



Biblical Counsel
for
Christian
Teens



by
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BIBLICAL COUNSEL FOR CHRISTIAN TEENAGERS

by

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A thesis submitted to Salt Lake Baptist College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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PREFACE

My burden for young people began when I was a student attending a Christian college. As I worked in the youth group of the local church, I realized that many of these teenagers were struggling in one area or another. Although most of them had grown up in Christian homes and had been attending church their entire lives, they were still looking for someone to help them sort through things Biblically.

Upon graduating from college, I became a high school teacher at a Christian school and this burden continued to grow. Throughout these years, there were many times when I felt frustrated that I wasn't confident about what to say when "my girls" brought their problems to me. The responsibility of giving counsel that could influence their lives was overwhelming, and I didn't want to steer them wrong. However, I was no longer content to just be a "good listener" or a "shoulder to cry on". I wanted to be able to help guide these young people to solve their problems Biblically. I also had the desire to instill in them the vision of going on to serve the Lord with their lives.

Now I am a missionary's wife in Mexico and I am still working with the teen girls of our church here. I have in no way "arrived" as a counselor for teenagers, but I am much more confident in giving counsel when I know that it comes straight from the Bible! As I considered a topic for this thesis, the Lord laid this topic on my heart and I thought that perhaps there are others who have felt the same frustration that I felt. It is my desire to give a Biblical foundation from which we can counsel and guide the teenagers that God brings into our paths.

INTRODUCTION

In our churches today, there are young people who are in need of Godly counsel. Some may have doubts regarding their salvation, or questions about their future, or perhaps they have problems within their families that they are having trouble figuring out.

Many of these teenagers have been in church since their nursery days, and they can spout more Bible verses than many of their fellow adult church members. Because of this, we often assume that they are truly saved and that they actually have a desire to be in the church serving the Lord. However, this is not always the case. They may be in church simply because it's the only way of life they have ever known or because their parents force them to come.

The day comes, however, when each young person must decide where he stands with God personally. During the teen years, a young person is faced with his future. What will he do when he is on his own? Will he continue attending church? Will he maintain the same standards and convictions that his parents and pastor have upheld for him? These are serious and life-changing decisions and sadly, many Christian teenagers are left on their own in making them. Parents and pastors may unintentionally overlook these "church kids" and are heartbroken and shocked when their "good" teenagers go to the world.

We must open our eyes and see the needs of our young people. And, upon seeing these needs, we must prepare ourselves to better serve our teenagers by helping to guide them Biblically through this crucial time in their lives.

Part One

THE COUNSELOR MUST BE PREPARED

Part One: Chapter One

GOD'S WISDOM

Before we can begin to discuss specific counseling situations, we must be assured that we are well-prepared as counselors. We must not enter into any counseling situation with the idea that we can simply “wing it” or we will end up doing more harm than good. As counselors we have a great responsibility because the counsel that we give has the potential to influence lives in a positive or negative way. This does not mean that we need to be fearful or bashful about proclaiming Biblical truth and being straight-forward about sin, but we do need to be certain that we are well-armed spiritually for the work that God has entrusted to us. We are involved in a spiritual warfare and as we attempt to confront sin, we are entering enemy territory. Satan has no desire to watch us tear down his strongholds and restore lives for the glory of God, and we can be assured that he will resist our efforts in any possible way. Therefore, it is extremely necessary that we continually examine ourselves to be sure that we are truly prepared for each counseling opportunity that the Lord brings our way.

We must beg God for His wisdom. Contrary to the opinion of many “professional counselors,” He is the *only* One who holds the answers to life’s problems and we are simply available to be used as His mouthpiece. The Bible says in James 1:5 that if we lack wisdom, we are to ask God for it. He then promises that **“it shall be given him”**. It is not simply handed to us, however. It is “given” to us through the many ways that God chooses to teach us about Himself. Whether it is through personal Bible study or through the trials that God brings our way, we are to constantly be learning the mind of God and therefore obtain wisdom!

Dr. Jeff Owens said that **“Wisdom is the ability to see life through the eyes of God.”**¹ This ability is not something we ask for once and then magically retain throughout our lives. It is a continual, daily practice. The Bible tells us that we are to be learning daily!

Proverbs 8:34

Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”

If we as counselors do not have a specific time set aside daily with the Lord where we communicate with Him through reading His Word and praying it is unreasonable to assume that we will be able “to see life through the eyes of God”. And, if we can’t see life through His eyes, how are we going to encourage the teenagers that we counsel to do the same?

¹ Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians* (Crown Point, Indiana: Owens Publications, 1998), 18.

The Bible has much to say about wisdom and those who possess it. If we honor and obey our parents, we are called wise.

Proverbs 13:1

“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.”

If we seek Godly counsel ourselves, we are considered wise.

Proverbs 28:26

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.”

The list goes on and on. We must search the Scriptures and begin learning how to “become wise” ourselves. If we have not yet learned how to gain the mind of God, and through this His wisdom, then how do we intend to counsel others? **“What we do with the wisdom of God may determine what God can do with us. The things we have learned from God are the only things worth learning from us.”**² Before we ever step foot into a counseling situation with a teenager, we must know that we have the mind of God and that we are prepared to share His wisdom with that teenager.

² Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians*, 21.

Part One: Chapter Two

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Having the wisdom (or mind) of God and being filled with the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. The power that comes from being filled with the Spirit enables us to share the wisdom that God is in the process of teaching us. Without this Holy Spirit power, we will not be able to achieve success as counselors.

Luke 4:18

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

Doesn't this verse state what our goal should be as counselors? Are we not trying to heal and restore lives for the glory of God? Is it not our goal to see Christian teenagers delivered from their sin? Do we not want to see their eyes opened so that they can see clearly what God has to say to them? Who better to help us as we try to “heal the brokenhearted” than the one who the Bible calls the Comforter in John 14:26? Who better to help us accomplish these goals than the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit gives us the strength to do what needs to be done. The Bible says:

Ephesians 3:16

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

Without this strengthening, our counsel will be insufficient and weak. When a person is truly yielded to the Holy Spirit's power, the wisdom of God seems to pour out of him. On the other hand, when we are attempting to speak without that power, our words will be empty and shallow.

Another promise that the Bible gives to us as counselors, is that if we will truly submit to the power of the Holy Spirit we will find that He is guiding our thoughts and our words. In Proverbs we are given a precious promise from God.

Proverbs 1:23

“I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.”

There will be times when at exactly the right moment a verse or truth from the Bible will present itself in our minds and we will be able to successfully share with the teenager God's thoughts on the situation. How many times, though, do we rush ahead of the Spirit of God and use our own logic and way of thinking? What a mess we make when we do not depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit!

Part One: Chapter Three

HUMILITY

The counselor must be humble. We must recognize that it is not our personality or our talents that will truly affect changes in the lives of the young people that we counsel. It really isn't about us at all. We are only the vessels that God has chosen to use. It should be our desire to be **“vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.”** (II Tim. 2:20-21) If we enter into a counseling situation with the mindset that we can effectively minister by depending upon our own strengths and abilities, we are destined for failure as counselors.

No one wants to listen to a proud person. It is an immediate turn-off when someone tries to tell us “how it is” with an egotistical, arrogant attitude. The Bible says in Proverbs 28:25 that, **“he that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife...”** Not only will we not help a teenager in need when we are proud, we actually are causing him more problems!

In Matthew 23:12, the Bible says, **“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased . . .”** God will truly knock us off of our pedestal if we attempt to do His work our own way. However, the last part of that verse holds the promise that **“. . . he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”** If our goal in counseling is a “pat on the back” for our amazing insight and earth-shattering advice, then we are in the wrong business. God will never honor us if this is the motive behind our ministry of counseling.

Proverbs 15:33

“The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.”

We have the promise that we will receive the honour that God gives if we are truly **“humble in spirit”**. (Prov. 29:23) This “honour” that the Bible talks about isn't always the flashy, in-the-spotlight type of recognition that we might desire, however. We may never see the rewards of our labor here on earth, but we can be assured that our labor is not going unnoticed in heaven. In I Peter 5:6, the Bible says, **“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. . .”** God's ways truly are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. However, the principle is very clear. If we are humble, God will lift us up!

Part One: Chapter Four

HONESTY

Teenagers, especially, seem to have a built-in sense regarding honesty and hypocrisy. They are known to be able to “spot a phony” a mile away. If we truly have the desire to reach out to them, we must be real. To be “real” means not only real in our love and concern for their well-being, but also real in our own personal walk with the Lord. If we are just playing a part and putting on a show, they’re going to see that and it will only push them farther away from wanting to seek God’s direction for their lives.

Many Christian teenagers have seen too much hypocrisy in their local churches. They have watched their parents, teachers, youth leaders, and even pastors put on a good show while bragging about their own spirituality, and quite frankly, they are sick of it. They want to see something real and if they don’t, they will begin to ask themselves, “Why bother with the things of God? What’s the point?”

It is our responsibility to demonstrate to them the reality of God in our lives. In order to do this, we must have a close, personal walk with the Lord ourselves. We must do as the Bible says in II Corinthians:

II Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

How often do we just go through life depending on past victories that God has given us or past answers to prayer? We must daily “prove” that Jesus Christ is in us! We will not be effective counselors until our own lives are right and we are truly walking with God!

We must also be “real” in our love and concern for each teenager that we are privileged to counsel. If we try to “fake” our concern, they *will* know and it will only hinder them in making any sort of decision for God. They are looking for someone who genuinely cares about them. Oftentimes, people fake their love and concern and they use sugar-coated, syrupy words to gain the teenager’s approval. Teenagers don’t want this. They would prefer someone who cares enough to tell them things in a straightforward manner. They may not like what we tell them, but they will appreciate the honesty in our words. Sometimes they may get mad as conviction sets in, but so often they return later to thank the one who was willing to tell them the “hard thing”. That is being “real” in our love for them. It is true, though, that some people are simply hard to love. It may be because of a personality clash between the counselor and the teenager, or perhaps lack of personal hygiene. However, if we have the mind of God, we will also have the heart of God. We must see these teenagers as God sees them and our love for them will be real.

Part One: Chapter Five

PATIENCE

As we counsel teenagers, we will at one time or another most likely be faced with the temptation to lose our patience. There are several reasons for this. Perhaps we feel that they just aren't "getting it" and we have run out of ways to explain what we're trying to get across. Or, maybe they do understand and are stubbornly clinging to their own ideas and thoughts. In either situation, we must exercise patience and continue to give counsel from the Word of God. Dr. Jeff Owens said, **"I must remind myself to be patient when counseling youth. They do not usually admit guilt until the counselor has exhausted all the other possibilities."**³ It can be very frustrating and may seem like we're running around in circles! However, patience will pay off in the end.

