

Overcoming the Stigma of Counseling

Questions for Reflection/Discussion

Session One:

- How might defining mental health problems as mental “illnesses” contribute to stigma?
- Why might this lead to a resistance to receive counseling?
- What is the standard for what constitutes “good” mental health?
- What do terms like “therapy” or “treatment” imply about what happens in counseling?
- How might psychological “labels” lead to stigma?
- How might they lead to despair?
- What is the possibility of “cure” if mental illnesses are equated to unchangeable human characteristics like ethnicity?

Session Two:

- What are the conflicting messages concerning what counseling is? Why might this create confusion?
- What would most people likely consider to be the common problems addressed in counseling? Why is this so.
- What effect will this have on how people perceive counseling?
- Among the common problems discussed, how many are “uncommon”? Why is this important to know as Christians seeking to help?
- Why have we concluded that “psychological” problems are beyond the scope of the Bible? Looking at the list of common problems, is this the case?
- What is biblical counsel?

Session Three:

- Why would it be helpful to “de-professionalize” counseling?
- What would it take to do this?
- How is counseling made “mystical”?
- Why would it be important to de-mystify counseling?
- What goals do most people have in mind when thinking of counseling?
- Why might a “therapeutic” approach to counseling lead to despair?
- What is the proper aim of counseling?

Session Four:

- In what ways have we flattened or shrunken our understanding of the cross?
- Why has this happened?
- Why is it necessary that we have a cross if people are going to seek genuine help?
- Why is the cross essential for the healing needed by those suffering?