moody, irritable, cross, snappish, and touchy. They withdraw into self and feelings, becoming socially isolated. They feel inadequate and are fearful that they do not measure up. They will frequently experience depression, anxiety, guilt, loneliness, and at times overwhelming emptiness, meaninglessness, hopelessness, and despair.

***Self-harm and self-injury***: In some people the above mentioned feelings are so overwhelming, too many and too strong to be endured. To cope, to release the pain, to escape it, to distract themselves, some people hurt their bodies.

***Other problems:*** Eating disorders frequently occur in combination with other problems:

- Alcohol abuse
- Abuse of prescription medications
- Abuse of drugs (especially steroids, diet pills)
- Abuse of laxatives and diuretics (water pills)
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Threats of suicide or suicide attempts
- Cutting, burning, hair pulling or other self-harm behaviors
- Rage attacks
- Placing oneself in dangerous situations
- Homicidal threats or attempts
- Stealing and other criminal acts

**What causes eating disorders?**

***Psychological factors***: People with eating disorders tend to be perfectionists. They have unrealistic expectations of themselves and others. In spite of their many achievements, they feel inadequate and defective. In addition, they see the world as black and white, no shades of gray. Everything is either good or bad, a success or a failure, fat or thin. People with eating disorders often lack a sense of identity. They try to define themselves by manufacturing a socially approved and admired exterior. They have answered the existential question, "Who am I?" by symbolically saying "I am, or I am trying to be, thin. Therefore, I matter."

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***Family factors***: Some people with eating disorders say they feel smothered in overprotective families. Others feel abandoned, misunderstood, and alone. Parents who overvalue physical appearance can unwittingly contribute to an eating disorder. So can those who make critical comments, even in jest, about their children's bodies. Families that include a person with an eating disorder tend to be overprotective, rigid, and ineffective at resolving conflict. Sometimes mothers are emotionally cool while fathers are physically or emotionally absent. At the same time, there are high expectations of achievement and success. Children learn not to disclose doubts, fears, anxieties, and imperfections. Instead they try to solve their problems by manipulating weight and food, trying to achieve the appearance of success even if they do not feel successful.

***Cultural pressures and media:*** Pressures from a particular culture can also tend to eating disorders. What is expected by Hollywood and the advertisers portrays to both men and women what will be loved and accepted. Therefore if a person is overweight they are perceived as being "imperfect" and therefore they strive to meet the norm or the expected norm even if this means bringing harm to their bodies. For those who are obese, they feel that they will never measure up and therefore give up to trying to "look right". They eat away their pain and lack of worth and acceptance.

***Triggers***: A trigger could be something as seemingly innocuous as teasing or as devastating as rape or incest. Triggers often happen at times of transition, shock, or loss where increased demands are made on people who already are unsure of their ability to meet expectations. Such triggers might include puberty, starting a new school, beginning a new job, death, divorce, marriage, family problems, breakup of an important relationship, critical comments from someone important, graduation into a chaotic, competitive world, and so forth.

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**WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?**

**TEACH THEM TO LOVE THEMSELVES**

The Bible repeatedly tells us that we are to love ourselves:

- Leviticus 19:18 "Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself.
- Matthew 19:19 "Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself.'
- Matthew 22:39 "A second is equally important: `Love your neighbor as yourself.'
- Mark 12:31 "The second is equally important: `Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."
- Luke 10:27 "The man answered, " `You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, `Love your neighbor as yourself.' "
- Romans 13:9 "For the commandments against adultery and murder and stealing and coveting–and any other commandment–are all summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
- Galatians 5:14 "For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
- James 2:8 "Yes indeed, it is good when you truly obey our Lord's royal command found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The two key words in these verses are the words "as yourself." In other words, God wants you to love yourself to the same degree and with the same intensity as you would love anyone else.

**Why should they love themselves?**

***Because God loves them***: Romans 5:8 "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners".

***Because they have worth in the sight of God***: To be bought with the precious Blood of Jesus, means that I must be of far more worth than what I give myself credit for. Show them through the Word of God how God values them and His willingness to sacrifice His own Son in order to purchase them. How does God see them?

- They are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)

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- They are the light to the Word (Matthew 5:14)
- They are the children of God (John 1:12)
- They are kings and priests unto God (1 Peter 2)
- They are a joint heir with God (Romans 8:17)
- They are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16)
- They are His workmanship and His handiwork (Eph 2:10)

***Because they have been made in the image of God***. Psalm 139:13-16"you made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

**What has caused them to stop loving themselves as they ought to?**

- Parental messages
- Parental reflections
- Parental abuse
- Guilt and shame as a result of bad decisions made in their lives
- Disowning their own experience
- Pleasing others/seeking external approval
- Belief that loving themselves is not OK

Loving yourself is the greatest love of all and we all need to love ourselves to have a full healthy balanced life. But when early experiences have shaped your core beliefs about yourself can you *learn* to love yourself? Yes. Love is a decision. Make the decision to love yourself in every moment--unconditionally--no matter what. Act and speak only in loving ways to yourself. Love yourself for being who you are, doing what you do, saying what you say, thinking what you think, and feeling what you feel. When you do that, you make space for yourself to be, do, think, feel, express, and accept yourself as you are. Learning to love yourself isn't easy -- especially if you're a survivor of childhood abuse or neglect. But there are things you can do to boost your self-love.

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**Practical ways to begin to love you:**

- Look in the Word of God to see what God loves about you and how He sees you in spite of your sin. Reflect and meditate on these scriptures. God's opinion of you is the truth because the Word of God is truth and it is light. The more you allow His Word to penetrate your heart, the more that light can be reflected on the dark areas of your thoughts and beliefs and those thoughts and feelings will be expelled by this light. Write down all these scriptures in a special journal that can be used to reflect on when doubts and negative self talk occurs.

- Ask for a list of things people like about you. Sometimes it can be hard to find things we like or love about ourselves. So -- ask other people to tell you all the things they like about you. This isn't a replacement for your own love; it's a first step in learning to love yourself. You may need to hear the things other people like about you before you can value them in yourself. If hearing what people like about you is hard, ask your friends to write it down for you, or leave it on your voice mail, so you can read/listen to it over and over. Go back to it as many times as you can. Even if you don't believe that someone can like a particular thing about you, or you don't believe it exists, trust that your friend does see it and value it. When you start to hear critical voices inside your head, go back to those things your friend said/wrote about you, and remember that you are loved.

- Make a list of the things you like about yourself. Look at this good-things-about-yourself book as frequently as you can.

- Make it part of your daily routine to praise something in yourself or think about something you like about yourself. Give yourself the kind of warm praise that you would a friend.

- Make a note every time someone says something nice about you: Every time someone tells you something about yourself that makes you feel good, write it down or make a mental note and jot it down later. When you get home, put that note in a container of "good things about me." Decorate the container however you like. Keep on adding notes, and read them over every time you need a little boost -- and even when you don't feel like you do.

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- Have compassion for yourself. If you're feeling really judgmental about something you've done or said, try to understand where the judgment is coming from. Not the immediate, surface answer, but an answer deep down inside you. Are you afraid of something, or are you feeling insecure? Do you think you did something "wrong," or are you hearing the judgment of a voice from your past? Forgive yourself!

- Recognize Self-Critical Messages and Talk to Them. Try noticing next time you hear a small (or very loud) voice inside your head criticize you. Be aware of what it is saying to you and find out whether what you are saying is the truth based on the Word of God or whether it is a lie. Counteract every negative and critical thought through the Word of God.

**TEACH THEM TO TRUST IN GOD'S HEALING POWER FOR THEIR LIVES**

Jesus Christ understands their pain and desires for them to come to a place of healing. "…we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses… (Hebrews 4:15). "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3)

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Gather information

1) When and how they started the behavior?
2) What weight fluctuations they have experienced?
3) What means they have used to manipulate her weight?
4) Their attitudes about normal and binge eating.
5) Concurrent alcohol, drug abuse, or stealing problems.
6) Self-destructive behaviors and suicide attempts.
7) Their fears of losing "control".

Step two: Find out what is at the root of their problem. For example: abuse, parents that are too appearance focused etc. Help them to recognize that whatever happened or whatever was said was not God's opinion or God's will but was the plan of the devil to destroy their lives. John 10:10 "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness." Deal with these issues.

Step three: Ensure that the counselee has come to realize that they cannot control their own lives (as their present situation confirms) and they need to

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surrender their control to God. They need to acknowledge that they are unable to help themselves and they need to come to God to receive their healing. Ensure that they have committed to having a relationship with Him.

Step four: Deal with shame and guilt by confessing it. 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Step five: Identify wrong thinking patterns and begin to retrain their thinking through the Word of God. This will most likely be retraining them to love and accept themselves for who they are and for seeing themselves as worthy in spite of their attaining to a certain "physical" appearance. Teach them through the Word of God how God sees them.

Step six: Provide them with scriptures that they can memorize that will change their wrong thinking every time they become critical about themselves or when they feel that they are not good enough.

Step seven: Provide them with practical help. For example: Keeping a journal of all that they have eaten. Have them keep a spiritual journal of all their thoughts and how God is speaking to them through the Word. Set treatment goals.

Step eight: Ensure that they have someone who they can be accountable to until they have recovered. This might mean that they need to seek medical help and assistance, a nutritionist etc.

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## PREMARITAL SEX

Sex before marriage has become more and more common among teenagers and young adults. Even within the church young couples often find themselves in a place where they are tempted beyond what they can handle and therefore they engage in a sexual relationship with their partner.

Many factors influence a person's decision to have sex or to remain abstinent. For example:

- A negative or nonexistent relationship with their parents: Teenagers who are close to their parents are less likely to engage in sex than teens who are not close to parents.
- Rejection or feelings of not being loved by the parents can impact the decision of the person to engage in sex outside the boundary of marriage.
- Alcohol and Drugs' Influence: Often teenagers have sex while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Impact of Sexual Abuse: When a child has suffered from sexual abuse they can be inclined to feel that in order for them to receive love they have to have sex.
- Embarrassment of still being a virgin
- Peer pressure can among friends can influence them
- Pressure of the partner by saying, "if you loved me you would …"

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH CONCERNING SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE?

The Bible refers to premarital sex as fornication. Fornication is sexual intercourse between people who are not married to each other. The only distinction the Bible makes between premarital sex and adultery is that adultery involves married persons while fornication involves those who are unmarried. Premarital sex is just as much of a sin as adultery and all other forms of sexual immorality. They all involve having sexual relations with someone you are not married to.