When we remember the patience that God has demonstrated with us and our stubborn ways, it should inspire us to **"not be weary in well doing"**. (Galatians 6:9) Oftentimes, their stubbornness is simply immaturity. They are convinced in their own minds how things should be and it is our job to show them from the Bible the correct way of thinking. We must remind ourselves of how often we make up our own minds about things and refuse to consider that we might be in the wrong as we listen to the pastor preaching or while reading our Bibles. God is patient with us and continues to put pressure on us until we conform to His will. We also, as counselors, need to continue patiently applying the pressure of the Word of God which will bring conviction to the teenager's heart.

There is a point, however, when we might need to re-evaluate a counseling situation and determine the best course of action. When the teenager continually shows no desire to change and has no interest in the things of the Lord, we may need to terminate the counseling sessions and focus our efforts where they will be more effective. However, each young person that we minister to should know that we will always be available to counsel with them again if they are willing to look at their situation with an open mind and heart to what the Bible says.

Conclusion

The topics that we have discussed are by no means all of the areas that we as counselors need to examine. We must be open and honest before God in our desire to counsel, and continually ask Him to show us areas in our lives that may hinder us in giving His counsel to the young people with whom we come into contact.

[Return to course main page and take TEST ONE.](#)

³ Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians*. 83.

LESSON TWO

Part Two

**PRACTICAL TOOLS IN
COUNSELING TEENAGERS**

Part Two: Chapter Six

GUIDELINES IN COUNSELING CHRISTIAN TEENAGERS

As we prepare to counsel teenagers, there are some guidelines that we must consider. Following these guidelines will help us in earning the respect of the teenager we are counseling and he will then be more apt to listen to what we have to say. When we are not careful in the practical areas of counseling, we very well could cause shame to come to our church's name, but more importantly to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a wise counselor who is careful in the way he counsels a teenager.

1. **Never meet alone with a teenager of the opposite sex.** The Bible says in I Thessalonians 5:22 that we are to “**Abstain from all appearance of evil**”. We can not give any cause for doubt in our conduct with the teenagers we counsel. Even if there is no wrong-doing, we can not open ourselves up for possible accusations. This guideline not only protects our personal testimonies, but also enables us to avoid temptation as well. Teenage girls, especially, tend to seek the attention of a man and may attempt to use counseling situations to get close to a male counselor. We must be alert to this and use wisdom in our counseling practices. For this reason, the counselor should always have his spouse or another Christian worker present when counseling a teenager of the opposite sex. We can not give the devil even an inch!
2. **Do not try to be on the same level as the teenager.** It is tempting to try to talk like they do in an attempt to “break the ice,” but we will end up losing their respect and probably look like fools in the process! Adults don't often succeed in trying to be on a teenage level. Instead of putting ourselves on their level, we need to lift them up to a mature, adult level. Speak to them like an adult and they will most often rise to the occasion. “**If a counselor will let a teenager seeking counsel be on his level, he will have more respect.**”⁴ If we are putting ourselves on their level, the teenager may feel that talking with us is no different than talking to one of his peers. He has come to us seeking counsel from an adult, not a teenager! Our goal is that the teenager will learn to view his problem, and life in general, in a mature way. We must help him reach that goal by speaking to him like a mature adult.
3. **Listen to the teenager!** We must not assume that we already know the answer to the problem before we have even given him a chance to tell his side of it! The Bible tells us in Proverbs how foolish that is!

⁴ Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians*, 135.

Proverbs 18:13

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

Many times teenagers are not given the opportunity to state their cause at home. Parents often fall into the trap of thinking that they are always right and immediately cast blame on their children. This is one of the causes of parent/teenage friction. We, as counselors, must allow them to speak freely and *without interruption!* There will be times when the teenager we are counseling evidences the fact that he is not thinking logically or Biblically. We will be tempted to jump in and show them the many errors in their way of thinking. Don't do it! These interruptions will discourage any confidence the teenager might have in his counselor. We must show him that we respect him and truly want to hear what he has to say. There will be plenty of opportunity to share Biblical insight later. Let him talk and strive to be a patient listener!

A patient listener is also careful with what he is communicating with his facial and bodily expressions. If we are listening with a critical spirit, the teenager will sense that and will probably not be willing to open up and share what he is really thinking and feeling. A bored expression or constantly checking the time will also discourage a teenager from confiding in his counselor. Work at truly listening with compassion!

4. **Do not allow the counseling session to become an authority-bashing hour.** We must be good listeners, but we can not allow the teenager to be disrespectful regarding his authorities. This includes parents, teachers, youth directors, pastors, and most importantly, God. He should be allowed to state his side of the story, while maintaining a respectful attitude. We must be firm in this! If we simply allow him to rant and rave about his authorities, we are teaching him that it's okay to be disrespectful when he feels he is in the right. We are actually encouraging him to sin! Those placed in authority over him are not perfect, by any means. These men and women are human as well, and could very well be at fault in the situation. However, God has placed them in an authority position in the teenager's life for a specific purpose. By demanding that the teenager demonstrate self-control while stating his cause, we are accomplishing what was mentioned previously. We are pulling the teenager up to a mature, adult level. He will be allowed to share his story, but he must maintain self-control and be respectful while doing so.

5. **Do not “take sides” in any situation.** Dr. Jeff Owens said, **“A teenager almost always expects an adult to gang up on him. The wise counselor will explain that he is on the side of the right.”**⁵ Perhaps the problem is between the teenager and his parents. The counselor must patiently explain

⁵ Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians*, 139.

the Bible's perspective regarding the issue, being careful not "add fuel to the fire" by supporting the teenager's idea that his parents are in the wrong. We must be sure that we are impartial in the conflict when it comes to "who is right and who is wrong". More often than not, there is fault on both sides, whether adult or teenager. What we must focus on, however, is the teenager who is sitting before us. We must confront the problems in *his* heart and seek to restore *his* relationship with God. In helping him to examine and correct, with the Lord's help, his own reactions and attitudes, we are helping him to develop a mature and Biblical response to problems. We must stress that it is not *our* responsibility or *his* responsibility to restore another person's relationship with God. That is between "that person" and God and we really can't do anything about it because "he" isn't the one sitting in the counselor's office. Let the teenager know that you are actually on his side, encouraging him to make things right with his God!

6. **Let him know that you are human.** If we sit in our counseling chair, piously spouting Bible verses, the teenager will probably not even consider the things we are saying. We must let him know that we've been there. This doesn't mean that we need to begin confessing our failures and sins so that he will feel better about his own. We must simply reach out to him as another sinner striving to live for the Lord. Maybe we haven't had to deal with exactly what he is currently working through, but we can let him know that we understand the challenge of truly yielding to God and His will for our lives. Teenagers aren't looking for someone to preach to them. They are looking for someone who will truly take an interest in their lives and will tell them what they need to hear in a loving way.
7. **Do not attempt to counsel a teenager in a public setting.** This rarely works, as teenagers are very "peer conscious". Try to find a private place where he can be free to open his heart without fear of what others might be thinking. There are times when we must confront a teenager in public, perhaps in cases of a public offense. However, these times should be few and far between. When there is the need for a public confrontation, it should never be done to "make an example" out of the teenager, but rather, to instruct that teenager as well as others. The Bible says to "**speak the truth in love**" in Ephesians 4:15. This is true whether in a public or private setting. When a teenager is publicly humiliated, his embarrassment turns to anger and he will lose the respect for and confidence in his counselor. And sadly, many times that confidence is never regained.
8. **We must give hope!** No matter how bleak a situation may seem to be, there is always hope to share from the Bible. We must never allow a teenager to leave a counseling session feeling defeated and without any hope. It is our

responsibility to show him from the Bible how God desires to use the circumstances in his life for His own glory. We must never say, “Boy, that sure is rough. I don’t really know what to say to you, but I’ll sure be praying for you.” The Bible is full of verses that give hope and we have to be prepared to offer Scriptures that specifically deal with his situation. We must be ready to offer hope!

I Corinthians 10:13

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

What an amazing promise! Jay Adams said, **“The counselor may extend hope confidently to the Christian counselee upon the basis of God’s promise.”**⁶

9. **Don’t give up on the teenager!** There will be times when we, as counselors, will be tempted to throw in the towel. However, we must never give in to that temptation. Each teenager is a special creation of God and His desire is to have fellowship with him. It is our responsibility to help restore that fellowship between the teenager and his God. If we give up, we are telling the teenager that essentially there is no hope for him. He is responsible for his own choices, but if we discourage him from seeking God, we will be held accountable for that. We must remember the patience and long-suffering that God continually shows to us. He doesn’t give up on us, so why should we give up on another?

There may be situations, however, when we need to step back and re-evaluate our counseling methods. We may need to change the way we are counseling or the number of times we meet with a teenager that evidences no desire to change. When a teenager decides not to seek counsel and chooses to follow after the world, he must know that we will still be there for him should he decide to seek the Lord and come again for counseling.

10. **Make him think for himself.** Teenagers are very accustomed to being told what to do and how to think, not that they are always apt to comply, but they aren’t going to be surprised if we begin listing things that they should be doing. If we help to guide their thinking, instead, and *they* begin to come up with the things they should be doing and thinking, it will make more of an impact. For example, when a teenager comes to us for counsel regarding a

⁶ Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor’s Manual* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1973),

problem he is having with his parents, it is automatic for us to begin preaching about honoring his parents, etc. However, if we turn the tables around, and ask him what *he* thinks the Bible says about his situation, he may just come up with better counsel than we could give him anyway! After all, he knows his situation better than we do, and often just needs someone to guide his thinking.

The counselor should not have to do all of the work. Giving homework will be beneficial to the teenager, as well. Scripture memorization, daily devotional paragraphs, and acts of service for the Lord are just a few ideas that we can use as homework opportunities. We need to be creative in the type of projects we give. The teenager needs to know that in order to continue receiving counsel, he must be willing to put something into it as well.

