

The #1 Problem Faced in Counseling

Introduction

1. A common mistake of counselors is to focus on _____ instead of _____ of human problems

“Sin is the problem, not sins ... specialization on the particular forms and manifestations of sin is irrelevant and very largely a waste of time.”

Martyn-Lloyd Jones

2. Which is the most important sin to look for?

“to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin”

- a. Sins of omission usually precede sins of _____.
- b. Sins of commission can be traced to sins of _____. (David – *Psalm 51*)
- c. Is one sin of omission worse than others? The answer is not in man’s opinion, but _____.

3. What sin is most important to God?

“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 (and great) commandment.” -- The Lord Jesus Christ, Mark 12:30

4. The most important issue facing your counselee is his _____ of God and his relationship with God.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason, the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God ... Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’, we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.”

A.W. Tozer

5. The spiritual future of many is not very bright.

One-third of Americans “believe in a conception of God that conflicts with the biblical portrait of the Father. One out of four churched adults have a nonbiblical view of God.”

44% of Americans believe that Jesus made mistakes

49% of college graduates believe that Jesus made mistakes

26% of Baptists agree that He made mistakes.

George Barna, Absolute Confusion

6. In my experience, I have yet to find any human problem and sin not ultimately traceable in part or in whole to an unbiblical view of God?

I. The _____ of a Low View of God – Isaiah 6

II. A Dulling of _____

Note: Isaiah did not say “woe is me” until _____ his vision of God.

A. Convictions about personal _____ reflect one’s view of _____.

1. A vision of His holiness is the _____ for our own.

“As he is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” 1 Peter 1:15

2. To confuse His _____ with a lack of holiness is disastrous.

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Ecclesiastes 8:11

“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them ...” Exodus 8:15

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.” Psalm 10:4, 11, 13

B. Convictions about _____ reflect one’s view of the will of God.

“... in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” Ephesians 5:20

C. Convictions about _____ reflect one’s view of the forgiveness of God.

“... Forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” Ephesians 4:32

D. Convictions about _____ reflect one’s view of the _____ of God

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

E. Convictions about _____ ... the _____ of God

“Blessed be God .. the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation ...” 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

F. Convictions about _____ ... the _____ of God

“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.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

G. Convictions about _____ ... the presence and power of God.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

H. Convictions about _____ ... the _____ of God

“I have planted, Apolos watered; but God gave the increase So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” 1 Corinthians 3:6-7

I. Convictions about _____ ... _____ of God

“... Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part ...” Luke 10:41-42

J. Convictions about _____ ... the _____ of God

"Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; ... Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness ..." Romans 1:21-24

K. Convictions about _____ .. the _____ of God

"... despises thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Romans 2:4

L. Convictions about _____ ... the _____ of God

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ..." 2 Corinthians 5:11

M. Convictions about _____ ... the program of God

"Here am I, Lord, send me" Isaiah 6:8

N. Convictions about condemning & judging ... the _____ of God

"Who did sin, this man or his parents ...?" John 9

III. If it is true that the _____ of the human problem is the problem of the human _____, where does the counselee find understanding about the problems of his own heart?

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Proverbs 9:10

IV. A delay of _____

V. Distortion of _____ Matthew 25:18-25

When the servant has the wrong view of the Master ..

- A. Fear displaces _____
- B. Obligation displaces _____
- C. Service for love displaces _____

What is Really Important to the Master?