The Bible explains, "…The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13). Verse 18 of this chapter goes on to say, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body." Galatians 5:19 speaks the same, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity…" Ephesians 5:3 says it most plainly, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." From these verses,

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we see that the Bible promotes complete and total abstinence from premarital sex. 1 Thes. 4:3 "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" Sex between a husband and his wife is the only form of sexual relations that God approves of (Hebrews 13:4).

**THE PRO'S AND THE CON'S OF PREMARITAL SEX:**

| **THE PRO'S** | **THE CON'S** |
|---|---|
| **Emotionally:**<br><br>A temporary feeling of being "loved" (as the world has described it) | **Emotionally:**<br><br>Shame and Guilt<br>Embarrassment<br>Trust issues<br>Lack of respect<br>Resentment |
| **Relationships:**<br><br>Acceptance from your peers<br><br>Approval of the other individual who may have pressured them into it | **Relationships:**<br><br>Usually there becomes a decline in the relationship with the individuals. The relationship may end in a break up<br><br>Teenagers may start lying to their parents if they have taught abstinence<br><br>Their relationship with God is affected and they stop praying and reading their Bible |
| **Physically:**<br><br>Fulfillment of sexual desires | **Physically:**<br><br>Fear of pregnancy<br>Fear of Sexual diseases<br>Loss of their virginity |

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## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Confess their sins to God

Step two: Reestablish their relationship with God. Show them that no matter what they have done, ". . .I will never fail you. I will never forsake you. That is why we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Step three: Walk them through forgiving themselves and their partner

Step four: Deal with the consequences of the encounter

### SHOW THEM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN BY GOD

God can and does forgive the sin of premarital sex. When a person places his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, desiring to turn away from the old life of sin, all sins are forgiven. That includes past, present, and future, big and small. Jesus died to pay the penalty for all of our sins, including premarital sex. Once they are forgiven, they are all forgiven.

Acts 13:38-39 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."

Colossians 1:13-14 says, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Isaiah 1:18 "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as sand."

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## TEACH THEM TO FORGIVE THEMSELVES AND DEAL WITH SHAME AND GUILT

Forgiving yourself is essential. There is a tendency in all of us to hold ourselves more accountable than we do others. Forgiving yourself is not specifically addressed in the Bible, but there are principles regarding forgiveness that should be applied. For example, when God forgives us, it states that He remembers our sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34). This does not mean that our all-knowing Father God forgets, but rather, because He forgives us, He chooses not to bring up our sin in a negative way. Peter said, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34). Applying "no partiality" to the issues of forgiveness, God does not choose to forgive one person and not another. He forgives everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. Applying His "no partiality" standards to ourselves, it is just as important to forgive ourselves as it is to forgive others

Forgiving yourself is not about forgetting. It is about not bringing the offense up to yourself in a negative way. Forgiving yourself is simply letting go of what you are holding against yourself so that you can move on with God. If God has moved on, shouldn't we do the same? Philippians 4:9 states that we are to put into practice those things that we have learned from God and from His Word. To continue to rehearse in our thoughts the events of our transgression, opposes Philippians 4:8 which tells us to dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

**Steps to Forgiveness:**

- Acknowledge your mistakes
- Accept your mistakes
- Confess your mistakes to God
- Realize that all of your mistakes and sins where forgiven when Jesus died on the cross
- Realize that God loves you and wants the best for you and that He will continue to forgive you regardless of the nature and scope of your mistake or sin (however you may have to deal with the consequences of your actions)

## TEACH THEM TO ABSTAIN IN THE FUTURE

As a Christian they will fight off temptation every day. Being tempted is not the sin, but giving into the temptation is. So how do you fight off the temptation? The desire to have sex can be very strong, especially if you have already had sex. It is only by relying on God for strength that you can truly fight off the temptation to have sex. 1 Corinthians 10:13 – "No temptation has seized you except what is

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common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

**Benefits of abstinence:**

Why should they choose to abstain in the future?

- They choose to walk in obedience to the will of God
- They will have more self respect and will receive more respect from others
- They will have security that they are not being "loved" just for sexual gratification.
- They will be preparing for a better marriage in which they will foster faithfulness, trust and security.
- They will not have to fear sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.
- They will not have to deal with shame and guilt but will have peace of mind and joy.
- They will have freedom from memories of past sexual partners.

**Steps to abstinence:**

- Make a serious commitment to be abstinent with the help of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- Acknowledge that they are responsible for their body and that it is the Temple of the Holy Spirit and therefore should not be abused or misused.
- Only date those people who are willing to respect your views and who will not pressure you into situations where you will be tempted to break your commitment to abstain.
- Avoid movies, television shows, websites, music and conversations that dwell on or remind you of sex. Think thought that are pure and right (Philippians 4:8)
- Develop self control by reading the Word and through having a consistent prayer life. Memorize scriptures.
- Constantly assess yourself and find out where you weak points are and then avoid these situations.
- Prayer often for the strength of God to help you resist all temptation
- Pursue purity. Psalm 119:9 "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word." 2 Timothy 2:22, "Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything

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that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love, and enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts."

Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

**DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PREMARITAL SEX**

- **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES:**

There are many different sexually transmitted diseases that you can receive through premarital sex.

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION:**

After taking them through the above steps, do the following:

- Encourage them to go and seek medical help in order to find out if they have contracted a sexual disease or not
- Teach them concerning the ability of God to heal them. Exodus 15:26 "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you."
- Encourage them to begin to confess with their mouth that they have been healed. Proverbs 4:20-22 "Pay attention, my child, to what I say. Listen carefully. Don't lose sight of my words. Let them penetrate deep within your heart, for they bring life and radiant health to anyone who discovers their meaning". God's Word is medicine to all their flesh.

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- **PREGNANCY**

If the counselee is dealing with an unwanted pregnancy they will have to carefully consider the options that they have concerning the child that they are carrying. This decision is not to be taken lightly as it will affect their entire life.

Being a parent is often described as one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of life. It is a miracle to watch this little life grow inside you and develop into a person with a unique personality, interests and talents; as you learn how to guide, encourage and provide for this extension of you. Besides love, the most essential need in parenting is support.

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION:**

Ask the following questions:

- Is marrying the father a possibility? Why or why not?
- Would he consider pre-marital counseling?
- What type of support could he provide? (ie: financial, role model, childcare)
- How would my family help? (ie: financially, childcare, living arrangements)
- Could I live with family or another single mom?
- How could I share responsibilities with those I live with?
- What would it take to live on my own with my baby?
- How can I continue to reach my goals to make a better life for me and my child?

**IS ABORTION AN OPTION?**

Many desperate mothers turn to abortion as a solution, but find it is not a solution, after all. The Bible clearly states that God has a plan for the baby from the moment the baby is conceived. "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous -- and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed" (Psalm 139:13-16). When we choose abortion, we are short-circuiting God's plan.

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The Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines "abortion" as "the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus…." [21]. The issue of abortion has to do with the morality of a person's choice to "terminate" the pregnancy, not a miscarriage that happens naturally. Abortion stops the natural process of human maturation within the mother's uterus (or womb). The purpose of abortion is to empty the mother's womb which results in the death of the tiny human being in its development.

Is the fetus a human being?

- Matthew 1:18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit."
- John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father…."

When did God become flesh? Was it at conception? Was it at birth? Was it at a point in time between conception and birth? The Holy Spirit carried the divine nature, so Jesus was God in the flesh from conception when the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary. Just as Jesus was God from conception, a human being begins life at his conception. The "miracle of life" certainly is a miracle. A human being is formed from 2 single cells fusing together in a female. The cells divide and differentiate forming tissues and organs. After only 18 days of growth, a heartbeat can be detected. After 21 days, the eyes, spine and digestive system become visible. After 40 days, brain waves can be detected. At 8 weeks, the toes and fingers are formed. At just 18 weeks, the baby can move on its own. Abortions are performed even after all of these things have occurred.

Luke 1:44: "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

Exodus 20:13: "You shall not murder."

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21 www.merriam-webster.com

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Ask the counselee the following questions:

- Are they informed of all the procedures and risks?
- Is there anyone pressuring them to have an abortion?
- Have they talked with someone who has been through an abortion to discuss their experience?
- How have they viewed abortion in the past?
- How does God view abortion?
- Do they beleive that God is able to help them through this crisis without having an abortion?
- Who do I want to choose to obey – God? Self? Others?
- What will the consequences of this choice be?

**ASSIGNMENT**

Ashley found out she was four months pregnant two weeks ago. She is 15 years old living with her parents and her 5 siblings. She is not from a wealthy home. Because of the situation that she found herself in, she went to an abortion clinic and had an abortion without telling her parents and her boyfriend. The abortion however did not go well and she had to be admitted into a public hospital. Her parents were therefore called in and have now found out about what she did. Ashley, since the abortion now has to deal with the following problems:

- She has started having nightmares about her abortion
- She constantly cries and is very depressed, to such an extent that she is thinking of taking her own life
- She has caused both her parents to start bickering about what happened and they have neglected her well being and instead focus on "what if" and "she did the right thing". She feels very alone in.

What counsel would you be able to provide Ashley? Write out the outline of the issues that you will be dealing with, your advice and godly counsel and the scriptures that you would use.

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**GIVING THE BABY UP FOR ADOPTION:**

If the counselee is underage and is still in school, sometimes their parents may decide that giving the child up for adoption will be best. There are thousands of loving, God-fearing couples longing to adopt a baby. They have the resources and the emotional and spiritual stability to raise a child. These potential parents always appreciate the sacrifice a birth mother makes when she gives up her baby for adoption. This is a great option for the mother who isn't ready for the responsibility of parenting and who realizes the value a loving, adoptive home can offer her baby. There are reputable agencies that handle these adoptions and do it with the baby's best interest in mind.

However it is important that they consider the following:

- They are giving up their right to never knowing their child in the following years.
- They may experience guilt of having to give up their child. Some people are never able to recover emotionally from having to give up their child – especially if they are being forced to do so by parents.
- Whose decision has it been to give the child up for adoption? Parents? Boyfriend? Their own?
- What type of adoption will they be expecting?
- Have they researched adoption in South Africa?
- Have they spoken to other people who have given their child up for adoption?

**IN THE SESSION:**

Step one: Take them through the above questions so that you understand what and who is motivating their decision.

Step two: Pray that they will have the wisdom to make the right choice for their child and that they will have the strength to do whatever it is that they decide to do.

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Step three: Provide them with scriptures that will encourage them through this process.