[Return to course main page and take TEST TWO.](#)

Part Two: Chapter Seven**THE NEED FOR CHANGE**

When a teenager comes to us for counsel, we must help him to recognize that there is a need for change. This may seem to be an obvious statement, but if the teenager is only interested in lodging his complaints with a sympathetic listener, nothing will be accomplished in the counseling session. These sessions should never become an “authority-bashing” hour where the teenager simply gets everything off of his chest. He may feel better when he is done, but nothing has changed. Many well-meaning Christians try to help by lending a sympathetic ear, but in reality, they are hurting the teenager in his walk with and view of God. He is being given the opportunity to disrespect his authorities and when we simply listen to his complaints, he feels that his way of thinking must be right. For this reason, we must be prepared to show him what the Bible has to say regarding the situation.

In secular counseling, the change begins with the actual situation. However, as Christian counselors, we must show the teenager that the change actually begins between himself and God. Jay Adams said, **“Whatever one’s other problems may be, there can be no change that is acceptable to God, and in the long run, to the counselee, until fundamental, positive change toward God has occurred.”**⁷ It is easy to get wrapped up in the “problem” to discuss and forget about the underlying source of the problem. The Bible commands us in Mark to first love God and then to love our neighbor.

Mark 12:29b-31

“. . . The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

If we are only concerned with restoring earthly relationships, we are missing the purpose of Biblical counseling. The end result will be an outward change that may look good for awhile, but it will be a change that does not last. Soon, the teenager will be back to see the counselor because he has found himself exactly where he used to be.

The teenager must examine himself to see where he has gone wrong in his relationship with God. More than likely he is not the only one at fault; however, he is not responsible for another person’s relationship with God. He must take responsibility for his own sin and make things right with his God if he is ever to see true change take place.

⁷ Adams, Jay E., *How to Help People Change*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 3.

When dealing with teenagers, we often hear that the reason for teenage rebellion is because of hormones, peer pressure, or the **“natural struggle for independence”**.⁸ Jim Berg stated it very clearly when he said that some of these things **“can certainly influence a teenager’s thoughts and choices and will need to be addressed, not one of them strikes at the root of the problem—the teenager’s heart itself”**.⁹ Let us deal with the “heart” of the teenager and help him to affect a true change by focusing on his relationship with his God.

⁸ Berg, Jim, *Changed Into His Image*, (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1999), 28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 28

Part Two: Chapter Eight

THE BIBLE (KJV) HOLDS THE ANSWERS

As we counsel teenagers, we can rest assured that we have at our disposal the only tool that contains the answer to any problem, situation, or issue that we may encounter. This tool is God's inspired Word, the King James Bible. This guidebook teaches us exactly how we ought to live and will enable us to instruct others also. This means, however, that we must be students of the Word or we will not know where to turn for the answers. We must do as II Timothy tells us:

II Timothy 2:15

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

How will we be able to “rightly divide the word of truth” if we have not first studied it to know what it says? Jay Adams says it plainly when he said that **“our problem is not that we do not have what we need in the Bible, but that we do not have enough of the Bible in us, which we need!”**¹⁰ How true this is! We will be more effective in our counseling if we are continually hiding the Word of God in our hearts.

Not only can we be confident in the tool that God has given to us, we can also take comfort in the fact that there is no problem that will take the Lord by surprise. It does not matter if we are living in Bible times or in the twenty-first century, the roots of the problems faced are the same as well as the solutions. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 1:9 that **“there is no new thing under the sun”**. I Corinthians 10:13 also tells us that **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man . . .”** We can then conclude that:

“if no Christian faces unique tests in life, and if Paul can say to the church at Corinth (living in an entirely different age and culture) that what happened to the Israelites is pertinent also to them (I Cor. 10: 6, 11), the counselor may be assured that he will face no truly unique problems in counseling.”¹¹

There will be times when the situation may *seem* “unique,” but we can be sure that it isn't. We must then, as counselors, identify what the root of the problem is so that we will be able to address it correctly from the Bible. **“Just as the Christian counselor knows that there is no unique problem that has not been mentioned plainly in Scriptures, so also he knows that there is a biblical solution to every problem.”**¹²

¹⁰ Adams, Jay E., *How to Help People Change*, 32.

¹¹ Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 23.

We should never find ourselves at a loss for words, because we can rest in the fact that God has an answer to every problem in His Word.

I Timothy 3:16-17

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

We have in our possession the living word of God and it is “profitable” in enabling us to be “perfect” and “throughly furnished”. Is it not our goal as counselors to show the teenager what the Bible says (doctrine), point out the sin that is between him and God (reproof), explain the way to make things right (correction), and teach him how he can continue living for and pleasing his God (instruction in righteousness)? Why then, would we attempt to accomplish this without the tool that God has designed specifically for that purpose?

Return to course main page and take TEST THREE.

Part Two: Chapter Nine

REPROOF, CORRECTION, AND INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

In order for a true change to take place in the heart of a teenager, there must be evidence of conviction. This is then followed by the “correction and instruction in righteousness”. Using the Bible as our tool, we as counselors are to bring to light the sin that is causing a barrier between the teenager and God. This goes back to the point that was made previously that the counselor must know his Bible! **“We can not hope to use the Bible to bring about Holy Spirit conviction if we don’t have the knowledge of what Scriptures to use for specific situations, or the ability to explain thoroughly the Scriptures we use.”**¹³

The Bible has the power to cut to the chase and illuminate the sin if the teenager is willing to allow its illuminating power to do so. This is a painful and uncomfortable experience as those who desire a close relationship with Christ know. No one is perfect and we all have to confront the sin that is in our lives. As counselors, we are helping the teenager to confront this sin by admitting its presence and then desiring to be rid of it! The teenager must be “knocked down” before we can help him back up! Jay Adams says in his book How to Help People Change that the counselor must use **“the Word not only to knock counselees prostrate before the holy God they have offended, but also to put them back on their feet”**.¹⁴ We as counselors shouldn’t get pleasure out of this “knocking down” part of counseling, but we must do it in order to restore a teenager’s relationship with his God.

Revelation 3:19

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.”

God doesn’t get pleasure out of it either, but He rebukes and chastens us because of His great love for us.

As counselors, we can not see inside the heart of a teenager. We can only judge by what we see on the outside. However, we have the promise that is given in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 17:9-10,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

¹³ Adams, Jay E., *How to Help People Change*, 125.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

We can use the Bible as our tool in bringing conviction to a teenager, and then if he is truly ready to do something about that conviction, we can begin the process of correction.

The first step in correction is repentance. The teenager may be convicted of his sin but not willing to repent. We must explain to him what true repentance involves. He must first confess his sin to God as well as others whom he has offended by his sin, seeking their forgiveness. If a teenager is not willing to do this, there is no evidence that he is truly repentant.

Proverbs 28:13

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

The purpose of confession is to seek forgiveness. In I John 1:9 we are given the promise that **“if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** The teenager has the unconditional promise that he is forgiven of God when he confess his sins to Him. However, as he confesses his sins to others that he has offended, it is up to each individual person to decide whether or not he will forgive. The teenager can only do his part of honestly confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness.

The next step in the process of correction and repentance is to forsake his sin and begin to work on pleasing the Lord in that area of his life. God will not bless him if he continues in his sin. Again in Proverbs 28:13 it says that **“... whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”**. The teenager can not confess and ask forgiveness for his sin and then expect that the temptation to fall into that sin again will just go away. He must make serious changes and take precautions in his life to guard himself from those temptations. There may be times when he will fall into the same sin again and we as counselors must be patient in going through the same steps of conviction, correction, and instruction in righteousness again. We must remember though, that these steps are not accomplished just by the counselor and teenager going through the motions in a step-by-step, “repeat after me” prayer. The Bible and the Holy Spirit must affect the change. Jay Adams said, **“Correction is the pivotal point of change, in which the transfer of thought and life from non-biblical to biblical ways begins.”**¹⁵ His way of thinking must change as he forsakes his sin.

After the teenager has been convicted of his sin, repented and asked forgiveness from God and others he has wronged, and has forsaken that sin, he is ready to be instructed in the ways of righteousness. Often, that is where counselors stop their counseling. The problem is solved, so they're ready to move on to someone else. We must, as counselors, be ready to guide him not only in “putting off the old man” but also in “putting on the new man” or it won't be long and he will be back for more counseling!

¹⁵ Adams, Jay E., *How to Help People Change*, 146.

Ephesians chapter 4 and Colossians chapter 3 deal specifically with the need to “put off” and “put on”. The teenager must learn how to live righteously and godly so that it will be hard for him to fall into the traps that Satan has laid out for him. We need to emphasize the fact that when we depend on our own righteousness we will fail.

Romans 10:3

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

The teenager’s life and habits will not change until he has submitted himself to the righteousness of God. In Romans 6 we are given a chapter telling us how we ought to yield ourselves to God and not to sin. As counselors we must realize that the teenager that we are counseling has been a servant to sin. Paul writes about the kind of servants we are to be in the book of Romans.

Romans 6:14 and 18

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but, under grace. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

He must become the servant of righteousness, obeying and glorifying his new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, at all costs!

Part Three

**ISSUES FACING
CHRISTIAN TEENAGERS**

Part Three: Chapter Ten

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

It may seem odd to begin a section dealing with issues that are facing Christian teenagers with a chapter about salvation. However, unless the teenager that we are counseling has a definite assurance of his salvation, there can be no effective change made in his life. Without the Holy Spirit dwelling within, he will have no one to guide him in solving his problems. John 16:13 says that **“when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”** We can not take for granted that a teenager who grew up in the church is saved. He must be able to point to a definite time and place when he repented of his sins and received Christ as his Saviour. How many times have we seen teenagers or adults who have grown up in a Christian family humble themselves before God and confess that they have never truly been saved?

In a way, a teenager that has grown up in church has a disadvantage. He has never known any other way of life. He has been learning Bible verses and Bible stories since he was a toddler. It is often hard for such a teenager to distinguish between what has simply been a “way of life” and what is actually real. The teenager we counsel will most likely have made a profession of faith as a child, perhaps in a Sunday School class, Junior Church, or maybe at a Christian camp. And, now, as a teenager, he begins to wonder if he truly understood what he was doing at the young age of four or five. He begins to have doubts about his salvation. It is our responsibility as counselors to be sensitive to this and ask questions that will help us to see where he stands with God. A teenager that has grown up in church might be ashamed or embarrassed to admit that he has doubts about his salvation.

This matter of salvation must be our first concern. We can not assume anything. Once we know that a teenager is not sure of his salvation, we must open the Bible and show him how he can be 100% sure that he is on his way to heaven. We must be sure that he understands the following:

1. **Good works can not save him.**

Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

It does not matter that this teenager has probably been involved in the bus ministry, works in the nursery, or that he has gone soul-winning every week. These “works” will not save him! It is a gift and no amount of service can buy it. (see also Titus 3:5)

2. **Every man is a sinner.**

Romans 3:23

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Although he may not have committed the gross sins of the world, in God’s eyes he is still just as guilty and is in need of redemption.
(see also Romans 3:10)

3. **There is a punishment for sin.**

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death . . .”

