

What is Christ-Centered Counseling?

Counseling is not just a clinical form of employment that enables a therapist to achieve a sense of heightened self-worth or personal satisfaction. For the committed Christian, it is a God-given opportunity to reach into a hurting community with genuine hope. As Christ-centered therapists, our professional training is enhanced by the healing agents of God's immutable Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not limited to diagnostics, assessments and the ever popular DSM-IV. While we embrace these as legitimate tools, we also recognize that we are in partnership with the Master Counselor. The Holy Spirit is our eternal advisor who delights in giving his protégés words of knowledge, words of wisdom and prophetic utterances to facilitate the healing process. Through this divine partnership we are empowered as ambassadors in the authority of Christ Jesus.

As Christian counselors, we share the concerns of Christ for the whole man: body, soul and spirit. We are the healing community that our society so desperately needs! Our ministry is open to "*whosoever will*" as they respond to the love of Christ Jesus. To the unsaved and hurting masses we extend the hope that is in Christ. To the prodigals of the world we extend the promise of a fresh embrace and reconciliation. Evangelism of the lost and reclamation of the backslidden is a priority.

As followers of Christ, we are also called to be "*good and faithful stewards*" of the resources that have been entrusted to us. We recognize that we have been given legitimate and needed skills that should be accessible to those around us. The talents that we have received must be invested wisely for there to be a measurable return. It is here that we need to face the reality of marketing. Allow me to submit the following question in an allegory: "Would it be appropriate for a woman with a high risk pregnancy to continue to see her chiropractor when she needs the expertise of a qualified OBGYN?" How tragic it would be to discover that the needed professional was just one door down but inaccessible because neither the woman nor her chiropractor knew the OBGYN was there. How many high risk people are there who could benefit from our training and giftedness but simply do not know who or where we are?

We must get the word out. I am not talking about unabashed, narcissistic, self-promotion, but rather a well developed plan that accurately portrays our product. Let us determine to be proactive and network with other professionals in the healing community, give out our business cards and hang up our shingles. We did not come to this place in our career to just sit in our office and anxiously wait for the phone to ring. Oh, how I needed to hear that! I have shied away from any serious marketing for fear of being seen as self-promoting. I have been too laid back, simply relying on referrals from a few friends that have trusted my work.

We also recognize that while we may be gifted, we are not all things to all people. The skilled surgeon has an array of instruments at his disposal. Each one has been designed for a specific function and serves its purpose in the healing process. We mirror those similarities. As responsible Christian counselors, we are aware of both our expertise and our limitations. We seek only to be used as His instruments in those areas where we are best suited. When considering the complexities of human development, the proclivity of the sin nature and the

resulting individual and family dysfunction, each one of us must answer the following question: “Where does God want me to focus my practice?” Because we value the concepts of teamwork and recognize the necessity of collaboration with colleagues of like precious faith, we need to develop a referral network. Having the ability to direct our clients to other clinicians with the specific expertise needed will enhance and safeguard our clients and our credibility.

As practitioners in the Christ-centered mental health arena, we have an obligation to guard not only our reputations but also the reputations of our colleagues who share our value system. For this reason we must be professional in all our business dealings. The first rule in counseling is, “*do no harm*”. Knowing and adhering to a Biblical standard as well as an ethical code of conduct is not an option. It is a necessity. Developing and maintaining authentic accountability relationships safeguard us, our clients and our profession. There is no room for prideful attitudes that promote haphazard conduct in our public or private lives.

In our business practices, we should also strive to set an example of excellence in the materials we use. Having appropriate forms for data gathering, record keeping, policies and procedures, stationery and business cards should all be the best quality that we can provide. Counseling is a multifaceted endeavor that requires a variety of skills. We should enhance our strengths, staff our weaknesses, and avoid the temptation to do it all. If need be, partner with a group that provides that needed assistance.