

Overcoming the Stigma of Counseling

Session Two

“A Different Understanding of What Counseling Is”

1. What is “counseling”--The conflicted common conception:

a. It is “therapy” provided by a health professional.

“In counseling (also sometimes referred to as psychotherapy or, simply, therapy), mental health providers (or counselors or therapists) work collaboratively with people of all backgrounds to foster emotional/mental growth and healing.” (U of W)

b. It is mystical—requiring deep insights.

“Clinical wisdom is an archetypal collection of accumulated and hard-won psychological, philosophical, existential and spiritual knowledge collectively drawn and distilled from psychotherapeutic practice or research, as well as other healing traditions. This precious clinical wisdom has been handed down from master psychotherapist to apprentice or disciple, from training analyst to trainee, from professor to pupil, from supervisor to supervisee, from author to student, growing more refined, developing, evolving and transmuting over time.”

(Dr. Stephen Diamond, *Psychology Today*, “Essential Secrets of Psychotherapy: The Healing Power of Clinical Wisdom”. January 6, 2012)

c. Yet, it is simply someone listening and helping you through life.

“Psychotherapy...involves examining and gaining insight into life choices and difficulties faced by individuals, couples, or families.”

2. What are the common problems of counseling?

a. The common conception is that counseling deals with “labeled” problems: (Bi-polar, Clinical Depression, OCD, Paranoid Delusions, etc.)

b. But according to *Psychology Today*, the following are the most common reasons people have sought counsel according to psychologists from around the country: Fear of not being who they think they are supposed to be, and the imposter syndrome.

Perfectionism

Relationship problems, especially with online dating and dissatisfaction and fear of rejection.

Relationship boundaries

Difficulty saying “no” and the fear of disappointing others.

Anxiety, worry, and stress, especially related to work.

Sexual issues, including anxieties associated with expectations.

“Adjustment disorders”—divorce, death, job loss, culture changes, uncertainty.

Fears associated with current events, pandemic, shootings, politics.

Social anxiety.

Depression

3. These common problems are...common problems:

- a. Handout of "Mental Health Issues"

As one psychologist put it, "If you are going through a stressful time, or feel unhappy, anxious, or unsatisfied with yourself and your life, please don't talk yourself out of taking care of your feelings." But aren't stress and feelings of unhappiness, anxiety, dissatisfaction, etc. common life experiences for most if not all people?

What is it about these kinds of issues that put them out of reach of biblical wisdom?

- b. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, esp. 13.

While many problems are not due to personal sin, all problems are temptations to sin.

4. What, then, is the biblical conception of "counseling"?

- a. Psalm 1:1

- b. Proverbs 1:1-5

- c. 1 Corinthians 2:1-7