Sin causes separation from God, not only a separation of fellowship with Him on this earth, but for all of eternity. (see also Romans 5:12b; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 21:8)

4. **Jesus Christ paid our sin debt.**

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

He must realize the great love that God has for him in sending his Son to die for sinners. (see also Romans 5:8; 6:23)

5. **He must receive Jesus Christ as his Saviour.**

Romans 10:9

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

This is something he must do himself. It does not matter that his dad is a deacon and his mom teaches a Sunday School class. No one else can receive salvation for him. It is a personal act of faith. (see also Acts 16:31)

6. **Once he is saved, it is forever!**

John 10:28

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

Once he receives Christ as his Saviour, he no longer needs to have any doubt of his eternal security. No one can take that away from him. He is saved, once and for all!

After the teenager has accepted Christ as his Saviour, we can then begin to counsel him concerning other matters because now the Holy Spirit is residing within and will help to guide this young new believer!

Part Three: Chapter Eleven

PURITY: PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL

One of the most common counseling issues that we will face with teenagers concerns their relationships with the opposite sex. It seems that whenever teenagers are asked to give ideas for topics to discuss in a youth group or a Sunday School setting, boy/girl relationships are most always at or near the top of the list. This topic contains many subtopics, and we will look at a few of these here. This is one area that many teenagers struggle to completely surrender to the Lord. We must help them to see the wonderful blessings that God will pour out on them and their future generations if they will just yield completely to Him in this area.

In our day and age, unfortunately even in Christian circles, there are very few boundaries when it comes to boy/girl relationships. No longer is emotional and physical purity something to guard at all costs. Teenagers are thought of as “weird” if they have never kissed, or experienced some level of intimacy, with a member of the opposite sex. As we counsel these teenagers, we must stress to them the reality that their **“adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (I Pet. 5:8). It is his goal to derail each Christian teenager by placing temptation in his path. In her book, *Passion and Purity*, Elizabeth Elliot said, **“If there is an Enemy of Souls (and I have not the slightest doubt that there is), one thing he can not abide is the desire for purity. Hence a man or woman’s passions become his battleground.”**¹⁶ It needs to be our goal then to help the teenager to bring these passions “under subjection”.

God has created each individual with natural desires and passions, and in and of themselves they are not wrong or sinful. When we do not allow the Lord to have control of these desires and passions however, we are inviting trouble and heartache. Teenagers are just discovering these passions that lie within, and have not yet learned how to gain control over them by giving them over to God. It isn’t an easy thing to do, either! However, Elisabeth Elliot said the following in her book, *Quest for Love*:

“God always answers the cry of the man or the woman who *wills* (against all *wanting*) to do His will. It is here that the battle is waged. My will must be baptized with fire—cleansed and purified and *consumed* as I offer it to God, a living sacrifice.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Elliot, Elisabeth, *Passion and Purity*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1984), 26.

¹⁷ Elliot, Elisabeth, *Quest for Love*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1996), 37.

When a teenager completely surrenders his will to God, He will enable him to keep a tight rein on those passions. The passions will still be there, but they won't be dictating the actions of the teenager.

Physical intimacy is something our Christian teenagers have more than likely heard many sermons about during special youth meetings or conferences, and yet, our girls are still getting pregnant and many lives are continuing to be scarred. As we counsel teenagers regarding their relationship with the opposite sex, we can not assume that they "know better" and would never allow themselves to be in a situation where there is an opportunity to have marital relations with another teenager. We must not be naive as counselors! These teenagers are being bombarded with "sex" and "pornography" from all sides and many times youth pastors and counselors are hesitant to bring up what the Bible has to say about the subject because it is uncomfortable. Because of our unwillingness to address an "uncomfortable" topic, our teenagers are only receiving guidance from one side . . . the world! We must learn how to use discernment and yet still be direct in dealing with this in our counseling.

The Bible is very clear regarding the sin of fornication. In I Corinthians, Paul tells us exactly how God views this sin.

I Corinthians 6:15

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."

Our Christian teenagers need to know that by committing fornication, they are sinning, not only against God, but also against their own bodies. There will be scars that don't just magically disappear when they decide to get right with God. Some of these scars they will carry with them the rest of their lives. The same chapter goes on to say:

I Corinthians 6:18-20

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

We have all heard the testimonies of teenagers and adults who have fallen into the sin of fornication. We have seen the shame and hurt that comes as a result. We have seen the scars that follow these teenagers and adults throughout their lives. It isn't that God doesn't forgive or that He won't use that person again, but there are often permanent consequences that they will continue to deal with. We must impress upon our Christian teenagers the great value of the gift that God has given to each of them . . . their purity.

There are some who may be called to a life of singlehood, but the majority of the teenagers we counsel will one day be married. God wants them to know that He has a mate uniquely created for them. The challenge for them will be to wait for God's timing in revealing that mate. Each person was created by God as a gift for his or her future spouse. When a teenager begins to violate his purity, he is degrading the value of that gift for his future spouse. No one desires to receive an opened, dirty, or used gift. However, if the teenager does not guard and protect his special gift, that is exactly what he will be offering to his future spouse as they stand together at the wedding altar.

When we speak of physical purity, we obviously immediately think of losing one's virginity. However, there are more areas of physical purity that we should encourage our teenagers to guard for their future spouses. How special it is when a man and woman stand before the wedding altar knowing that they have saved themselves completely for each other, not only their virginity, but the intimacy of kissing, holding hands, and hugging as well. These demonstrations of affection should also be guarded. Not only is it an amazing gift and blessing to give to a spouse, it must also be pointed out that it is extremely dangerous to "play around" with these acts of intimacy. We have all heard it said, "One thing leads to another," and it is a true statement. We must teach our teenagers to hold themselves to the highest possible standard, so that they can not only bless their future spouses, but most importantly, bring glory to their God! Joshua Harris said, "**We have to understand purity as a pursuit of righteousness.**"¹⁸ It isn't merely a set of rules and regulations. If our teenagers view it as simply a line that they must not cross, what's to keep them from going as close to the line as they possibly can? Harris goes on to point out that "**True purity flees as fast and as far as it can from sin and compromise.**"¹⁹ Let us endeavor to instill in the teenagers that we counsel a God-given determination that they will guard their purity!

This not only applies to physical purity (sexual relationships, hand-holding, kissing, etc.), but also to emotional purity. What is emotional intimacy? Heather Arnel Paulsen defines it as "**a close, private relationship that would invoke strong feelings, passions, and the senses.**"²⁰ Often a teenager will say, "Oh, we're just friends!" And, yet, they share personal secrets and lean on each other emotionally. How often have we heard this "we're just friends" statement made and then months down the road the girl comes to us crying because she's pregnant and doesn't know what she is going to do? Not only do our teenagers need to be careful in their "dating/courting" relationships, but also in so-called "friendships" with the opposite sex.

Today, it is common for teenagers to be close friends with a guy or a girl and share the kind of emotional intimacy that should only be shared between a married couple. Teenagers are opening up parts of themselves that should never be opened up to another teenager of the opposite sex. Girls, especially, tend to share their hearts and

¹⁸ Harris, Joshua, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Books, 1997), 91.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁰ Paulsen, Heather Arnel, *Emotional Purity*, (Enumclaw, Washington: Winepress Publishing, 2001), 40.

reveal secret things about themselves in an attempt to further strengthen a bond between themselves and another person. When they do this, pain and suffering usually follows. Eventually, one or the other decides they would rather share a bond with someone else and hurt feelings and broken hearts are the result. Or, their bond becomes stronger and stronger and they have eventually shared and exposed every secret part of themselves. By this point, the emotions are so out of control, that there is nothing left to share except their bodies and fornication inevitably follows.

We have allowed our teenagers to become “too familiar” with each other. When the emotions start to soar, there is no stopping them! If a teenager experiences this emotional intimacy with others of the opposite sex before he is married, he is not guarding his special gift for his future spouse.

Another area to be aware of regarding this idea of emotional purity is the sin of “defrauding” our brothers and sisters in Christ. Webster defines defrauding as “**to swindle or cheat.**” Basically, to defraud someone is to steal or cheat them out of something they are saving for someone or something else. **“One could define it as teasing them with what they can not have.”**²¹ The Bible tells us clearly that we are not to defraud one another.

I Thessalonians 4:3-6

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.”

When teenagers become emotionally intimate, they are cheating each other, and their future spouses, out of the pure and undefiled relationship that God desires them to have with their future spouses. They are also in a sense “teasing” each other with the forbidden “sexual act”. **“In our society, there is a common acceptance of defrauding one another in uncommitted, emotionally intimate friendships between men and women.”**²² We must, as counselors, do our best to “reverse the trend” with the teenagers that we counsel. Most people realize and appreciate the idea of physical purity, but how much more special when one guards his emotional purity as well!

Another way that teenagers defraud others is in the area of dress. When a teen girl dresses in a way that causes a teen boy to lust after her, she is sinning against God and against that boy! Our teen boys have enough of a challenge keeping their thoughts pure as they deal with billboards and the magazine covers at the grocery store check-out counter. They should be able to focus on spiritual things when they come to church!

²¹ Paulsen, Heather Arnel, *Emotional Purity*, 57.

²² *Ibid.*, 58.

However, our teen girls don't allow them to do that, and it is sin. We must encourage our teen girls to set high dress standards for themselves so that they will not defraud their Christian brothers.

Another topic that often comes up among different youth groups is the idea of dating versus courting. There have been books written and a lot of talk about the idea of courtship as opposed to dating. Many times it is simply how one defines the two terms that makes the difference. Some people use the term "dating" and actually agree completely with those who would *never* use that term. Parents must set the guidelines in their homes in the arena of dating/courting. However, we as counselors, can help teenagers by sharing the Biblical guidelines discussed in this chapter as well as in the following chapter.

In our society today it is considered "normal" to date around, as if "trying on" another person to see how they "fit". In this process, young men and women are becoming emotionally attached to many different people and in the end there isn't much left for the one that they marry! Whichever "term" we want to use, let us encourage our young people to guard their purity as a precious gift for the unique person that God has set aside for them to marry!

