

Godly Counselling is not Man-Centred

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 10 October 2010 19:31

"We must get down alongside the person" says the counsellor (whether Christian or not). "We must begin with where he is. We must understand his problem and his situation, before we do anything to help"

says the same counsellor. Sounds okay? Of course it does. But do you remember the old Greek mythical tale of the Sirens? They had such beautiful singing voices, they were able to lure hapless sailors to their doom as they listened spellbound. Their ships smashed against the rocks and sank, along with all on board. What sounds good is not always proof of quality or of usefulness to the Christian!

Much of modern Christian 'counselling' is really godless theory wrapped in good intentions. Certain aims and practices are against Biblical truth. Too often, many good Christian folk who 'want to help' others are led by their emotions and not by what God demands. It reminds me of my nursing days, when we would protect a patient with diabetes by giving him or her the proper medication and a strictly controlled diet. But, relatives (or undertrained staff), thinking that the patient was having a rough time of it, would sneak in sweets and cream cakes, saying it was a 'treat'! What they were doing was measuring the other person's wellness against their own preferences. The result was a wildly fluctuating bill of health for the poor patient, frustration on the part of the people who were *really* helping, and a scenario that could easily lead to death!

Let us look briefly at the rule of Christian counselling. Really, there is only one major rule determining the boundaries of Christian helps. It is, simply, that we do what **God** wants, not what **we** want.

Then, we are not hampered by emotions and by what

we

think is best. We do what

God

wants. A few short definitions will guide us in this matter...

Everything God says is 'law'. Because He is God and is Perfect, His commands and requirements are also perfect. Therefore, what He says must be Absolute. (Because God is not a part of His creation, He Himself is above Absolutes). God cannot change His mind, make a mistake, or act in an impromptu way, because He knows everything, including what happens in the 'future' (to God there is no time).

Now, for human beings, God's word is found in the Bible. Everything in it is absolute, because it has been uttered by Almighty God. And what do we find? We find that God begins *with Himself*.

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Not with Man!

We cannot go into detail in this short introduction, but we can put forward several guidelines for Christian counselling.

1.

We must always start, continue and end with what *God* says.

2.

We do not waste time analysing a person's anxieties or wrongs. Instead, we start bluntly with God's Word (everything in the Bible is 'doctrine' and is for our guidance). All else is secondary.

3.

For the Christian there is no such thing as 'non-directive counselling'. Where we see sin, we must warn against it. We do not take long periods to 'get alongside' a person. Rather, we say "*God says...*"

. That is always our starting point. It is our duty to bring a person back to God, not to beat about the bush and swim in his own errors and human mess! If all we can offer is to jump into the very same human thinking and to struggle alongside, then we have nothing to hope for!

4.

Once we have said what God wants, there is not much more to it. The 'details' and the 'situation' of any case can be endless and humanly complex. What God says is clear and unequivocal. So we start with God and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit.

5.

When God's requirements have been set forth, He expects a person to comply. If he does not, then he is out of God's will and is disobedient. And so his situation gets worse. It is essential for the person to **(a)** know what God wants, and to **(b)** do it straight away. Let us assume that, in the midst of 'getting alongside' a person, he dies. That would mean we have discussed 'meaningful' (human) things but we have not led the person back to God!

6.

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If God requires immediate compliance with His commands, then what is a counsellor doing when he 'gets alongside' and spends many hours, weeks and months trying to unravel the mess made by relying on human feelings and ideas?

Once a Christian has declared God's word he has to retire from the situation until the person he has counselled comes back to God. There is no more he can do except pray and guide, and be there to help when the person wishes to repent.

Footnote

The above is merely an introduction to what has become an incredibly complex matter. Counselling today falls far short of Christian honesty and godliness, because it is centred on Man and not on God. The crux of it is very simple - what does God want? Once we have satisfied what God wants, all else will fall into place. There may be various 'details' to sort out, but these are nothing when put against complying with God's commands.

Lack of sympathy? No, quite the opposite! It takes a *real* friend to face a person with his or her sins and with God's commands. This is because we are ourselves prone to sin and can fall foul of our feelings. That is why it is imperative that we begin with God. We may have sympathy in a limited sense; we can acknowledge that we, too, could be in the same position because of our humanity and sinfulness; we can offer help when such a fall must be 'sorted out'. But, remember that the problems before us are based on sin.

Some counselling does not require directing a person to God's commands - it may require pointing him or her toward God's promises. Even so, His promises are inextricably linked with His commands, so the process is very similar: God first, then Man's 'problems' after. There is nothing worse in counselling, than a counsellor who refuses to direct or who does not clearly tell a man what God requires. Yes *tell*, you do not 'advise' or 'discuss' or 'debate' the absolute Truths of God!

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