Step four: Deal with issues of guilt and depression when the time comes for them to give the child up for adoption.

Step five: Ensure that they are placed in a Christian support group that will help them through their "bad" days.

**KEEPING THE BABY**

If they are ready to face the responsibilities and demands that come with being a parent, keeping the baby is sometimes the best option. Many courageous mothers have made this commitment and have done a tremendous job providing love and care for their babies. An important element to ensure success is to have a number of people around who will support them in their new role. This strong support system provides security for both the mother and the baby.

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Ask the counselee the following questions:

- Am I able to give a child what he/she demands and needs?
- Would I have to count on my parents to help me out?
- Will I be getting married to the father?
- Can I raise a child and meet my own needs? To finish school? To start a career?
- Am I really ready to become a good parent on my own?
- What do I want to achieve in life and to experience out of life?
- Could I handle a child and a job and/or school at the same time?
- Am I ready to give up the freedom to do whatever I want whenever I want?
- An example of something I would have to give up by having my child with me would be…
- Am I willing to cut back on having fun and staying home while my friends go out?
- Would I miss my free time and privacy?
- Can I afford to support a child? How will I pay for rent, clothing, food, diapers, and other living expenses?

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- Do I want to raise a child in the neighborhood that I live in now? Where do I plan to live?
- Do I want my child to be like me?
- Am I expecting my child to make my life happy and to love me?
- When I am around small children for a while, what do I think or feel about having a two-year-old around ALL the time?
- How would I treat a child if I lost my temper or became angry?
- How would I discipline a toddler?
- How would I take care of my child's health and safety?
- Do I enjoy teaching others?

**Guide for Making a Decision:**

The decision of either keeping the baby or giving the baby up for adoption is a decision that they will need to make for themselves. It is importasnt to gather giodly counsel by consider other people's thoughts and ideas, but ultimately they don't live with the final decision, you do.

The following tips can help you discover your values, beliefs and circumstances and hopefully help you make the best choice for you.

- Find a quiet place alone.
- Take a pen and a notebook or journal with you.
- Record your thoughts and feelings after finding out you were pregnant.
- Make a chart for each option with two columns, one to list your losses and one to list your gains.
- Briefly describe what you imagine your life, and your child's life would look like after each decision you are considering.
- Write down your first responses to the following questions:

1. What are my top 5 goals for my life?
2. What do I want my life to look like in 5 yrs?
3. What kind of person do I want to be?
4. How would others describe me?
5. How do I want others to describe me?

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6. What do I need to do now to make the above happen?

- Think Good. . . Better. . . Best. . .: Usually, we can see the difference between a bad decision and a good decision. Try to take it a step further to what would be better and then what would be the best for you and your child.

- Seek counsel from someone you respect and trust.

- Consider who would be supportive of each option? How would the most important people in my life feel?

- Pray and ask God to show you what would be the best and biblical decision to make. Follow the following steps:

    1. Read the Word of God
    2. Study the Word of God
    3. Meditate on the Word of God
    4. Prayer and ask God for wisdom
    5. Get advice from godly counsel
    6. Go back and prayer about it
    7. Ask for God's peace in making the decision
    8. Make the decision

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION:**

Step one: Help them to identify the support structure that they will have once they have had their baby.

Step two: Show them through Scriptures that God will be their help. "For I am the LORD, your God, who See also: takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you". (Isaiah 41:13). "I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2) "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them - the LORD, who remains faithful forever". (Psalm 146:5-6)

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Step three: Help them to realize what their role will be as a mother. Teach them from scripture what a godly mother looks like.

Step four: Guide them through what they are going to do with the following issues:

- Nutrition
- Medical Care
- Exercise
- Financial support

Step five: Pray with them and provide them with a support group that will help them and encourage them.

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## PART FOUR: WRONG RELATIONAL PATTERNS

Wrong relational problems develop when one or both of the individuals in the relationship have one or all of the following problems:

- Wrong feelings due to their needs being unmet
- Wrong thoughts on how to meet their needs for themselves
- Wrong behavior as a result of acting on these wrong thought patterns.
- Wrong relationships result in reaffirming all that we feel and believe and therefore sets a pattern on how we are to deal with things in the future

Many relationships are dysfunctional because they contain "faulty programs" downloaded from past relationships. Most people are not consciously aware of this, but in fact, it has been shown to be true. This is why people find themselves dealing with the same types of issues over and over again no matter how many partners they may have. Whether it is money, sex, jealousy, fidelity, or any number of other issues, to some degree or another, the theme is the same for them in the current relationship as those of the past.

A dysfunctional relationship has certain qualities about it. These qualities are as follows:

- A sense that you have to fit into someone else's perception of what is right or wrong in order to be loved.
- You feel confined.
- There is always something to fix in the relationship.
- You feel like you're settling.
- Who you are is diminished in the relationship.
- Your needs are not met in one way or another.
- You're never going to be good enough.
- You feel trapped.
- Being there is not what you really want, but you're afraid to leave.
- You find other ways to satisfy yourself to keep your mind off how unhappy you are in the situation.
- When it's good, it's really good, but when it's bad it's horrible.

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On the other hand, a healthy relationship has these characteristics:

- You feel honored.
- You feel more alive.
- There is nurturing and support for you to become more of who you are.
- There is strength coming from your partner allowing you to explore ways to expand into new territories.
- There is trust.
- The goals are the same, even though the ways of expressing them may be different.
- Each brings healing into the other through depth and security.
- The relationship causes you to create a new dynamic based on the future rather than on what has been known in the past.
- There seems to be a knowing about the other person that goes beyond this time and space, as if you had known each other before.
- Your partner is more than you would have known to ask for. You wonder how you ever got this lucky.

The goal for the counselor is to bring the counselee from being in a wrong relationship that is dysfunctional and unhealthy to being in a relationship that is healthy for all the parties.

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## MARRITAL RELATIONSHIPS

### MARRIAGE IN THE EYES OF GOD

The biblical view of marriage originates with God. The God of the Bible instituted marriage with His ideals and purposes. In Genesis 2:24, God defined marriage by saying: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." God shows that marriage is made up of one man and one woman. We are divinely designed to become one flesh. God meant for marriage to be a long-term covenant to bring Him glory.

The primary purpose for marriage is companionship. In Genesis 2:18, God proclaimed, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." The divine purpose for marriage is to do away with loneliness. God created marriage to meet man's need for companionship. The woman is to fulfill man's need for companionship and the man is to fulfill the woman's need for companionship. Marriage is not defined by procreation, sexual union, and fulfillment, but it does imply that these obligations and pleasures are a part of marriage. This holy covenant includes loving intimacy and commitment which in turn produces security. God's purpose and standard for marriage alone produces meaning, happiness, and fulfillment.

God created marriage as a loyal partnership between one man and one woman.

- Marriage is the firmest foundation for building a family.
- God designed sexual expression to help married couples build intimacy.
- Marriage mirrors God's covenant relationship with His people.

The relationship between the husband and the wife is reflected in the following verses:

- "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such

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thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." *Ephesians 5:22-33*

- Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. *Colossians 3:18-19*

- Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. *Hebrews 13:4*

- For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. *1 Peter 2:25-3:2, 3:7*

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## COMMON MARITAL PROBLEMS

There are a number of factors which affect the healthy relationship of a marriage and which causes conflict and problems which can eventually lead to separation and divorce. For example:

- Poor conflict management
- Lack of intimacy
- Financial problems
- Differences in the level of commitment
- Lack of communication
- Adultery and infidelity
- A new baby in the home
- Cultural, religious or spiritual differences
- Unresolved baggage from the past
- Unfulfilled expectations
- Resentment and unforgiveness

## POOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict is natural and inevitable in marriages and other close relationships. Marital relationships are particularly prone to conflict because spouses develop a great deal of shared intimacy and interdependence. These qualities make the partners more vulnerable to one another. At the same time, cohesion strengthens the relationship such that partners can better withstand criticism from one another and the relationship can survive partner disagreements.

The term "conflict" often conjures up perceptions of hostile disputes and dysfunctional relationships. However, research has shown that the mere existence of conflict is not necessarily bad. In fact, some conflict produces positive outcomes. Conflict allows relational partners to express important feelings and to devise creative solutions to problems. Further, successfully managed conflict can strengthen relational bonds and increase relational cohesion and solidarity.

The most frequent topics of conflict in marital relationships include:

- communication,
- finances,
- children,
- sex,

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- housework,
- jealousy, and
- in-laws

The intensity and seriousness of conflicts varies widely both within and between couples. Some opposition is merely mild disagreements or complaints. They receive minimal attention and produce short-lived effects. Other conflicts represent ongoing struggles about personally significant issues that produce intense personal anxiety and relational tension. The way in which these conflicts are handled is dependent on how both parties in the conflict have determined how they will manage it. There is both constructive conflict management and destructive conflict management. Destructive conflict is competitive, antisocial, and relationship-damaging in nature. Destructive behaviors exhibit negativity, disagreeableness, and sometimes hostility. Methods for confronting or avoiding conflict influence the extent to which spouses are satisfied in their marriage, and ultimately affect the likelihood of separation and divorce.

Couples at greater risk for divorce repeatedly engage in complaining and criticizing, which leads to contempt, which produces defensiveness, which results in stonewalling.

Complaints allow marital partners to express dissatisfaction or disapproval. The goal of complaining is not to offer a solution but rather to bring it to the attention of the spouse that they are not being fulfilled.

- When a complaint takes the form of a personal attack, in other words, when it communicates disapproval of the character or personality of the recipient, it is regarded as criticism.

- Criticism attacks the person and generally shows the person that they are disrespected, disliked for what they have done and even at some times hated. This results in the expression of contempt.

- In order to protect the person from these expressions of contempt, the partner will be defensive. Defensiveness is common in conflict as an attempt to protect ourselves. Defensive responses include denying responsibility for reproachful actions, making excuses for untoward behavior, and responding to complaints with counter-complaints.

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- Stonewalling manifests itself in emotional withdrawal from conflict interaction. Stonewallers exhibit silence, repress verbal and nonverbal feedback, and generally attempt to show a complete lack of expressiveness.

- Criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling can be exhibited in stable relationships as well as unstable ones. However, they become particularly problematic for relationships when they are

  (1) habitual,

  (2) reciprocated, and

  (3) insufficiently counterbalanced with positive behaviors.

Current research confirms that poorly handled conflict between married couples can negatively influence mental, physical, and family health. Feelings of anger, bitterness, and unhappiness - sometimes leading to separation and divorce - often result.

## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

### TEACH THEM HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Marriage and family therapists not only pinpoint a lack of communication as a source of family unhappiness, they also point out that bad communication causes unhappiness.

### SOME REASONS FOR COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTY

At its core, communication requires a sender, a message and a receiver. It sounds like a simple process. However, there are many factors which can prevent communication from taking place. Some of these include:

- Inability to receive the message (the sender mumbles; the receiver has trouble hearing, etc.)
- Failure to understand the message.
- Different perceptions concerning the meaning of the message.
- Distractions.

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- Preoccupation.
- Disinterest.
- Poor timing.
- Competing messages.
- Cultural differences between the sender and the receiver.
- Confused verbalization of the message.
- Emotional mind reading.
- One partner assumes, "if you really cared you would know how I feel without asking."
- Non-verbal signals that conflict with verbal messages.
- Threats and ultimatums.
- Actions that betray words

**RULE TO COMMUNICATING:**

**Be aware of the factors that can hinder** effective communication: It is a common mistake to think that communication between you and your partner is only about the two of you. There are three major factors that can hinder effective communication:

- Norms and Attitudes: As human beings, we take experiences and interactions of our past and incorporate them into our thought process. If your partner grew up in a home where money issues were never discussed, they may have a preexisting sensitivity to financial topics. If your partner was scolded excessively as a child, they may react strongly to the simplest of criticisms. These are examples of attitudes or norms that can interfere with your communication. It is important, as a couple, to try and understand your partner and any barriers that may exist so you can more effectively overcome these obstacles and get to the heart of the matter you are discussing.

- External Noise: Your environment can have a major influence on communication. If there is excess noise or distraction, it may be impossible to effectively discuss important matters. It is critical to choose the right time and right place for detailed discussions about your partnership.

- Internal Noise: It probably isn't the best time to bring up buying a new car or replacing an appliance when your spouse has just walked in the door from a terrible day at work. Likewise, it is probably best to delay a conversation about intimacy when your partner has just had a fight with a friend or lost a

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love one. Realize that our state of mind is often driven by the emotional or physical strain we are feeling at the moment. Be sensitive to these "internal" distractions and communicate accordingly.

***Allow Enough Time***: Plan a certain time each day for you to sit together and talk to one another. This communication may not be conflict related but it may be just day to day talking.

***Listen:*** Communication involves two steps; talking and listening. Listening strengthens the relationship between two people by conveying messages of caring and respect. You are able to increase your understanding of each other by being good, active listeners. An active listener notices facial expression, body posture, and voice tone as well as words. They nod or say "okay" or "go on" or something to indicate their attention. James 1:19. "My dear brothers take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

***Check It Out***: Unclear messages can often be clarified by saying, "I'm not sure I know what you mean by that" or "This is my understanding of what you mean...Is that correct?"

***Get Inside The Other Person's World***: We each live in our own unique world. No one sees life exactly the same way you do. The way you look at a certain situation depends on past experiences you have had, the values in which you believe, and your personality characteristics. This means that when two people disagree on an issue, it is not always because one person is right and the other wrong. It is more likely due to the fact that the two people come from different worlds, with different perspectives.

***Beware of communicating "monsters"***: What are these monsters? Anger, criticism, acting superior, name calling etc. When disrespectful judgment takes place, relationships will fail. Ephesians 4:29, Paul wrote, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Proverbs 15:1 "A gentle answer turns away wrath, a harsh word stirs up anger."

***Keep It Honest:*** Always ensure that you communicate honesty and openness. People say what they mean and mean what they say.

***Pray:*** In addition to receiving divine assistance, the simple, humbling act of asking for help from the Lord softens hearts and makes communication easier. Pray together as a couple and ask that you be inspired to find creative solutions to the issues at hand.

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Take an inventory of their lives in which they will ask themselves "Do I truly honor, trust, and respect my spouse?" "On what level have I communicated with my spouse in the past few months, past year etc? Have my communication techniques digressed since we were married? What caused this lack of communication or poor communication on my part?

Step two: Confess and ask for forgiveness for not communicating with each other or for communicating with "monsters".

Step three: Pray and ask God to help them with the way in which they communicate with one another.

Step four: Bring the couple or the individual to come to a place where they will commit at working at their communication techniques on a day to day occasion. Let them set a time where they will start to get to know their spouse again. Getting to know their thoughts, feelings, desires and dreams.

Step five: Provide them with scriptures that they can meditate on that will help them build their marriage. For example:

- Psalm 19:14 "May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
- Psalm 39:1 "I said to myself, "I will watch what I do and not sin in what I say. I will curb my tongue when the ungodly are around me."
- Psalm 141:3 "Take control of what I say, O Lord, and keep my lips sealed."
- 1 Cor. 13:4-8 "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear."
- Ephes. 5:22-25 "You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Savior. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything. And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her"

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**TEACH THEM HOW TO MANAGE THEIR CONFLICT CONSTRUCTIVELY**

Conflicts can be resolved constructively when both of the partners are committed to listen to one another and hear what other person is saying. With the help of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit growing in their lives, conflicts can be resolved in such a manner that they will draw the couple to a greater intimacy than they had previously had before.

- Only start with one problem at a time. Learn how to manage conflict constructively by starting with a conflict that is "non explosive". Start with a small issue before you begin to dissect something that is going to "blow up".

- Discuss a problem fully before trying to solve it. When focusing on a problem, couples should first have a full and open discussion about it and understand one another's point of view before trying to solve a problem. During this time, define together what the problem is, your own part in the problem, and how earlier attempts at dealing with it have proved unsuccessful. Use "I-statements" to express concerns ("I was upset when you forgot our date last week") and make two or three statements before the listener paraphrases what they heard. When listening, focus on the speaker's message and paraphrase what you heard the speaker saying, without rebuttal. Make sure you are both satisfied that you have been heard and understood.

- Move on to solving the problem:

    - Set the agenda. Identify the problem or portion of the problem that needs to be resolved. Describe the problem in ways which are not based on critique or disdain. "I" statements are the most effective way of formulating a problem. This means that you start with your own feelings and ideas. Be an active listener, let other people state their views, try to understand your partner, and ask check questions to ensure that you have not misunderstood something. Understanding the views of your spouse can cause you to see the problem in a new way.

    - Eliminate the following phrases from your vocabulary: "You never" or "You always" "I can't" (always substitute "I won't"), "I'll try" (usually means "I'll make a half-hearted effort but won't quite succeed"), "You should" or "You shouldn't" (these are parent-to-child statements).

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- Brainstorm. Think of as many strategies as you can for solving the problem. Write them down so you can review them together.

- Discuss and evaluate. Look over the strategies and discuss the pros and cons of each one.

- Choose a strategy. Select one of the strategies to try out, one you both feel good about.

- Agreement. Agree on what each of you will do to help carry out the solution.

- Follow-up. Set a time to follow up on how things are going.

- Manage your anger: Anger is a very strong emotion. Proverbs 29:11 says, "A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back". Proverbs 15:18 says, "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger pacifies contention" To overcome anger, these steps are important:

    - Consciously determine to be calm. Don't react, think! Remember your goals and respond appropriately. Choose to remain calm!

    - Communicate. Calmly talk about how you feel about their words or actions.

    - Remove yourself from the scene until you can respond without anger.

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION:**

Step one: Ask them to identify and define their destructive conflict pattern: How do they act when they are in a conflict or a disagreement? There are many interaction patterns that can harm a marriage and make dealing with differences and disagreements very difficult. For example

- Harsh Start-ups: frequently getting started on the wrong foot
- Criticism: Complaints with the intent to attack another person's character
- Contempt: Criticism conveying disgust
- Invalidation: Being made to feel - or making another feel - devalued, not cared about, or put down
- Defensiveness: Counterattacking a partner's character, reflecting blame
- Escalation: Battling each other in a vicious cycle that spirals out of control
- Stonewalling: Withdrawing or "pulling out" with no intent to return, disengaging
- Flooding: Being overwhelmed by criticism, contempt, etc.
- Negative Interpretations: Viewing motives of a partner as "out to get you" or harmful
- Failed Repair Attempts: Missed attempts to put the brakes on or "head-off" harmful communication
- Bad Memories: Looking back on the relationship and seeing the "good gone bad" or good simply gone

Step two: Confess and ask for forgiveness. Let go of all resentment that has built up over the years from using this wrong pattern. "So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God" (Matthew 5:23)

Step three: Make a commitment to eliminate that pattern from your relationship and practice positive conflict management.

Step four: Learn to deal with your anger. Peace, and the solution to life's problems, can only be found by turning to God. There are many Bible verses that deal specifically with anger and its implications. You need to pray for strength and self control to enjoy a life of contentment and joy. You also need

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to pray to God to remove the darkness of anger controlling you. Choose it! "You (God) will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (Isaiah 26:3-4).

Step five: Teach them that marriage is a lifelong commitment that they have made to one another just as Christ has made a lifelong commitment to His bride. Be committed to working through issues and areas of conflict without having the "escape door mentality", divorce or separation.

Step six: Teach them on the steps to resolving their conflict

Step seven: Pray about areas of conflict where you are unable to come to a solution and ask God to show them what the solution to the conflict is.

Step eight: Provide them with scriptures to meditate on concerning conflict and how God does and does not want us to act when we are in it. For example:

- Proverbs 18:13 "What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts!"
- Proverbs 26:21 "A quarrelsome person starts fights as easily as hot embers light charcoal or fire lights wood.
- Proverbs 15:18 "A hothead starts fights; a cool-tempered person tries to stop them."
- Ephes. 4:26 "And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry,"
- Proverbs 15:4 "Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit."

**FINANCIAL PROBLEMS**

Ongoing quarrels and differences over money are frequently cited as one of the primary reasons for marriage problems. We inherit money behaviors and attitudes from our families and other influential people in our lives. Differences and conflict arises when we are different in the value that we place on money. There are two wrong behavior patterns towards spending money:

- Hoarders /Under-spenders: this is the person that believed that they might need the money "someday". Many hoarders are those who lived in a situation where there was not sufficient for their material needs early on in their life. Under-spenders represent the most extreme condition of hoarding where they may resist spending, even to their own detriment. They won't seek

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medical help when they are ill, they won't buy seasonal clothes to deal with the climate.

- Compulsive Spenders: For people who are over-spenders, often, possessions give them identity. Overspending can involve over-use of credit, or the need to spend money to create a mood change. Spending works as a kind of anesthetic for the pain. These people live in a debtor's prison of their own making. The very shame that torments them arising from their out-of-control spending is the same dynamic that compels them to do it again.

## WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?

### TEACH THEM ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

- Track how they have been spending money to this point. Tracking your spending is not a way to point fingers at one another as to who is spending what. Tracking your spending is not having someone looking over your shoulder every time you buy something. Tracking your spending is critical to being financially secure. Unless you know where your money is going, it is impossible to set up a budget and set financial goals you are both comfortable with.
- Discuss finances together on a regular basis: It is important that both of the partners know where they stand financially and have common financial goals.
- Save 10% of their income: Couples living month-to-month often rationalize that they just don't have enough money to save. Make the decision to save at least 10% of the income.
- Handle debt as a couple: Make a plan to pay off existing debt. Do not look at debt as being “his” or “hers”. Marriage is a union, one in which the couple needs to work together to overcome issues in their lives.
- Live debt free: Couples often don't want to wait to have a new television, new car, and other new gadgets. They rationalize that people just don't live without credit cards and debt. Although it may be true that many people are heavily in debt, that doesn't mean it is a healthy way to handle your finances.
- Don't keep big financial secrets: Not being honest about the cost of large financial purchases or keeping debts hidden is considered financial infidelity by many people. Such secrets can destroy your marriage.

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**PRACTICAL ADVICE**

- Stop living beyond your means.
- Treat the household like a business.
- Create an income -and-expense statement.
- Create a balance sheet.
- Create a budget.
- Figure out how to pay down your debt
- Agree on a plan of action in which you both share equally in cutbacks.
- Find ways to cut expenses.
- Go on a debt diet starting with the little stuff.
- Have only one credit card for your entire family.
- Celebrate when you pay off a debt.

**TEACH THEM ON THE PROVISION OF GOD FOR THEIR LIVES**

- Psalm 37:25-26 "Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly forsaken, nor seen their children begging for bread. The godly always give generous loans to others, and their children are a blessing."
- Luke 12:28-31 "And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won't he more surely care for you? You have so little faith! And don't worry about food—what to eat and drink. Don't worry whether God will provide it for you. These things dominate the thoughts of most people, but your Father already knows your needs. He will give you all you need from day to day if you make the Kingdom of God your primary concern."
- Psalm 107:4-8 "Some wandered in the desert, lost and homeless. Hungry and thirsty, they nearly died. "Lord, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he rescued them from their distress. He led them straight to safety, to a city where they could live. Let them praise the Lord for his great love and for all his wonderful deeds to them".
- Psalm 34:6-10 "I cried out to the Lord in my suffering, and he heard me. He set me free from all my fears. For the angel of the Lord guards all who fear him, and he rescues them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in him! Let the Lord's people show him reverence, for those who honor him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go

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hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will never lack any good thing".

- Matthew 6:31-34 "So don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing. Why be like the pagans who are so deeply concerned about these things? Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.
- Psalm 37:3-4 "Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires."
- Philip. 4:13 "For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need".
- Philip. 4:19 "And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."

**GO THROUGH THE BIBLE FINANCIAL CHECKLIST WITH THEM:**

- Are they tithing? Malachi 3:10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

- Are they going into debt for lustful things? Wants, instead of needs? 1 Timothy 6:6-10: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

- Are they planning and budgeting their financial spending? Luke 14:28-30: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

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- Are they lazy or slothful on the job? Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Proverbs 21:25 "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour."

- Are they being wasteful? John 6:12: "When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

- Have they committed all their money and material things to God? Luke 12:34: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

- Do they need the things they buy or are they luxuries? Proverbs 21:17: "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich."

- Have they paid their debts or made arrangements to do so? Romans 13:8: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

- Are they spending their money foolishly or are they being wise? Proverbs 24:3-4: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches."

- Do they lack faith in God as their total source? Psalm 121:1-2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Romans 14:23: "---for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

- Are they hoarding things through fear or greed? Luke 12:19-21: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." This is different from preparing for the future by saving and

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storing at God's direction. Proverbs 30:24-25: "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer."

**The Bible says:**

- Malachi 3:10 says to "prove Him". "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."
- Galatians 6:9 promises we shall reap what we sow. Just as a farmer plants a crop and then there is a growing season before the harvest, so it is with planting God's Word in our hearts. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Don't faint! Ask God for the strength to overcome. We are overcomers in Christ!

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

Step one: Identify what type of spender they are. Identify where their behaviors fall on the continuum between the two extremes of hoarding and spending. Each person should then evaluate how much of a problem they think their own spending is, and how much of a problem their spouse's problem is. With this as a starting point, they can start to examine why they have their particular attitudes towards money (e.g. did their parents spend in the same pattern), and what they can do together to reach peace with each other and also meet their longer-term financial goals. Ask the following questions:

- How do you handle finances?
- Where did you learn your style?
- What is your beliefs about money?
- What do you value when it comes to money?

Step two: Deal with their faulty belief by teaching them the Word of God. If they are hoarders because they fear that they will not have enough for the future, then teach them concerning the provision of God. If it is because they block out their pain by shopping, then deal with the root, their pain, so that this wrong behavior pattern will stop.

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Step three: Go through the Bible Financial checklist with them. Confess all neglect of being obedient to the Word of God.

Step four: Teach them how to plan their finances by budgeting.

Step five: Pray that God will help them with their financial problems and that He will help them to communicate with each other that will be constructively. Acknowledge afresh that you are dependent upon Him to help you in your time of need – the financial pressure.

Step six: Make a commitment that you will make no more additional charging or take out any more loans but that you will stick to the budge and debt reduction plan that you as a couple have agreed upon.

Step seven: Provide them with scriptures that they can use to meditate on and memorize.

## ADULTERY AND INFIDELILTY

### DEFINE:

The word translated as "adultery" in the New Testament is the Greek word "moicheia". Its primary meaning was sexual intercourse between a married woman and any man other than her husband. However, the New Testament generally forbids all extramarital sex, so sexual intercourse between a married man and any woman other than his wife is also forbidden. In common usage today, "adultery" includes both cases above.

### WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE AFFAIRS?

The reasons for marital infidelity can be because of the following:

- conflict avoidance,
- intimacy avoidance,
- unmet needs within the relationship
- neglect of the partner (emotional and physical)
- lack of affection
- thrill seekers

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- low self esteem and a desire to receive self worth from a person other than God and their spouse

**WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?**

**TEACH WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS**

- Adultery is a Sin: The definition of adultery includes it being a sin in God's eyes. Adultery is an unrighteous act. In no circumstances can it please God when a person commits adultery. It is one of the Ten Commandments - "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14)
- Adultery comes from the heart: The definition of adultery includes the characteristic that it comes from within and it is not caused by outside influences. Adultery is committed by two willing partners. One person in the relationship may have been the temptress or tempter, but the other person accepted the temptation. Adultery is always birthed from our own heart. Matthew 5:28, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart".
- Adultery destroys the offender: "But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself" (Proverbs 6:32). The Bible tells us that adultery starts off sweet, but ends in bitter consequences. Proverbs 5:4, "But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword".
- Adultery is the work of the flesh: Galatians 5:19, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,".

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION – COUNSELING THE OFFENDER**

Step one: Ask them what were the reasons why they decided to have an affair? Gather information by asking them questions concerning their marriage relationship prior to the affair? What changes had occurred in the marriage in the past year? What characteristics drew them to the person with whom they had an affair?

Step two: Show them that what they have done was sinned against God and their spouse by teaching them what the Bible says concerning adultery.

Step three: They must confess their sins to God and believe that He will remove their sins. Because their sins have been forgiven they no longer have to feel the guilt and condemnation (Romans 8:1).

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Step four: They must end the affair! This means that they must have no further contact with the person from here onwards.

Step five: Deal with the root of their problem, their wrong thinking and feeling. For example: low self esteem, feelings of being neglected, anger towards their partner etc. Retrain their thinking so that they will not continue with this wrong behavior and in this wrong relationship.

Step six: Go to your spouse and ask for forgiveness. Make a commitment to your spouse to work at your marriage and to rebuild trust and intimacy. Trust can be built by your commitment to the following:

- Be completely honest with your spouse from now on. You must be truthful and open about anything your spouse has a reasonable right to know. This includes your work schedule, your activities with friends, your spending habits, and so on.
- Answer whatever questions your spouse has about the affair.
- Unanswered questions and doubts can linger on for years, making it very difficult for your spouse to truly forgive you and trust you again.
- Make amends to your spouse. Saying "sorry" may not be sufficient.
- The best way to make amends is simply to ask your spouse what you can to make it up to him or her. Ideally, it will be something that reaffirms your love and brings the two of you closer together. Perhaps it will be something that your spouse has always wanted from you - being a better listener, for example. The purpose of making amends is not to punish you for your misdeeds. The purpose of this is to show your spouse that you are committed to making the marriage work.

Step seven: Make a covenant to not commit adultery again. John 8:10-11 "Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." Decide to walk by the fruit of the Spirit and not of the flesh. 1 Thes. 4:3 "God wants you to be holy, so you should keep clear of all sexual sin."

Step eight: Be careful to not place yourself in a situation where you will be tempted into adultery. 1 Cor. 6:18 "Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body." Abstain from all evil appearances 1 Thes. 5:22 "Keep away from every kind of evil".

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Step nine: Be committed to a personal time of prayer and reading of the Word. Psalm 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." 1 Thes. 5:17 "Keep on praying." If you are in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, you will not be tempted to sin.

Step ten: Prayer that they will receive strength to resist all future temptation: 2 Peter 2:9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:".

Step eleven: Provide them with scriptures that they can meditate and memorize.

Step twelve: Ask them for a name of a person who they will make themselves accountable to. For example an elder in the church, the pastor, a godly friend etc.

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION – COUNSELING THE OFFENDED**

Step one: Choose to forgive your spouse. One of the hardest things in coping with adultery is to actually forgive the marriage partner that has committed the adulterous act. The Bible tells us that if someone repents, we are supposed to forgive them. Even if they keep falling down but truly repent, we should forgive them. Luke 17:3-4, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him". This forgiveness needs to be as God has forgiven them: Jesus forgives all of us that repent of their sin. God expects us to forgive people as He forgave us. 2 Corinthians 2:10, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;""

Steps in forgiving:

- First, consider all the things that God has forgiven you for in your past. Then meditate on all the areas in which you are presently failing and consider the rich and free forgiveness that flows from the Father. By first looking at your own faults you are obeying the command given by Jesus in Matthew 7:5: "First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Obedience to this command will greatly aid you in finding the willingness to forgive.