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Part Three: Chapter Twelve**CHOOSING A LIFE'S MATE: WAITING ON GOD**

When listening to teenagers talk about a girl or a guy that they like, they tend to focus on the physical attributes of that person. We might hear something like, “He’s sooooo cute! I think I’m in love!” or “She is sooooo hot! That’s the one for me!” The Bible gives a lot of guidance in the area of choosing a life’s mate and as surprising as it may be to the teenager, the outward, physical characteristics are not the deciding factor! The Bible teaches that it is the inner man of the heart that the teenager needs to be concerned about because therein lies the true person. In fifty years, as wrinkles begin to make their appearance and false teeth sit in a jar on the dresser at night, those physical attributes that originally won his heart aren’t going to seem quite as important as they once did. What *will* be treasured by a husband or wife, however, will be the sweet, Godly spirit that his or her spouse possesses. We must help the teenager to focus on that “inner man” when seeking a spouse!

Although teenagers have not come to the place in their lives where they are actually ready to actively seek the spouse that God has for them, we must prepare them now before that day comes! It is a topic that they are interested in and the decisions they make about this topic now will affect them for the rest of their lives. So, ignoring the topic because we are trying not to encourage boy/girl relationships is foolish. Again, if the only input they are receiving regarding these relationships is coming from the television and peers, they’re in trouble! We must give them Biblical guidance in this area so that they will have some guidelines to help them refocus when the emotions begin to soar!

Many teenagers ask the all-too-common question, “But, how did you *know* that your husband was the one for you?” They want to do the will of God in this area, but it can seem confusing to them. The teenager must first trust God’s leading. Proverbs gives us a precious promise.

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

If a teenager will truly trust God and keep his heart and mind open to the way the Lord leads, God promises that He will show him His perfect will regarding a life’s mate. Many times the hard part is the **“lean not unto thine own understanding”** part. We often get it into our heads that we know exactly what we need, when in reality, it’s what our flesh wants. In the end, however, if we follow the will of God, we will see both our needs and wants met!

As counselors, we should encourage each teenager to make a list of some qualities that must be evident in someone who could be their life's mate. We can give them some Biblical guidelines to help them begin their list. Here are a few of them:

1. **He/she must be a born-again Christian.** The Bible says very clearly that we are not to be **“unequally yoked together with unbelievers”** in II Corinthians 6:14. Some teenagers unwisely think that they will be able to “win” a lost boy or girl to Christ after they are dating or married. This rarely happens and it is never God's plan for a Christian to marry an unbeliever. How often do we see the heartache of a Christian man or woman who is trying to raise their children for God, but their spouse doesn't want anything to do with the things of God? This causes a lot of tension in the home and the children end up suffering as well. There is no exception in this area. A Christian teenager must not even consider dating or marrying an unsaved person.
2. **He/she must be spiritually minded.**

Amos 3:3

“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”

If the teenager we are counseling is spiritually minded and desiring the will of God for his life, he will want to marry someone that has the same mindset.

Romans 8:5-8

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh can not please God.”

Dr Jeff Owens said, **“Two people who want to be married should desire Christ above all else. They should love and want Him more than they desire a marital partner.”**²³ A person, whose strongest desire is for another and not for Christ, will continue in this pattern of placing people or things before God. God will not honor and bless a marriage where He is not in first place!

3. **He/she must be a hard worker.**

Proverbs 15:19

“The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.”

²³ Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians*, 244.

If a guy or a girl does not have a good work ethic before marriage, they will more than likely continue to be lazy after they are married. Good looks won't keep the house clean or supply food for the table!

4. He/she must maintain self-control.

Proverbs 22:24, 25

“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go. Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”

A person that can not control his temper will undoubtedly have other areas in his life over which he has no control as well. The Bible says that we are to avoid a friendship with such a person, let alone a union in marriage!

5. He/she must be stable.

James 1:8

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

If a prospective mate can not hold a steady job or seems to constantly be changing his plans and decisions, beware!!! Be sure also that he does not waver in his convictions and beliefs. A person that can not stand firm in these areas will most likely continue to be “unstable” throughout his marriage.

6. He/she must be committed. First of all, he must be committed to God and to serving Him with his life. If he is faithful to this commitment he will be faithful to his marriage as well. Be sure that he is actively involved in Christian service and does not take this service lightly.

7. He/she must be respectful. First of all, he must be respectful toward God. If he does not pay close attention to the preacher during a sermon, he probably won't pay close attention when God is trying to speak to him through his own personal devotions, either.

Secondly, he must be respectful toward his authorities, whether they are his parents, pastor, teachers, etc. He must show them honor and treat them in a respectful manner. The saying, “Watch how a man treats his mother, because that is how he will treat his wife someday,” is true in many cases.

We have listed many things to consider when advising someone who is praying about God's will regarding a spouse. No one is perfect, but there are certain character traits that should be evident.

We must also remind the teenager seeking counsel that it is a lot easier to make a list of what someone else should be, than it is to hold ourselves to the same high standard. We must encourage the teenager to be sure that he is working on becoming the kind of person that a Godly young man or woman would consider for a spouse as well as looking for a person that fits these character traits.

The young person that is truly seeking God's will in this area of finding a spouse must then learn to wait for God's timing in bringing that spouse. This period of waiting will be a different length for each individual, but what God wants us to do with that period is the same no matter the length. We are to be busy while we wait! God has a plan for the single years of every Christian. The Bible talks about this in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 7:32, 34-35

“But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: . . . There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”

The purpose during those single years is to truly **“attend upon the Lord without distraction”**.²⁴ How often, though, do singles become selfish, using their time only for themselves? Heather Paulsen said, **“When singles keep their attention or energy focused on themselves and not on a love relationship with God, they miss out on many activities that would bring about deep satisfaction.”**²⁵ She also goes on to say that by focusing on serving the Lord instead of self, they are actually ensuring a better marriage because they will have practiced being selfless! So, instead of worrying and fretting about when “Mr. or Mrs. Right” will come along, we must encourage our young people to get busy serving God and He will bring that person at exactly the right time!

Here are seven Biblical principles with which we can encourage young people in waiting on the Lord's timing for their life's mate.

1. **Every child of God is complete in Christ.** The world will try to tell our young people that unless they have a girlfriend or boyfriend in their lives, they are not complete. This is a lie of Satan because the Bible specifically tells us that we are complete in Him.

²⁴ Paulsen, Heather Arnel, *Emotional Purity*, 126.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, *Emotional Purity*, 126.

Colossians 2:6-10

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”

2. **Every child of God has acceptance from God, so we need not seek the approval of others.**

Galatians 6:4

“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”

It shouldn't matter what the world is telling our young people, because their focus should be to gain the approval of God and not their peers.

3. **Our purpose in life, no matter whether we are single or married is to bring glory to God.**

I Corinthians 6:19-20

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

When a person marries it doesn't mean that he has suddenly “arrived” in the sight of God and is now important enough to serve and glorify Him. God simply commands all Christians to bring glory to Him!

4. **To be truly happy, the inward man must be right with God.** Happiness does not depend on circumstances. Matthew 5:3-12 gives us the list of those who are blessed of God in the passage known as the “Beattitudes”. When we are right with the Lord, we are truly blessed!
5. **When we feel lonely, we are desiring fellowship from another rather than the fellowship we are promised from God.** Often in our carnal minds we have horizontal vision and only focus on the friendships and fellowship of those around us and we lose sight of the fact that man will fail us. When we are dependent on what we can get out of our earthly friendships we are sure to feel lonely and depressed. However, the Lord will never fail us and He longs for us to desire His fellowship.

Psalm 73:25

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

6. **God gives a special honor to those who choose not marry in order to serve Him more effectively.** The Bible tells us in I Corinthians 7:32-34 that a single person is more able to **“care for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord”** than a married person. Isaiah also tells us of the special place a single person holds in God’s eyes.

Isaiah 56:3-5

“ . . . neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.”

7. **When our thoughts and actions are not what they should be, our desire for marriage can become overwhelming.**

Proverbs 4:23

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

When a single person allows himself to dwell on the fact that he isn’t married, it will cause him to desire marriage even more. Also, when he becomes involved in immoral actions such as pornography or physical intimacy he is distorting the Biblical desire for marriage.

We must, as counselors of Christian teenagers, encourage our young people to wait for the one that God would have for them to marry, and to do it on His timetable!

Part Three: Chapter Thirteen

PORNOGRAPHY

Sadly, in our day and age, one of Satan's most successful tools in the battle for a Christian teenager's mind and purity is pornography. It is so readily available to him through the internet, television, and he can even download it onto his cell phone! This wicked device of the devil is destroying our young people and because it is so easily accessible, many parents and pastors are completely unaware that the destruction is taking place until it is too late!

We, as counselors, must be ready to help a young person break down this stronghold in his life. We can show him what the Bible clearly says in Matthew about lustful thoughts.

Matthew 5:27-28

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

It isn't just the outward act of adultery that God is concerned about, but also the inward lustful thoughts. The Bible also says that **“out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies : . .”** What he allows himself to think about today will become his actions tomorrow. Pornography leads to fornication, which leads to heartache and destruction. Here are some more verses that we can share with teenagers regarding the sin of pornography.

1. God commands us to be holy.

I Peter 1:14-16

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

2. A person can not play around with sin without being burned.

Proverbs 6:25-29

“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.”

The teenager may not have actually committed the act of fornication, but we have seen in Matthew that even to look lustfully upon a woman is considered fornication in one's heart. We must warn the teenager of the destruction and pain that comes from playing with sin!

3. Only the rewards of doing the will of God will last for eternity.

I John 2:16,17

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

The carnal things that seem so important now are worth nothing in light of eternity. Serving the Lord brings rewards that will never die or decay.

We can also help these teenagers who are struggling with pornography by providing accountability for them. If they are truly willing to allow the Lord to work a change in their heart regarding this sin, they must be willing to give up some things in order to avoid temptation. There may be a period of time when they should have no access to a computer, television, or cell phone. We can work with parents on this. We can also provide homework such as Scripture memory, weekly visitation, and service within the church. We must help him to fill the time spent previously in pornography with opportunities to grow and serve God!

Part Three: Chapter Fourteen

BITTERNESS

Many teenagers are consumed with bitterness. There are a multitude of reasons why teenagers become bitter. Physical or emotional abuse, unfair treatment, divorced parents, or jealousy, are just a few of the most common excuses given. Dr. Jeff Owens stated:

“If a person is bitter with God, more than likely it is because of an unwanted circumstance in life. However, if that circumstance in life is a tough one, we must still accept it and know God allowed it in His great love. We must never be bitter at God.”²⁶

There is no doubt that some of the teenagers we will counsel have “had it rough”. The abuse that goes on in homes today is horrendous and wicked. However, we as counselors must deal with the root of the problem and that is the sin of bitterness.