*"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his **wisdom**, neither let the mighty man glory in his **might**, let not the rich man glory in his **riches**; But let him that glorieth glory in this, **that he understandeth and knoweth me ... for in these things I delight** saith the Lord." Jeremiah 9:23-24*

VI. Denial of _____ Hosea 4:1-6

VII. Damage of _____

Indicators of Distorted Consecration

1. Pride in Outward Conformity
"I tithed of all I possess."
2. Contempt for Others Who Don't Conform
"I thank God I am not like the publican."
3. Anger When the Non-Conformist Receives Blessings
"Lo, these many years do I serve thee ... yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry ..." Luke 15:29
4. A Chronic Struggle with Sins of the Flesh Galatians 5:16-21
5. An Absence of the Fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22ff
6. Regular Unfulfilled Resolutions to "Try Harder"
7. Discouragement and Guilt when Failing to "Perform" or "Produce"
8. Fear of Displeasing Men Who Hold to Similar Views.
9. Spiritual Exhaustion and Burnout from Operating in the Energy of the Flesh

- A. Be mindful that the pool of raw potential from which counselors are drawn possesses the very thought distortions they will later be called upon to correct in the counselee. If that pool is contaminated with theological sewage, the physician may be attempting to treat a patient while possessing the same disease.
- B. “Unhelpful God-perceptions can get in the way of counseling. [counselors] ... should examine their own perceptions of God and make sure they are not using ... Scripture, prayer to perpetuate unhealthy concepts of God.” -- Michael Cavanaugh “Pastoral Psychology,” November ‘92

What are the results of a low view of God?

“The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking” -- A.W. Tozer

Some Attributes of God

God's Greatness: His Non-Moral Attributes

| <i>Attribute</i> | <i>Definition</i> | <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Significance for Counseling</i> |
|---------------------|--|---|--|
| Omnipresence | God is present everywhere | <i>1 Kings 8:27</i> <i>Psalms 139:7-10</i> <i>Isaiah 66:1</i> <i>Jeremiah 23:23</i> <i>Acts 17:24</i> | God is aware of all our trials and is always present with us. God's presence can be a restraint on bad behavior. |
| Omniscience | God is all-knowing. He knows everything there is to know about Himself and all things past, present and future | <i>Psalms 147:5</i> <i>Isaiah 46:9-10</i> <i>Micah 5:2</i> <i>Acts 15:18</i> <i>Hebrews 4:13</i> | God knows all of the details and variables of our situations. He even knows how everything will turn out in the end. |
| Omnipotence | God is all-powerful. He is called "the Almighty." | <i>Genesis 17:1</i> <i>Isaiah 45:11-13</i> <i>Jeremiah 2:17</i> <i>Matthew 19:26</i> <i>Acts 4:24-31</i> <i>Revelation 4:8; 19:6</i> | Nothing can overpower or limit God. What He says, He will do and He can do. |
| Immutability | God is unchanging. He does not change in His essence, nature or will. | <i>Psalms 33:11, 102:26, 103:17</i> <i>Malachi 3:6</i> <i>James 1:17</i> | God is always the same – an anchor of stability. We do not have to contend with surprises because He never changes. |

God's Goodness: His Moral Attributes

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|--|--|--|---|
| Holiness (Righteousness and Justice) | He is sinless and without fault. He always does what is right. He is perfect and always just. | <i>Exodus 3:1-6</i> <i>1 Samuel 2:2</i> <i>Psalms 99:1-9</i> <i>Isaiah 6:1-13</i> <i>Revelation 4:1-11</i> | God is completely good and acts out of His goodness. God hates evil and will eventually destroy it. Ultimately He will bring justice. He has high standards for us. |
| Love | God has an affection for His creation that causes Him to act in ways that provide for the well-being of His creatures. | <i>Deuteronomy 7:6-8</i> <i>Isaiah 43:4</i> <i>Hosea 11:1, 3-4</i> <i>John 3:16</i> <i>1 John 4:8</i> | God wants loving relationships with His people. He is forgiving, accepting, compassionate, and a help in times of struggle. Because He is love, He is also merciful and caring. |
| Truth | Everything that God says and does corresponds completely with reality. He is never deceived, neither does He deceive. | <i>Isaiah 25:1</i> <i>John 17:3</i> <i>Romans 3:4</i> <i>1 John 5:20</i> <i>Revelation 3:7</i> | God is completely trustworthy and always faithful. We can be sure that what He says is true. |