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- Now ask God to give you the same tenderness of heart to forgive your spouse as God has demonstrated toward you. The Bible commands, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

- Next, make the choice to forgive your spouse. Remember, forgiveness is a choice you make from your heart simply because it is a command. Everything in the Christian life hinges on the choice to obey God's commands. For example, service to the Lord is a command, but you must choose to yield yourself to do it (Joshua 24:15). Faith is also a command that must be obeyed. "This is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another" (1 John 3:23). Forgiveness works the same way. You are commanded: "Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26). The words "if you do not" specifically refer to your choice. In addition, don't think that you first have to feel like forgiving your spouse before you actually choose to do it. Forgiveness must first be granted from the heart before it will ever be felt in your emotions (Matt. 18:35). Simply choose to do what is pleasing to the Lord and the feelings of forgiveness will follow (Is. 56:4).

- Once you've chosen to forgive, you must now keep your promise. Understand that when you forgive you make a promise to erase the sin off the internal ledger in your mind and never bring it up again. This is exactly what God does when He forgives you. He declared: "I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins" (Is. 43:25). The words rendered "blots out" mean to wipe clean or obliterate. The word "remember" means to mention or recall. Therefore, when you forgive you are promising to never mention or recall this sin as a weapon in the heat of an argument. You obviously can't forget or erase the sin from your memory, but you can refuse to remember it against your mate. This is a decision you must make every day and sometimes every hour.

Step two: Acknowledge the emotions that you have towards your spouse. For example: anger, betrayal, disappointment, bitterness, resentment, revenge etc. Confess these feelings to God and ask Him to help you to not display the fruit of the flesh but the fruit of the Spirit. Do not hide the feelings that you have towards

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your spouse but be willing to confront them, talk about them and then release them to God.

Step three: Help them to decide what they want to do from here onwards. Do they really love their wife/ husband even though he / she has been cheating behind their back? Do they want to continue in the relationship? Do they want to keep their family intact? Do they love their partner enough to be able to forgive and forget and move on with the relationship? What changes can be made in both of their behavior to avoid a repetition of cheating?

Step four: Help them to find out what their part of the breakdown of their marriage was before the affair. Ask them the following questions:

- Have I changed the way I pursue and prioritize my husband/wife?
- Am I critical or nagging?
- Do I work hard to meet his/her needs (honor, sex, , security)?
- Am I responding to my spouse's pulling away by also pulling away?
- Have I prayed regularly for my marriage and for my spouse?
- Have you been giving adequate attention or have other matters taken priority over time?
- Have you been expressing love and sharing your life intimately with your partner?
- Have you been appreciating your wife's / husband's contribution to the relationship?
- Is your relationship based on mutual respect and understanding?
- Have you had adequate communication in your relationship?
- Have you been taking the relationship for granted and trying to control, push and do what matters to you alone?
- Have you really been listening to what your partner may have been trying to tell you?

Step five: Ask your spouse to forgive you for the break down in the marriage.

Step six: Believe in the fact that God can heal you and your marriage. He is a God of reconciliation. While the Bible says you can divorce your spouse if he or she commits adultery, that does not mean it is God's perfect will. God can miraculously change anyone. Isaiah 59:1 "Listen! The Lord is not too weak to save you, and he is not becoming deaf. He can hear you when you call." Psalm 18:6 "But in my distress I cried out to the Lord; yes, I prayed to my God for help.

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He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry reached his ears." Psalm 34:17-18 "The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit." 1 Peter 1:6-9 "So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him, you trust him; and even now you are happy with a glorious, inexpressible joy. Your reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls."

Step seven: Acknowledge God's first desire. Your heart may not be ready to hear it; but the Father has made it very clear through His Word and by His actions that He is a God of reconciliation. He longs for His adulterous children to come back to Him. God told the prophet Jeremiah to declare to the nation Israel, who had played the harlot with other gods, "Go and proclaim these words … and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,' says the LORD. 'Return, O backsliding children,' says the LORD; 'for I am married to you' " (Jer. 3:12-14). These words clearly reveal that God's heart is for reconciliation with those who violate their covenant with Him. The only requirement was for Israel to acknowledge and repent of their sin, and God promised to have mercy and receive them back. The last thing the Father wanted was to divorce them. His first desire was, and always is, to seek reconciliation. God's example reveals that this should also be our first desire. Therefore, this example makes it clear that God's first desire is always to seek reconciliation.

**What does God say about divorce?**

- "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel (Malachi 2:16).
- What God has joined together, let man not separate ... I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery (Matthew 19:6, 9).
- Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery (Mark 10:11-12).

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- If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

Does God ever allow divorce? Although the Bible stresses the importance and permanence of marriage, it permits divorce in two circumstances.

- Divorce is allowed for sexual immorality. Jesus said you may divorce if your spouse is sexually unfaithful. Notice, however, that he did not command you to divorce. He merely said it is permissible. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery (Matthew 19:9). Jesus said God only allowed divorce in the Old Testament because of the hardness of our hearts (Matthew 19:8).

- Divorce is allowed if an unbeliever leaves. If you are married to an unbeliever, it is God's desire for you to stay married (1 Corinthians 7:12-14, 16; 1 Peter 3:1-6). However, if your unbelieving spouse leaves, you "are not bound." To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances (1 Corinthians 7:12-15).

Step eight: Determine your spouse's decision. Once you've made your decision to seek reconciliation, the question is: has your spouse made the same decision? So often, the offending partner isn't willing to reconcile because he or she hasn't made the decision to cut off the adulterous relationship. At this point the offended spouse usually makes one of two fatal errors. Some become harsh and arrogant and demand reconciliation, forgetting that a relationship is built on the choice to love, which cannot be forced. On the other hand, some are too timid and afraid to require a decision from their spouse because they are fearful their mate will choose to leave. The key is to remember it takes two willing partners to reconcile any relationship.

Step nine: Bring both the parties together and work with them in restoring their marriage. Teach them what their biblical roles are as a husband and a wife. Teach them on the importance of communication. Provide them with steps to

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improving their marriage.

- Read the Bible together.
- Pray together.
- Be kind to each other.
- Learn to talk through your problems.
- Be verbally and physically affectionate with each other. Don't take each other for granted.
- Put each other before your children. God called you to be married before He called you to be a parent.
- Be sure you are meeting each other's sexual needs.
- Be watchful of boundaries. Guard your conversation. Stay away from language that is flirtatious and suggestive.

Step ten: Take them through the steps in rebuilding their marriage. Just as Nehemiah followed certain steps before he was able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, so too the couple needs to be committed in following these steps:

- Weep and seek the face of God concerning your broken marriage and the loss (Nehemiah 1:4)
- Pray and fast for the restoration of your marriage (v4 - 11)
- Communicate your needs for being able to rebuild the marriage (2:3-10)
- Be willing to make the right action to bring about restoration. Nehemiah had to leave where he was and travel to Jerusalem to do this (2:5). Be willing to make the necessary changes to build trust, love and intimacy.
- Survey the damage to the walls (2:1315). Be honest and open about your feelings so that you will both be aware as to what needs to be repaired.
- Trust in God through all resistance, opposition and criticism (Neh 4-6)
- Re-establish your commitment to God. Commit your marriage to being a testimony of Christ. Nehemiah and Ezra encouraged the people to repent of their sins and remove all things that were causing them to fall into temptation (Neh 9-12)

Step eleven: Show them that they need to control their thought life. The reason for this is that both partners will be tempted to go back and dwell in the past when things get tough, which will greatly hinder the rebuilding process. The offended partner usually struggles with resentment over what has happened or the fear that this will all happen again. The offending partner usually battles with

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the guilt and condemnation of his or her failure. Therefore, you must bring every thought into the captivity of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). You can't look backward! You must keep your eyes fixed on the road ahead. To illustrate this truth, just imagine what would happen if you tried to drive your car down the road while continually looking in your rear view mirror. You would obviously crash! If you fail to control your thought life your relationship is bound to hit a brick wall spiritually and emotionally. How to control your thought life:

- Recognize the reason why it is important to bring your thoughts into captivity. It's very simple; your thinking directly controls how you feel toward your spouse. Consequently, you can't dwell in your mind on your partner's failures and at the same time have great emotional feelings of love. Neither can you dwell on the condemning thoughts of how you've destroyed your marriage and then be overflowing with joy in the Lord.

- Next, once the infidelity has been forgiven, make a choice to not dwell in your mind on this failure anymore. When the thoughts begin to come, reject them as something that has come to destroy you and draw you back into despair or resentment. Consider these thoughts and deal with them in the same manner as if someone was trying to gossip to you and destroy your relationship with information that is completely inappropriate for you to hear. This is what Paul did with his own thoughts concerning his past persecution of Christians. He said, "But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Phil. 3:13). The word forgetting means to neglect or put out of your mind. Is this what you are doing with your thoughts of the past? Are you deliberately and willfully choosing to put them out of your mind or allowing them to stumble you?

- Lastly, choose to think on the good changes that have occurred since your reconciliation. This again was Paul's solution while he was in prison after being held for over four years on false charges. He declared to the Philippian Church how he found peace: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things" Phil. 4:8). You must make a conscious decision to dwell on the good things that have come about in your relationship with your partner. Choose to meditate on these things, not on the past. This is what it means to look forward. Are you daily dwelling on these thoughts?

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- Remember the promise that Jesus made to Paul in his hour of struggle: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:**

How would you respond to the following situations?

One:

I am female, 34 years old, and have been married 8 years. Lately, I have felt very ignored and restless in our relationship. I don't think my husband is aware of these feelings because I try to hide them, but they are in my heart. He buys me beautiful gifts and tries to give me his love and support. He has always been a very kind man, but he would rather watch TV and talk to our dog than talk with me. That's just the way he is. Recently a man has come into my life that has rekindled feelings in me that have been dormant for a long time. I find myself thinking about him often and wish I could be with him. I feel so guilty and ashamed of these feelings, but nevertheless, they are there. I try not to think about him, but I do. I don't know if he feels the same way about me, but sometimes he looks at me in a way that gives me a signal that he might. Nothing has been said or done between us. I don't want to tell my husband about this because this man is my husband's best friend. There are things I can do to get closer to the "other man" if I will allow it to happen, but I'm afraid of the consequences. I feel I'm at a crossroads.