Bitterness can be likened to a poison. After a person ingests poison, its destructive work begins to wreak havoc on the inside and then eventually makes its way outward for all the world to see. A bitter person can not hide the fact that he is bitter. It distorts his countenance, his words, and his actions. What may have begun as bitterness toward one person, eventually becomes bitterness toward everyone and everything, just as poison begins by affecting one organ and in the end destroys them all!

Ephesians 4:31

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

If we are told here to “put it away” then it must have been a choice we made to “pick it up” in the first place. It does not matter what the circumstances are, each person chooses whether or not he will become bitter. As we listen to the story behind a teenager’s choice to be bitter, we must remember that although what he is saying may be true, he has reacted sinfully by taking on the sin of bitterness. We can not become influenced by the circumstances as he has been influenced by them. This does not mean that we are not empathetic or compassionate regarding the things he is going through, but we can not refrain from pointing out his own sinful responses to these circumstances. We will not help a teenager to overcome bitterness by encouraging him to be bitter!

The answer to the problem of bitterness is found in the Word of God. A teenager must first of all admit and confess his sin of bitterness.

²⁶ Owens, Dr. Jeff, *Practical Counseling Principles for Christians*, 171.

Psalm 51:3**“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.”**

He will be tempted to justify his bitterness by what has happened to him, but he must take responsibility for his own sinful actions of allowing bitterness to enter his heart. The teenager must then ask forgiveness for his sin of bitterness.

I John 1:9**“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

We must point out to the teenager that if he chooses not to confess this sin, the Lord will not hear his prayers.

Psalm 66:18**“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:”**

Once his relationship with his God is restored, the teenager must determine with the Lord's help not to allow the bitterness to take hold of him again. He must instead replace the bitterness with good things such as quoting Bible verses when he is tempted to have bitter thoughts. We as counselors can help him by providing accountability in this area.

Part Three: Chapter Fifteen

SELF-ESTEEM

We are bombarded with this topic of self esteem from every side! The world tells us that we must “feel good” about ourselves in order to be happy. Teenagers often fall for this lie of Satan and think that they have to be beautiful, thin, or popular in order to achieve true happiness. This is the message they are receiving from Hollywood, magazines, and their peers. They are constantly seeking approval and if they don’t happen to think that they measure up, they believe that they can not be happy.

For this reason, many teenagers (mostly girls), fall into the trap of anorexia or bulimia. They believe that in order to be happy they must be accepted. And, in order to be accepted, they have to have what the world calls “a perfect body”. Even our Christian girls are falling for this lie of Satan and proceed to do serious damage to their bodies in an effort to become something that they are not.

As we counsel these teenagers, we must remind them what I Corinthians says:

I Corinthians 6:19, 20

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

They have been purchased by God and their bodies are not their own! The Bible tells us that we must recognize that there is nothing good about us, except what we are in Christ. No matter how hard we try, our physical bodies will never “add up” in the world’s eyes, therefore we must encourage teenagers to strive to better themselves spiritually because by doing so they will be increasing their value in the eyes of the One Who purchased them!

The current trend of feeling sorry for one’s self and being labeled as having low self-esteem goes against the Bible. The Bible tells us that we are not to make provision for the flesh. We are to seek the spiritual and not the carnal.

Romans 8:12, 13

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

If a teenager will truly “die to self,” he will not struggle with his self-esteem. He will be so busy concentrating on the things of the Lord that there will be no place in his mind for carnal thoughts. Let us strive to encourage teenagers to truly have the mind of Christ!

[Return to course main page and take TEST FIVE.](#)

Part Three: Chapter Sixteen**COMFORT IN CRISIS**

There will be times when a teenager will come to us for comfort. Perhaps they are dealing with the death of a loved one, parental divorce, or some other kind of personal grief. We must be ready to give them Biblical comfort so that they can experience the peace that only God can give. Our own words will seem empty and won't accomplish much, but, we have been given many promises of comfort in the Bible that we can share with them.

II Corinthians 1:3-4

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

What better way to comfort another, than with the comfort that God has given to us? Here are some promises that we can share with a teenager in his time of need.

1. **God will never leave him.** If he is truly born again, he is never alone.

Psalm 73:23, 24

“Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

The teenager may feel alone in his problem and that no one cares. What a blessing to be able to share with him that God is actually there holding his hand!

2. **God will be his strength.**

Psalm 91:1-2

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

Even in the most difficult of circumstances, God promises that He will be a refuge and fortress for the teenager.

3. God will be his guide.

Psalm 139:9-10

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

It does not matter where he is in his life, whether on top of the mountain or in the valley. God promises that He will lead him!

4. God will work it out for good.

Romans 8:28, 31

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

The situation may seem bleak, but we can share with the teenager the promise that God can take even a bad situation and turn it into good if he loves Him and seeks His will!

5. God will give him grace.

II Corinthians 9:8

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

No matter what the crisis, God is there with His grace to enable the teenager to get through it!

As counselors, we must be prepared to offer hope to a teenager who is confronting a crisis in his life. By sharing the comfort of the Scriptures, the teenager can choose to place his problems in the hands of his loving Saviour.

Part Three: Chapter Seventeen

PEOPLE PROBLEMS

In every teen group, there will be conflicts between teenagers. There are personality clashes and teenagers often begin to form “cliques”. As we try to help them to solve their differences and be unified as a teen group, we must look beyond the actual circumstances of the dispute and identify the sin that is the true source of the problem. Perhaps it is the sin of jealousy or self-centeredness that is the root. When we know the source, we can deal with that sin and help to solve the problem.

There will be differences in personality among teenagers, and we are given the opportunity to teach them how to live in harmony with others who may not think exactly like they do or have the same interests that they have. It is easy to love someone who is in agreement with us, but much more difficult to love someone who always seems to be in opposition. If a teenager can truly learn the principle that is taught in the following verses, he will have learned something that many Christian adults still have not learned.

Matthew 5:43-48

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

If we can instill in the teenager a love for people, whether or not they are “lovable” in the world’s eyes, God will be able to greatly use him. The key is teaching them to see people through the eyes of God.

Part Three: Chapter Eighteen

BACKBITING/GOSSIPING

Another problem often confronted when dealing with teenagers is the sin of gossip. Girls, especially, seem to have a tendency toward this sin. Backbiting can cause serious damage to a youth group and ultimately the name of Christ, so it is not something to be taken lightly. We must be wise as counselors to identify the true source of the sin, however. Often, backbiting is a result of another sin such as envy or pride, and so we must also deal with this sin. There are many verses in the Bible that deal with backbiting and gossiping and we must show the teenagers God's view of this sin.

1. Gossiping causes wounds.

Proverbs 18:8

“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

The teenager needs to know that it isn't just “empty talk”. Words can seriously injure others and cause them to turn away from God.

2. A gossip can not be trusted.

Proverbs 11:3

“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”

A teenager should not be close friends with someone who gossips. The teenager can rest assured that if his friend is willing to talk about others, he will most surely talk about him as well when he isn't around. Encourage him to seek friends that the Bible calls “faithful!”

3. Gossiping causes strife.

Proverbs 26:20-21

“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to the burning coals, and wood to a fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.”

When there is no backbiting and gossiping, there will be peace and unity in a youth group or Christian school.

4. **We are commanded not to speak evil.**

Psalm 34:13

“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”

It is rare to find a person with a disciplined tongue. When a teenager feels that he has been wronged, his natural reaction is to begin spouting about what happened! The Bible has much to say about using discretion as we choose our words. The tongue has often been said to be the “meanest member of the church,” however it can also be the “kindest member of the church!” It has the power to rip and destroy, but it also can lift up and encourage!

Part Three: Chapter Nineteen

HOW CAN I BE USED?

Each teenager is a unique creation of God and has been created with a specific personality that God intends to use for His glory. If we can show the teenagers that we work with how God wants to use each personality, it could help to solve some of the discord in our church youth groups and Christian schools. It will also motivate and encourage the teenagers to look for ways that they can serve God during their youth.

Each person has been given different gifts and each of these gifts work together to form a whole that will bring more glory to God. For example, one teenager may be considered a “computer nerd” while another is extremely athletic. The teenager who is computer savvy may be used of God to help prepare power point presentations for the youth group or put together a website displaying the ministries of the church. The athletic teenager can be used of God by using his sports abilities to form intramural teams through which he can invite lost teenagers to church or by helping with the children’s classes such as AWANA or Patch the Pirate Club. These young children will enjoy playing the games with him, but will also be looking to him as a spiritual leader. Both of these teenagers can be used for God in a great way! God promises to bless and prosper those who serve Him.

II Chronicles 31:21

“And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.”

I Corinthians 15:58

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Sometimes we mistakenly think that once our young people become adults they will magically desire to work in the different ministries of the church. But, so often, that doesn’t happen. We must begin now to show them where God can use them! Be creative and consider each teenager’s personality and gifts as you encourage them to take part in a ministry.

Part Three: Chapter Twenty

FINDING GOD'S WILL

When counseling teenagers, a question that often comes up is, “How do I find God’s will for my life?” As counselors, we need to be ready to use our Bibles as we guide these teenagers in making decisions. Many teenagers feel frustrated because the future seems so “unknown” and they often wish that God would just send them a telegram telling them exactly what they are to do, whom they are to marry, and where they are to go! What they do not realize is that God *has* given them a “telegram” that answers all of those questions . . . the Bible (KJV)!

Finding God’s will isn’t as mysterious and confusing as most Christians seem to think. We must remind teenagers who their God is and what He is not. God is loving and kind and it is not His desire that His will should be confusing to His children. I Corinthians 14:33a says, “**For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace . . .**” How often do we see teenagers in a state of panic and frustration as they try to decide where to go to college, which career path to study, whom to marry, etc? This doesn’t describe the “peace” mentioned in I Corinthians!

There are so many promises of God’s guidance in the Bible. Here are a few of them that we can share with a teenager to assure him that God truly does desire to guide him in making the decisions in his life.

1. **God promises to guide our way.**

Isaiah 30:21

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”

There doesn’t seem to be any guesswork in that! He says he will guide specifically “to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left!”

2. **God promises to guide us even unto death.**

Psalms 48:14

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”

He doesn’t plan to stop guiding us when we get old and near death. This guidance is a promise that stays with us throughout our entire lives!

