

Counseling One Another in the Body of Christ

Part I: What Exactly is Counseling?

Sunday, 11/08/09

The Foundations of Healthy Counsel

God's Plan A: Self-Counsel

God dreams that each of us would live thoughtfully and carefully, not haphazardly nor impulsively. There are four Bible words that summarize how a thoughtful, careful, "self-counseled" individual will live:

Wise: "Not as unwise, but as *wise . . . understanding the will of the Lord*" (Eph 5:15-17)

Worthy: "That you might walk *worthy* of the Lord, *pleasing Him in every way*: (Col 1:9-10)

Holy: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, *holy and acceptable to the Lord*" (Rom 12:1-2)

Trained: "To those trained by discipline, it yields the *peaceable fruit of righteousness*" (Heb 12:11)

Such self-counsel comes not by accident. It grows by the cooperative effort of an individual, God, and the Body of Christ, via faith, God's Word, meditation, and obedience. But what happens when someone's self-counsel fails to lead him toward that wise, worthy, holy, and trained (W.W.H.T.) life? It doesn't matter whether ignorance, force of habit, or disobedience is the cause, God's "Plan B" can help him recover.

God's Plan B: Community Counsel

When someone's self-counsel fails, then God has designed several "back-up systems" to help that someone recover from the failure to counsel himself rightly:

Family: Spouses are to help one another toward that W.W.H.T. Life. Parents are to help their kids (even grown kids). Kids (even young kids) are to help their parents. Siblings (even grown siblings) are to help one another. Extended family are to help their nuclear families.

Friends: Some of our best friends ought to be people who help us rightly recover from our stumble, helping us get back to that W.W.H.T. Life.

A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity. (Pro 17:17)

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. (Pro 27:6)

Fellowship: God wants that we not be childish, not be tossed about by waves and winds of doctrine, nor by man's trickery or deceitful scheming. Instead, by speaking the truth to one another in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Christ. (Eph 4:13-15)

Force: When previous spheres of help cannot persuade someone back to healthy self-counsel . . .

The local church wields responsibility/authority to send away one who will not be restored to healthy self-counsel. (Mat 18:15-18; I Cor 5:1-5; I Tim 1:18-20)

The State wields responsibility/authority to punish, including taking life, from one who will not be restored to healthy self-counsel (I Pet 2:12-14; Rom 13:1-7; Gen 9:1-6)

Satan's Tactic: Unhealthy Counsel

Satan's Plan A: Twist Self-Counsel

By feeding each of us lies and half-truths, Satan would have each of us think, say, and/or do evil rather than good. Instead of helping us pursue a W.W.H.T. Life, he aims us at a U.U.U.U. Life.

Satan's Plan B: Twist Community Counsel

Twist Family Counsel: Any family member can at times counsel badly

Twist Friends Counsel: What appears as friendly affection can lead us badly (Pro 27:6)

Twist Fellowship Counsel: A group can affirm sin or attack good, disguised as God's word (Isa 5:20)

Twist Force: Both church & state can sin as they "enforce" proper behavior or doctrine

Understand Satan's Role in Anti-counsel

Get behind me Satan: Peter's anti-counsel prompts Jesus' condemnation (Mar 8:31ff)

Not against flesh and blood: Satan urges, whispers for your failure at a WWHT Life (Eph 6:10ff)

Doctrines of Demons: Lying & fallen men will teach what "deceitful spirits" teach them (I Tim 4:1ff)

W.W.H.T. Counsel fosters . . .

(Gal 5:22ff) the Fruit of the Spirit
(Rom 1:5-6) the "Obedience of Faith"
(Mic 6:5-8) Justice, Mercy, Faithfulness
(II Tim 2:24-26) Humble Repentance
(I Cor 2:12-13) Godly, Biblical Wisdom

U.U.U.U. Counsel fosters . . .

The "Works of the Flesh" (Gal 5:19ff)
the "Disobedience of Doubt" (Jas 1:6-8)
Criticism, Judgment, Bitterness (Mat 23:23-24)
Hard-Heartedness (Mat 23:15)
Human "Wisdom" or Folly (Col 2:16-23)

When and Where do We Counsel?

When the Need Presents Itself

Someone is stumbling: Self-, Family-, Church-, Society-destructive (Gal 6:1; Pro 24:11-12; Jas 3:1-2)

Someone sins against you: Bold, gentle, clear, gracious, w/o eye log, forgiving (Mat 18:15-18)

Someone is hurting another: Jesus v. money changers; v. pharisees (John 2:13-17; Mat 23)

Someone comes to you: Asking or not, we must encourage toward love & good works (Heb 10:24)

When the Timing/Setting is Appropriate

Privately, then two of you, then the elders or the Church (Mat 18:15-18)

Need of the moment (Eph 4:29)

When the Homework is Done

Four Gates: No unwholesome word, edifies; need of the moment; gives grace to hearer (Eph 4:29)

Log Gone: We cannot help another if we cannot see well to do so (Mat 7:1-5)

The Leaders' Role in Community Counsel

Leaders must equip saints to

Leave room for God to change people: Gentle, Humble, Patient, v. harsh, demanding, "now!"

Speak Truth in Love, whether encouraging, counseling, correcting (Eph 4:11-15)

Be teachable and obedient to that equipping (Tit 3:1; Heb 13:17)

Leaders must remind saints

Regular: Rom 15:15; II Tim 1:6; II Tim 2:14; II Pet 1:12;

Direct: Every NT Leader was direct with people: I Cor 4:17-21; II Cor 10:1-6; Jude 1:5

Biblical: Inspired, profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness (II Tim 3:16-17)

Leaders must show saints

Encouragement: N.T. examples in sermons, conversations, letters by Jesus, Paul, others

Counsel: Leaders, in their counseling, demonstrate W.W.H.T. Counsel (monkey see . . .)

Correction: Carefully, according to biblical principle, not whimsy or fleshly handling (II Cor 10:3-6)

Will We Be Counseled Thus?

For Community Counsel to Work in a Family or Church

Each of us must be teachable, loving, growing, diligent, watchful, careful, forgiving (W.W.H.T)