Two:

My husband had an affair with my "former" best friend of 21 years. At first, he showed very little interest in her, but over a period of months I could tell that there was something going on. It all came to a head when I walked in on them in her bed. We have been married 7 years, and have two children, ages 6 and 1. The affair began when our baby was born, and by the time he was 9 months old, my husband left us to live with her. It has been so blatant and painful. I have always been very, very much in love with him and I never believed he was the kind of man who would be unfaithful to me. I always trusted him and felt so comfortable with our trust. I want to reconcile, but I know I will have a hard time dealing with the betrayal from both of them.

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Three:

My wife and I are separated after 20 years of marriage. About two years ago I entered into a relationship with a younger woman, became totally captivated by the excitement, and left my wife and two daughters. I cannot defend my actions, but I understand why I was unable to resist. My most basic needs had been unmet for several years. I was emotionally abandoned for the sake of our children. After much effort to get my wife's attention, I quit trying. I spent about 18 months with my lover until she could no longer handle the guilt she felt from contributing to the breakup of my family. My relationship with my teenage daughters has struggled terribly since the affair. I have lived alone for the last 5 months and the emotional turmoil over the recent events combined with loneliness has devastated me; I am suffering from classical depression symptoms..... sleeplessness, lack of appetite, unable to focus, etc. My wife and I have been trying to reconcile all summer, but there is so much pain and bitterness (on both sides); we have just about reached the point of giving up. Every time we make a little progress, one of us gets hurt or discouraged and we lose ground. There is a part of both of us that feels like we should just end things and try to make a fresh start, but there is also a part of us that wishes we could find a way through the maze - together. I am very sorry for hurting my family, and I have told them so. I would like to feel the closeness and specialness with my wife that I experienced with the OTHER woman.

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## ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Abuse is identifiable as being a cycle. This is because it is both: generational and episodic.

**Generational cycles** of abuse are passed down, by example and exposure, from parents to children. For example: A son, who is repeatedly either verbally or physically abused by his father, will predictably treat his own children in the same way. When a daughter hears her mother frequently tear down, belittle, and criticize her father, she will adapt a learned behavior which involves control through verbal abuse. Similarly, a child who witnesses his parents engaging in abusive behaviors toward one another, will very likely subject his or her spouse to the same abusive patterns.

**Episodic abuse** occurs in a repeating pattern within the context of at least two individuals within a family system. The cycle can be explained as:

- The abuse begins with a major abusive behavior such as loud verbal abuse, screaming and/or verbal harassment and even a threat of physical assault.

- A period of remorse follows. The abusive individual will go to great lengths to seek forgiveness and offer assurances that the abusive behavior will never occur again. An abusive spouse may bring flowers or expensive gifts. An abusive husband may seek reassurance from his wife that she will never leave him.

- The third portion of the cycle is characterized by a period of "normalcy." During this time frame the abusive spouse may appear to be truly living out his or her repentance. Great effort will be expended to please and lull the victim of abuse into believing that the worst is now over.

- Over time, tension will begin to replace the easy atmosphere in the home. Irritability will increase, followed by veiled accusations by the abuser, blaming the other spouse for his or her frustration and unhappiness. Eventually, this escalating behavior will give way to another episode of full-blown verbal and/or physical abuse.

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**Phase 1 - TENSION BUILDING: Tension increases, breakdown of communication, victim feels need to placate the abuser.**

**Phase 2 - INCIDENT: Verbal and emotional abuse. Anger, blaming, arguing. Threats. Intimidation.**

**Phase 4 - CALM: Incident is "forgotten", no abuse is taking place.**

**Phase 3 - RECONCILIATION: Abuser apologizes, gives excuses, blames the victim, denies the abuse occurred, or says it wasn't as bad as the victim claims.**

**<u>COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSERS:</u>**

- They were abused as a child, or witnessed it in their own family.
- They have an explosive temper, triggered by minor frustrations and arguments.
- Abusers are extremely possessive and jealous. They experience an intense desire to control their friends and family.
- Their sense of masculinity depends on the woman's dependency upon him. He feels like a man only if his partner is totally submissive and dependent on him.
- Abusers often have superficial relationships with other people. Their primary, if not exclusive, relationship is with their wife/girlfriend.

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- They have a low self-esteem.
- They have rigid expectations of marriage (or partnership) and will not compromise.
- They will expect the other person to behave according to his expectations of what a wife/ friend/ child should be like; often the way his parents' marriage was, or it's opposite.
- They will demand that their friends/spouse etc. will change to accommodate their expectations. They will have a great capacity for self-deception and will project the blame for relational difficulties onto the other person in the relationship. For example: "I would not be drunk if you didn't nag me so much". "I wouldn't get angry if only you would do what you are supposed to do".
- The abused person is usually seen as being a symbol. The abuser doesn't relate to his partner as a person in her own right, but as a symbol of a significant other. This is especially true when he's angry. He assumes that she is thinking, feeling, or acting like that significant other -- often his mother

**TYPES OF ABUSE**

There are different types of abuse that can take place in relationship. For example:

**FINANCIAL ABUSE:**

Financial abuse can take many forms, from denying you all access to funds, to making you solely responsible for all finances while handling money irresponsibly himself. Money becomes a tool by which the abuser can further control the victim, ensuring either her financial dependence on him, or shifting the responsibility of keeping a roof over the family's head onto the victim while simultaneously denying your ability to do so or obstructing you. Financial abuse can include the following:

- preventing you from getting or keeping a job
- denying you sufficient housekeeping
- having to account for every penny spent
- denying access to cheque book/account/finances
- putting all bills in your name
- demanding your paychecks
- spending money allocated to bills/groceries on himself
- forcing you to beg or commit crimes for money

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- not permitting you to spend available funds on yourself or children

**EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE**

Emotional abuse is more subtle than physical abuse. There are many categories of emotional/psychological abuse. They encompass a variety of behaviors that will be easily recognizable by those experiencing them, and often remain completely unnoticed by others. They include:

***Abusive Expectations***: The other person places unreasonable demands on you and wants you to put everything else aside to tend to their needs. It could be a demand for constant attention, or a requirement that you spend all your free time with the person. But no matter how much you give, it's never enough. You are subjected to constant criticism, and you are constantly berated because you don't fulfill all this person's needs. This is usually seen in aged parents to their children.

***Aggressing***: Aggressive forms of abuse include name-calling, accusing, blaming, threatening, and ordering. Aggressing behaviors are generally direct and obvious. The one-up position the abuser assumes by attempting to judge or invalidate the recipient undermines the equality and autonomy that are essential to healthy adult relationships. This parent-child pattern of communication (which is common to all forms of verbal abuse) is most obvious when the abuser takes an aggressive stance. Aggressive abuse can also take a more indirect form and may even be disguised and "helping." Criticizing, advising, offering solutions, analyzing, proving, and questioning another person may be a sincere attempt to help. In some instances however, these behaviors may be an attempt to belittle, control, or demean rather than help. The underlying judgmental "I know best" tone the abuser takes in these situations is inappropriate and creates unequal footing in peer relationships. This can lead to learned helplessness

***Constant Chaos***: The other person may deliberately start arguments and be in constant conflict with others. The person may be "addicted to drama" since it creates excitement.

***Denying***: Withholding is a form of denying. Withholding includes refusing to listen, refusing to communicate, and emotionally withdrawing as punishment. This is sometimes called the "silent treatment." When the abuser disallows and overrules any viewpoints, perceptions or feelings which differ from their own.

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***Dominating***: Someone wants to control your every action. They have to have their own way, and will resort to threats to get it. When you allow someone else to dominate you, you can lose respect for yourself.

***Emotional Blackmail***: The other person plays on your fear, guilt, compassion, values, or other "hot buttons" to get what they want. This could include threats to end the relationship, totally reject or abandon you, giving you the "cold shoulder," or using other fear tactics to control you.

***Minimizing***: Minimizing is a less extreme form of denial. When minimizing, the abuser may not deny that a particular event occurred, but they question the recipient's emotional experience or reaction to an event. Statements such as "You're too sensitive," "You're exaggerating," or "You're blowing this out of proportion" all suggest that the recipient's emotions and perceptions are faulty and not be trusted. Trivializing, which occurs when the abuser suggests that what you have done or communicated is inconsequential or unimportant, is a more subtle form of minimizing.

***Unpredictable responses***: Drastic mood changes or sudden emotional outbursts. Whenever someone in your life reacts very differently at different times to the same behavior from you, tells you one thing one day and the opposite the next, or likes something you do one day and hates it the next, you are being abused with unpredictable responses. This behavior is damaging because it puts you always on edge. You're always waiting for the other shoe to drop, and you can never know what's expected of you. You must remain vigilant, waiting for the other person's next outburst or change of mood. An alcoholic or drug abuser is likely to act this way. Living with someone like this is tremendously demanding and anxiety provoking, causing the abused person to feel constantly frightened, unsettled and off balance.

***Isolation***: The abuser will control whom the victim sees, where she goes, whom she speaks to and what she does. This can take the form of simply not allowing her to use the phone, have her friends round or visit her family, or ensuring it simply isn't worth it by being in a bad mood because she left some housework undone, making her feel guilty that she was out enjoying herself while he worked, or even encouraging her - theoretically - to make friends, and then discounting them or complaining that she cares more for her friends/family/hobby than she does him or is neglecting him. The effect of this isolation is that the victim feels very alone, doesn't have anyone with whom to do a 'reality check', and is ultimately more dependent on the abuser for all her

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social needs. Forms of Isolation include:

- checking up on you
- accusing you of unfaithfulness
- moving to an isolated area
- ensuring you lack transport or a telephone
- making your friends or family feel uncomfortable when visiting so that they cease
- punishing you for being 10 minutes late home from work by complaining, bad moods, criticism or physical abuse
- not allowing you to leave the house on your own or taking away your passport
- demanding a report on your actions and conversations
- preventing you from working
- not allowing any activity which excludes him
- finding fault with your friends/family
- insisting on taking you to and collecting you from work

**VERBAL ABUSE:**

Verbal abuse undermines your sense of worth, your self-concept (i.e. who you think you are) by discounting your ideals, opinions or beliefs. Verbal abuse can include:

- yelling or shouting at you
- making threats
- insulting you or your family
- being sarcastic or mocking about or criticizing your interests, opinions or beliefs
- humiliating you either in private or in company
- sneering, growling, name-calling
- withholding approval, appreciation, or conversation
- refusing to discuss issues which are important to you
- laughing or making fun of you inappropriately
- leaving nasty messages
- accusing you of unfaithfulness, not trying hard enough or purposely doing something to annoy
- blaming you for his failures or other forms of abuse

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***Characteristics of Verbal Abuse***

- Verbal abuse is hurtful and usually attacks the nature and abilities of the partner. Over time, the partner may begin to believe that there is something wrong with her or her abilities. She may come to feel that she is the problem, rather than her partner.
- Verbal abuse may be overt (through angry outbursts and name- calling) or covert (involving very subtle comments. This is hidden aggression).
- Verbal abuse is manipulative and controlling.
- Verbal abuse is insidious. The partner's self-esteem gradually diminishes, usually without her realizing it. She may consciously or unconsciously try to change her behavior so as not to upset the abuser.
- Verbal abuse is unpredictable. In fact, unpredictability is one of the most significant characteristics of verbal abuse. The partner is stunned, shocked, and thrown off balance by the sarcasm, angry jab, put-down, or hurtful comments.
- Verbal abuse is not a side issue. It is the issue in the relationship. When a couple is having an argument about a real issue, the issue can be resolved. In a verbally abusive relationship, there is no specific conflict. The issue is the abuse, and this issue is not resolved. There is no closure.
- Verbal abuse usually escalates, increasing in intensity, frequency, and variety. The verbal abuse may begin with put-downs disguised as jokes. Later other forms might surface. Sometimes the verbal abuse may escalate into physical abuse, starting with "accidental" shoves, pushes, and bumps.