3. **God delights to guide the steps of a good man.**

Psalm 37:23

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.”

Notice it says a “good man”. A teenager will not receive guidance from the Lord if his ways are not pleasing to the Lord. He must make things right between himself and God to be able to receive the promised guidance.

4. **God promises that His righteousness will direct our way.**

Proverbs 11:5

“The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.”

Here there is a promise to the righteous as well as to the wicked. The teenager needs to know that if he follows his own carnal way of thinking he will fall.

5. **God promises that He will direct our paths when we acknowledge Him.**

Proverbs 3:6

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” It says “all thy ways”.

Sometimes teenagers just want His guidance in the big decisions that they face, the ones that seem more important. God, however, wants to be his Guide in every area, even the small, minute details of his life.

6. **God promises to lead us and not forsake us.**

Isaiah 42:16

“And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in the paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”

We must remind the teenager that God may lead him through some difficult times, but he must cling to the promise that He will not leave him!

7. God promises to be continually with us.

Psalm 73:23, 24

“Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

When talking about the “will of God” it often seems to be some far-off magical idea, when actually it involves the practical things of every-day life. There are some definite teachings in the Bible that are the will of God for every believer.

The first place that a teenager needs to start in “discovering the will of God” for his life is with the things that he already knows that he should be doing. The Bible has clear direction for many areas of his life such as church attendance, soul-winning, obedience to parents and other authorities, separation from the world, tithing, etc. If a teenager is not “doing the will of God” in these basic things, how can he expect God to bestow upon him a greater calling? So, as counselors, we need to ask some questions to help a teenager to evaluate where he stands with God. Is he fulfilling God’s will for his life right now? Often teenagers are only interested in the future and aren’t willing to begin now to do His will in the seemingly mundane, ordinary tasks.

When a teenager is fulfilling the things that God has for him now, and he truly desires to know God’s will for the future, God promises that He will show it to him. In Psalms David cries out to God saying,

Psalm 139:23, 24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

First of all, David prays for God to inspect his heart. When a teenager wants to know exactly what God would have him to do in a certain situation or for a life decision, he needs to be completely honest before God. David didn’t want anything to stand between himself and God. Sometimes teenagers come for counsel regarding decisions only because they want a stamp of approval on something that they have already made up their minds to do. They aren’t truly wanting to know what God says if it happens to be contrary to what they have already solidified in their minds. So, many may give up right here in the first step. However, if he is willing to be honest before God, he is ready for the next step.

After asking to be searched, David then asked the Lord to try him. If a teenager isn’t willing to be tried or proven by God in every area, he won’t be ready for the future that God has for him. When things start to get uncomfortable as God asks him to get rid of some music, or a girlfriend, or even some seemingly good thing that takes too much of

his time away from the things of God, that is where the teenager is put to the test. If he is willing to go through the “trying,” and will allow God to purge his life of anything that stands between himself and God, he is ready for God’s direction.

Lastly, David asks God to direct him in the way everlasting. The primary way that God chooses to lead His children is through His Word and through the Holy Spirit. The Bible says in John 5:39 to “**Search the Scriptures.**” We need to stress to the teenager that his roadmap is the Bible and he must be a good student of God’s Word.

II Timothy 2:14

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

He can not expect God to direct his path if he isn’t studying His roadmap. He would never attempt to travel to some unknown place without first consulting a map! Neither should he expect to figure out what God’s plan is for his life without checking with the roadmap of life. The Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit leads us.

Romans 8:14

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

The Holy Spirit lives inside each saved person and one of His jobs is to help guide the believer in the right things.

Galatians 5:16

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

When we do not “walk in the spirit” we then grieve the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30

“And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

If a teenager is deciding on a course of action he needs to ask himself if the Holy Spirit will be grieved by his actions. He must allow the Holy Spirit free reign to guide him in the way he should go.

Many Christians rely too much in circumstances and the opinions of others to “guide” them. God does sometimes use circumstances to lead but never by the circumstances alone. A teenager must have the Bible and the Holy Spirit’s guidance to back up what the circumstances are telling him. He also does use the advice/counsel given by men, such as pastors, parents, and counselors, when that advice/counsel is based upon Biblical principles. He must be cautious, however, to not take the “word of a man”

as the “word of God” unless that man is reading from the Bible. So often people do exactly what a man tells them without praying themselves and reading their Bibles.

Proverbs 11:14

“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

The teenager just needs to be sure that the Bible and Holy Spirit are in that “multitude of counsellors” that he is listening to. We as counselors, then, need to encourage the teenagers that come to us to fulfill the will of God that is laid out clearly for him in the Bible, and then rely on the direction of the Bible and the Holy Spirit as they make decisions.

Part Three: Chapter Twenty-One

PAST MISTAKES

Sometimes teenagers will come to us and feel that they can never be truly used of God because of some mistakes they have made in the past. Not all of our Christian teenagers have been raised in church since they were babies and there will probably be some who didn't get saved until their teen years. They may have some baggage and scars from their lives prior to salvation and may need some counsel as to how to deal with it.

There are many promises in the Bible regarding our sin and guilt. Here are a few of them that we can share with teenagers who need to be reminded of God's mercy and grace.

1. God promises to forgive our sins.

I John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

He doesn't say from “some” of our unrighteousness, He said, “ALL!” We must be sure that the teenager has truly confessed the sins of his past and then we can assure him from this verse that they have been forgiven and cleansed!

2. God promises to have mercy upon us.

Isaiah 55:7

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

When a teenager is willing to forsake his wicked way and unrighteous thoughts, God promises to forgive him!

3. God promises not to turn His face from us.

II Chronicles 30:9

“ . . . for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.”

No matter what the teenager has been involved in, he has the promise that God will not turn away from him.

4. **God promises to remove our transgressions.**

Psalm 103:12

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

The teenager can rest assured that his sins aren't hanging around any more to condemn him!

5. **God promises that He will not remember our sins.**

Hebrews 8:12

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

What an amazing promise! Satan will often bring to mind sins of the past in an attempt to discourage a teenager, but he can hold to the promise that God will not remember them. Jeremiah 31:34 says, “. . . **for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**” It isn't that God forgets the sin, He chooses not to remember it! This is an act of love!

As we counsel teenagers regarding their past mistakes, we must encourage them that the past does not have to determine the future. They have choices to make that will determine how they will live and what their future will be like. We must encourage them to put the past behind them and seek to live their lives for the Lord.

Romans 13:12, 14

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. . . But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

It is true that some may have scars from the past that aren't just going to magically go away when they decide to live for Christ, but God is ready to use even those scars for His glory if they will just let Him.

Philippians 3:13b-14

“. . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

They must put those things in the past behind them and set a goal of pleasing and glorifying God with the rest of their lives!

Joshua Harris said it well in his book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*:

“Not one of us can stand completely pure before God. We are all sinners. But no matter how filthy the rags of our defilement may be, in a moment of true surrender the heart turned toward God loses its impurity. God clothes us in Christ’s righteousness. He no longer sees our sin. He transfers Jesus’ purity to us. So see yourself as God sees you—clothed in radiant white, pure, justified.”²⁷

As counselors, we must not only encourage a teenager to “forget those things which are behind,” but also as the verse continues, to “press toward the mark”. How can we help a teenager to do this? The first step a teenager needs to make is to be sure that his “slate is clean” before God. Has he truly confessed and repented of his past sins? Has he “pulled down the strongholds” as II Corinthians 10 admonishes us to do? Has he removed the sinful influences in his life? If so, he is ready for the next step.

He must then look for some Godly people he can trust to be accountable to whether it be his parents, his pastor, or his counselor. Teenagers can help other teenagers in this area, but there should be a mature Christian the teenager looks up to as a spiritual leader that he is ultimately accountable to. If we as counselors are going to act as his accountability, we need to set up specific times when we can check up on the teenager and see how he is doing. We should be ready with questions, but also encouraging words!

Next, the teenager needs to “**establish protective boundaries**”.²⁸ He must be willing to avoid situations that will bring temptation. This takes thought beforehand and the determination to make decisions about where the teenager will and will not go. He can not expect to avoid falling into sin if he continually puts himself in the path of temptation.

Lastly, he needs to beware of outside influences. Satan is astute at sneaking through those carefully laid boundaries and before the teenager even knows what is happening, he will be swayed to do wrong. He must do as the Bible says in I Peter:

I Peter 5:8

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

Outside influences could include television, friends, cell phone, computer, or a number of other things. The teenager must surround himself with godly influences such as serving in the church with godly staff members, soul-winning with friends who want to serve the Lord as well, memorizing Scripture, listening to good preaching tapes,

²⁷ Harris, Joshua, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, 107-108.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

reading his Bible and good Christian biographies, or books on Christian living. These are just a few examples of the influences he should work toward having around him at all times.

Through these steps we can encourage a teenager to truly put the past in the past and focus on what God has for him in the future. This doesn't mean that Satan won't try again to whisper in his ear, reminding him of failures in the past. But, the teenager will be equipped with the Bible and will be able to silence the devil. He can then go on in his service for the Lord.

Part Three: Chapter Twenty-Two

PEER PRESSURE

As teenagers begin to get jobs in the world, the pressure from peers becomes stronger. There is a degree of peer pressure within the Christian school/church youth group setting that must be dealt with, but even more so as the teenager gets out into the world and is working with lost teenagers on the job. There must be some training and preparation beforehand or the teenager may succumb to the pressures and decide to “try the world”.

The teenager must learn that there is a difference between friendships and acquaintances. A teenager’s closest friendships need to be with the other Christian teenagers in his youth group or Christian school. As he begins to come into contact with other teenagers through work or a community sports league he will be confronted with the temptation to make close friends of the lost teenagers he meets. The Bible says in James 4:4 that **“friendship with the world is enmity with God”**.

II Corinthians 6:14-15, 17

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? . . . come out from among them and be ye separate.”

Therefore, to have a close friend who is lost goes against the principles we find in God’s Word. We must encourage the teenager to be a good testimony and witness to the lost teenagers he meets, but also refrain from developing close friendships with them.

Part Three: Chapter Twenty-Three

FEAR

Sometimes teenagers will express fears they have concerning different situations in their lives. We must never make light of their fear no matter how minor it may seem to us as adults, because to them it is very real. Instead, we need to help them Biblically to overcome their fears. God has given us many promises and commands regarding fear in His Word. Here are few of them that we can share with a teenager who is fearful.

1. **God promises to help us in our fear.**

Isaiah 41:13

“For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”

The teenager is not alone in his fear; God is right there holding his hand!