***Categories of Verbal Abuse:***

***Withholding***: A marriage requires intimacy, and intimacy requires empathy. If one partner withholds information and feelings, then the marriage bond weakens. The abuser who refuses to listen to his partner denies her experience and leaves her isolated.

***Countering***: This is the dominant response of the verbal abuser who sees his partner as an adversary. He is constantly countering and correcting everything she says and does. Sometimes the verbal abuser will cut off discussion in mid-sentence before she can finish her thought. In many ways, he cannot even allow her to have her own thoughts.

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***Discounting:*** Discounting denies the reality and experience of the partner and is extremely destructive. Sometimes verbal abuse is disguised as jokes. Although his comments may masquerade as humor, they cut the partner to the quick.

***Blocking and Diverting***: The verbal abuser refuses to communicate, establishes what can be discussed, or withholds information. He can prevent any possibility of resolving conflicts by blocking and diverting.

***Accusing and blaming***: A verbal abuser will accuse his partner of some wrongdoing or some breach of the basic agreement of the relationship. This has the effect of diverting the conversation and putting the other partner on the defensive.

***Judging and criticizing***. The verbal abuser may judge his partner and then express his judgment in a critical way. If she objects, he may tell her that he is just pointing something out to be helpful, but in reality he is expressing his lack of acceptance of her.

***Threatening*** is a classic form of verbal abuse. He manipulates his partner by bringing up her biggest fears. This may include threatening to leave or threatening to get a divorce. In some cases, the threat may be to escalate the abuse.

***Name-calling:*** Continually calling someone "stupid" because she isn't as intelligent as you can have a devastating effect on the partner's self esteem.

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**WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?**

The Bible clearly warns us about the dangers of an angry man. Proverbs 22:24 says, "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man." And Proverbs 29:22 says, "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression."

**PROVIDE THEM WITH THE FOLLOWING ADVICE WHEN FACED WITH VERBAL ABUSE:**

- Remain calm and choose your words carefully. A hurtful word becomes a destructive weapon, and our first reaction is to retaliate with hurtful words. Speaking good and uplifting words back in kind, will bring confusion to the abuser. The power of life and death is in the tongue. Breathe life-giving words.
- Control your emotions. Do not lash back with more of the same emotions that are coming at you. React with wisdom, not with feelings.
- Guard your heart. Do your best to not take the hurtful words personally.
- Understand abuse. Verbal abuse makes a person feel unloved, unwanted, unnecessary, and unworthy. The abuser must destroy the person's self-esteem to make them feel more powerful and in control. When in actuality, it is the abuser who is the insecure one. The abusive patterns are the abuser's way of regaining security.
- Concentrate on who you are to God. God created me (Psalm 130:13-18. I am not alone (Deuteronomy 31:6). I am loved by God (John 3:16). I am not afraid (2 Timothy 1:7). I can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13)

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

**TO THE ABUSED:**

Step one: Acknowledge that they are being abused verbally by their partner, parents, teacher etc.

Step two: Teach them that God loves them. The Bible teaches, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18)

Step three: Deal with their feelings of guilt. They may be feeling that the problem is their fault. "If only I would do better, he wouldn't be so angry with me." The Bible teaches in Psalm 51:6 that "Surely You desire truth in the inner parts; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place."

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Step four: Forgive the abuser and hand him / her over to God. Do not retaliate or take steps to revenge.

Step five: Accept the liberty of Christ. They can be free from being a victim 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

Step six: Retrain their negative thinking and teach them on what the Bible says about their worth. Provide them with scriptures that they will be able to meditate on. (For examples look at the self esteem section to these notes)

Step seven: Help them in overcoming depression. Avoiding depression can be accomplished when steps are taken to dispel it. Inactivity of one's situation breeds depression. Here are some active steps people can take to counteract the effects of depression brought on by verbal abuse.

- Realize that abuse is not your fault. Abuse is never justified.
- Discuss the unacceptable behavior with the abuser. Let the abuser know how much the harsh words hurt.
- Discuss ways both people can change to improve the relationship.
- Seek counseling: whether it is together, separately, or individually.
- Surround yourself with a support system of friends, family, church group, etc.
- If the verbal abuse becomes physical, personal safety is imperative. Leave the volatile situation and allow time for cooling down.
- The person dealing with depression due to verbal abuse must stop blaming him or herself for the problems. (See Depression for more details)

Step eight: Prayer with them for the relationship and the person who is abusing them.

Step nine: Provide them with scriptures to meditate on and give them the boldness to stand up to the person who is abusing them. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6) "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13)

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION:**

**TO THE ABUSER:**

Step one: Acknowledge that they have been verbally abusing the person whom they love.

Step two: Recognize that this abuse is ungodly and that it contradicts the type of love that God desires that we show to one another. Confess their sin to God.

Step three: Gather information so as to find out what is the root of their verbal abuse. For example. Jealousy, anger, inadequacy, behavior pattern taught and learnt by a parent, insecurity etc. Deal with these issues separately.

Step four: Provide the abuser with scriptures that they will meditate on concerning the importance of the words of their mouth.

Step five: Pray with them and ask God to give them self-control when they find themselves in a "abusive" situation. Teach them what to do in these situations that will stop the wrong behavior. For example: Leave the situation to cool off, pray and ask God for strength, phone your support leader to help you etc.

Step five: Teach them about anger management

Step six: Provide them with a person whom they will have to be accountable with.

Step seven: Ask the abused for forgiveness. Their repentance must be "true repentance" that will be lead to a change in their behavior.

Step eight: Work at reconciling the relationship. Discuss methods of effective communication and conflict management.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical assault is the most obvious form of domestic violence. Physical abuse is any act of violence on the victim, and can include the following:

- slapping,
- kicking,
- shoving,
- choking,
- pinching,
- forced feeding,
- pulling hair,
- punching,

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- throwing things,
- burning,
- beating,
- use of weapons (gun, knives, or any object)
- physical restraint - pinning against wall, floor, bed, etc.
- reckless driving, etc.

**Causes:**

Physical abuse develops because of several factors.

- Drugs and alcohol
- Childhood history of abuse
- Some people are just aggressive by nature. They quite often adopt the method of physical abuse to terrorize their partners and family members.
- Frustration and non-achievement on the part of a spouse may result in an abusive relationship.

**WHAT SHOULD THE COUNSELOR DO?**

**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION**

**THE ABUSER:**

Step one: Acknowledge that they are an abuser.

Step two: Identify what is the cause of this abuse. For example: If it is because of substance abuse, take them through the steps of addictions. If it is because they feel out of control, deal with anger management. If it is because they are trying to feel powerful and significant take them through how to find their self worth.

Step three: Teach them on what the Bible says concerning love. For example: 1 Corinthians 13. Is what they are doing to their spouse or their children, love? How do they describe love from their past experiences? How does the Bible describe love? How is their love different from the love expressed in the Bible?

Step four: Take them through repentance and confession for their wrong behavior. Hurting someone else is sin and therefore needs to be confessed.

Step five: Go to the person and ask for forgiveness. Saying, "I'm sorry" is never enough, unless it is accompanied by taking responsibility for wrong behavior

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and a genuine desire to change. In 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 , the Apostle Paul makes mention of a Godly kind of sorrow; the kind that leads to turning away from the wrong behavior.

Step six: Make a commitment to stop the abuse. This can only be done through changing their thought patterns to that which is based upon the Word of God. Provide them with scriptures which reveal their significance etc. Once you have changed their wrong thinking and feeling, you will be able to deal with their wrong behavior. Wrong behavior can be changed through the power of the Holy Spirit working in their lives. Remember that it is a process.

Step seven: Ask God to help them deal with their anger and to provide them with the strength to walk away when they are feeling angry. Deal with issues that were discussed in anger management.

Step eight: Provide scriptures that will help them. For example, scriptures on anger, love etc.

Step nine: Provide them with a support group or a person whom they will be held accountable to. Ensure that they meet with this person until their behavior has been changed.

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**IN THE COUNSELING SESSION:**

**THE ABUSED:**

Step one: Admit that they are being physically abused.

Step two: Understand why it is that the abused person is staying in the relationship or accepting the abuse. Are they dependent upon the relationship? Do they feel that they are not worth better treatment? What is their self image like? What thought go through their head when they are being abused?

Step three: Deal with issues such as low self esteem and self worth. The concept of true love. Teach them on the love of God and what the Bible describes love should be.

Step four: Take them through the steps of forgiving their abuser.

Step five: Deal with issues such as depression and loneliness.

Step six: Ask the abuser to come in for counseling. If they refuse to do so and continue in the abusive relationship, advise your counselee to find alternate accommodation until steps have been taken by the abuser to seek help. Help the counselee through this period of separation.

Step seven: Provide the abused with a support group.

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**ASSIGNMENT**

Following the same pattern as we have done in the notes, complete a study and the counsel you will give to a homosexual. In your study answer the following questions:

- What is homosexuality?
- What does the Bible say about homosexuality?
- How does a person become a "homosexual"?
- What are the main causes of homosexuality?
- What are the root problems of homosexuality?
- What counsel would you provide a person who is a homosexual?
- What counsel would you provide a person who wants to leave his wife for another man?
- What would you teach the person?

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