2. **God promises that we will be safe if we hearken to Him.**

Proverbs 1:33

“But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

The promise hinges on whether or not the teenager is truly hearkening unto the Lord.

3. **Fear does not come from God.**

II Timothy 1:7

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

It is not God’s desire for His child, the teenager, to be fearful. He desires him us to have the peace of mind that only He can give.

4. **God desires to give us good things.**

Luke 12:32

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

This verse has such a tenderness in the way God speaks to His children as a “little flock”. It is as if He wants to put His arms around the teenager to let him know that He is there beside him.

5. **God commands us not to fear men.**

Proverbs 29:25

“The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” (See also Isaiah 51:12)

God is all-powerful and is stronger than anything that any man might try to do to the teenager.

6. **God promises us His peace.**

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

When a teenager truly has the peace that only God can give, he will not fear.

7. **Even in death, we should not fear because God is with us.**

Psalm 23: 4

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

There are many things that teenagers may admit that they fear. Some of these may include the fear of taking tests, meeting new people, public speaking, driving a car, or even dying. These fears are very real to them and we must take them seriously.

We must remind the teenager who their God is. He is a God of love. I John gives us the answer to fear.

I John 4:18

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

Jay Adams said in his book *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, **“The fear of God is the one fear that removes all others. The enemy of fear is love; the way to put off fear then, is to put on love.”**²⁹ He then goes on to contrast love and fear. He says, **“Love is self-giving; fear is self-protecting. Love move towards others; fear shrinks**

²⁹ Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, 414.

away from them.”³⁰ They are opposites, but we are given the promise that love is stronger because it has the power to “cast out” fear. No amount of “positive thinking” or any other gimmick can do what the Bible says “perfect love” can do! We know that God is love and so ultimately it is He that gives the victory over fear!

As counselors, we must encourage the teenager to first of all recognize that his fear is real and that it goes against God’s love. Therefore, his fear is wrong and sinful. He must see that his fear will hinder his relationship with God and so it must be dealt with. Then he must face the object of his fear and realize that through God’s love he has the power to overcome the fear.

In most hymnals in our Baptist churches we find the well-known hymn, “Trust and Obey”. This song tells us that “there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey”. When a teenager is fearful he is not happy. The Bible says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” As Christians, we are simply to obey out of love for our God. God commands us to place our faith in Him and when we don’t, we are demonstrating the fact that we don’t love Him as we should. The teenager must know that through the love of God he has the answer to his problems with fear.

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³⁰ Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, 414.

Part Three: Chapter Twenty-Four**ENVY**

As we deal with conflicts between teenagers, we will find that many times the root of the problem is envy. It could be envy of another teenager's possessions, his looks, his friends, his family, his standing with authority, or his talents and abilities. Whatever it may be, the root is the sin of envy and it must be dealt with Biblically. We as counselors must be ready to share from the Bible why envy is wrong and what the consequences of envy are. Here are some verses that we can use.

1. God commands us not to desire another's possessions.**Deuteronomy 5:21**

“Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.”

When a teenager envies another's possessions, he is sinning against God and will be out of fellowship with Him.

2. God tells us that envying brings confusion.**James 3:16**

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

When there is conflict between teenagers it brings disharmony to the entire youth group. We must stress to the teenager that his sin of envy is affecting everyone!

3. Envy will destroy from the inside out.**Proverbs 14:30**

“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.”

Envy doesn't hurt the one that is being envied! It rots the bones of the one who is doing the envying!

4. **Envy is a stronger evil than wrath and anger.**

Proverbs 27:4

“Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?”

Often we think of anger as being such a terrible sin because of the outward actions that we see, but the sin of envy is more powerful and destructive than anger or wrath!

5. **Envy desires vain glory.**

Galatians 5:26

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

The glory that is achieved from trying to out-do another teenager is vain. It doesn't glorify God and He doesn't find pleasure in one who is seeking such glory for himself.

6. **The Bible says we are not to envy sinners.**

Proverbs 23:17-18

“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.”

It is sometimes tempting to envy the lost teenagers and what they see as their “freedom”. We must remind the teenager that we counsel of the “end” that is coming for both a lost teenager and the “end” that will come for a saved teenager.

Envy leads to fretting and self-pity and eventually can become all-consuming. The teenager feels he can not be happy if he doesn't have the exact thing he is envying. It also becomes a habit and the teenager begins to envy everyone he comes into contact with. This sin of envy must be dealt with Biblically. Heather Paulsen said in her book Emotional Purity, that **“to be envious is to doubt God's love for you and His sovereignty in your life.”**³¹ Satan loves to plant the seed of doubt in the minds of Christians and one way he does this is through the sin of thinking that God must love others more because of what He has blessed them with. This lie of Satan causes the Christian to take his focus and trust off of his God! We must remind the teenager that God desires him to be content with what he has been given. Heather Paulsen goes on to

³¹ Paulsen, Heather Arnel, *Emotional Purity*, 85.

say that **“a key to having a deep personal relationship with God is contentment. Why? Easy. When you are fully content, you say that you are 100 percent, totally willing to accept whatever God wants to throw your way—the good, the bad, and the ugly.”**³²

We must encourage the teenager to empty himself of self and take on the mind of Christ Jesus as we are admonished in Philippians 2. He was the perfect example of selflessness in being willing to **“take upon him the form of a servant”** and **“humble himself”** and **“become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!”** In the same chapter of Philippians the Bible says:

Philippians 2:3, 4

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

The teenager must confess his focus on self and begin to focus on the Lord and others!

After a teenager recognizes his sin, and confesses and repents of it, he is ready to begin to develop a safeguard against the temptation to be envious. The first step he can take is to begin praying for the good of others. He needs to pray specifically that God would bless those around him in the different areas of their lives.

Romans 15:2-3

“Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”

The next step is to begin to appreciate the gifts and talents that God has given others. We as counselors can help a teenager to identify the spiritual gifts that the people around him have and how God can use those gifts in their lives. Instead of being envious, the teenager will begin to appreciate how each person working together with their God-given gifts can bring more glory to Him!

Ephesians 4:7, 16

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. . . From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

³² Paulsen, Heather Arnel, *Emotional Purity*, 86.

The last step is to speak out and encourage those around him. As the teenager begins to look beyond himself and tries to encourage others, it will bring him encouragement and joy as well. He will see that their lives aren't as "perfect" as he once thought and that God can use him to encourage others!

Envy only brings suffering and heartache. The psalmist wrote of this in Psalm 73. In verses 2-3 he tells how he had slipped because he **"was envious at the foolish"**. Later in the chapter (vs. 21-22) he states that the result of his envy was that his **"heart was grieved" and that he was "foolish" and "ignorant"**. Obviously, his envying did not bring him joy and happiness. He was miserable! Let us help the teenagers we counsel to overcome this destructive sin of envy!

Part Three: Chapter Twenty-Five

ANGER

There are times when a teenager will come to us who is filled with anger. Whether he is angry with his parents or some other person in his life, or he is angry with his circumstances, his anger must be dealt with Biblically.

Two types of angry people are those who “blow up” and those who “clam up”. Discovering the sin of anger in one who blows up isn’t hard, but it can be more difficult with those who just “get quiet” and stew on the inside. However, the sin problem is still the same for both. So, we as counselors need to be discerning as we pray for guidance in pointing out and dealing with the root problem. The results of both of these types of angry people are basically the same. The one who “blows up” hurts others because of his outward actions and also hurts himself as he will probably lose friends and the respect he may have had. Also, the one who “clams up” hurts himself because he is storing all of that anger inside which could cause physical problems, but he hurts others as well because the anger inside of him will cause him to be miserable and not much fun to be around. Therefore, he will probably lose friends as well.

Jay Adams writes in his book *The Christian Counselor’s Manual* about the trend in psychiatric circles and group therapies in encouraging patients in the “**free verbal and physical expression of one’s emotions, particularly of hostility**”.³³ This idea of “venting” is completely unbiblical. The Bible has much to say about anger and the consequences of being an angry person. Here are some verses that we can share with angry teenagers.

1. **The end of an angry man is destruction.**

Proverbs 25:28

“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”

2. **An angry man causes problems for everyone around him.**

Proverbs 29:22

“An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.”

An angry teenager needs to see the problems his sin is causing not only in his own life, but in the lives of those around him.

³³ Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, 351.

3. **An angry man will be hated.**

Proverbs 14:17

“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.”

No one enjoys being around an angry person and soon he will find himself all alone.

4. **An angry man should be avoided.**

Proverbs 22:24, 25

“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”

A Godly teenager should not have a close friendship with an angry teenager because although he may just be trying to help, he will end up learning how to be angry as well.

5. **An angry man will be punished.**

Proverbs 19:19

“A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.”

God promises to punish an angry man, but he will also be punished by the consequences of his anger . . . no friends, etc.

It is God’s desire to use our church youth groups in a great way for His glory. But, so often, unresolved problems between teenagers keeps that from happening. In the same way, when a teenager is angry against someone, whether it be a family member or another teenager, his sin of anger is hindering God from doing a great work in his family, his church, or his youth group.

The Bible tells us that when a brother offends us, we are to immediately go to that brother to make things right. Instead, what often happens, is we sit and brood about it until it turns into anger! Then, we begin to talk to others about the offense, causing them to be angry as well. This happens so often in Christian youth groups, it is no wonder that we are not seeing revival!

The first step is for the teenager to recognize and repent of his sin of anger. Then he is ready to be reconciled with the ones with whom he is angry. Jay Adams said, **“Counselors must always divide the *relationship* (to God and one another) from the *issues* and be sure that they do not attempt to deal with the latter until the former**

has been rectified.”³⁴ It is sometimes easier to deal with the symptoms rather than the root problem. However, as a teenager develops the mindset to seek solutions God’s way, he will find the solutions because God is ready to help him!

The angry teenager must learn to love and the greatest example of love is the Lord Jesus Christ. If a teenager will focus on learning about and imitating his God, he will find that anger replaced with a love for those around him. He will find it natural to be kind and tenderhearted when it is Christ living and loving through him.

³⁴ Adams, Jay E., *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, 366.

CONCLUSION

We have in no way covered every possible counseling situation that might be faced with Christian teenagers, however, we can rest assured that nothing is “new” to God and He is there to guide our words as we seek to give His counsel. Our Christian teenagers are truly worthy of our time and effort in helping them to see life “through God’s eyes”. May we open our eyes and hearts to their need and give all the glory to God as they choose to surrender their problems and ultimately their lives to God.

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