

Choosing a Christian Counselor

You might not be able to come to CCEF for counseling, but we would like to help you find a biblical counselor in your area. These guidelines can help you make wise decisions in choosing a biblical counselor.

A counselor should be someone who:

loves people, perseveres through tough times, and is confident that Jesus works in his needy people
believes that God's Word is designed and provided by God to provide sufficient counsel for all of life's issues (2 Pet. 1:2-4; Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
gives clear evidence of a vital personal relationship with Jesus Christ
your pastor (or trusted Christian friend) believes would provide wise, biblical, loving, and faithful counsel

Steps you should take

Pray. Ask God for wisdom as you seek a Christian counselor. God promises to give you wisdom if you ask for it in faith (James 1:5-8). As you step out in faith, he will direct your steps to the right counselor. (See also Psalm 23, Proverbs 16:3 and Philippians 4:6-9.)

Seek counsel from your church. If you belong to a church, seek the counsel of your pastor (Heb. 13:17) and other church leaders, as well as wise, trustworthy Christian friends. Will they help you? Can they recommend someone who can? The Bible says there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; and 24:6). If you do not belong to a church, seek the counsel of godly, Bible-believing Christians. They may be able to recommend wise and godly pastors who can help shepherd you.

Seek outside counsel, if necessary. In some cases, wise, biblical counsel might not be found in the leadership of a church. Or you may not belong to a church, so you are trying to find biblical counsel outside the church context. In these cases, the "Questions to Ask" in the next section can help you make a wise decision.

Questions to Ask

The questions below will help you get a clearer picture of what a counselor believes and how he or she conducts the counseling sessions. If possible, ask the prospective counselor these questions on the phone before any appointment. Otherwise, discuss them during your first meeting. The kind of counselor you will want is one who is humble and committed to the Scripture. He or she should have no problem helping you in this way. Write down the counselor's answers and explain that you would like to consider them before continuing with counseling. Then talk to your pastor, elder, or wise Christian friend about the counselor's answers in light of God's Word.

Ask your prospective counselor

1. How would you describe your approach to counseling? How do you understand people's problems? How do you help them grow and change through counseling? Please describe the process.
2. What books or other resources do you recommend on a regular basis? What books have most influenced your approach to counseling?
3. Are you a Christian? How does your faith affect your view and practice of counseling?
4. Do you bring Christian truth into your counseling practice? How? What role does Scripture play?
5. Do you pray with those you counsel?
6. Do you attend church? If so, where? How long have you been a member?
7. What is your educational and professional background? What role does it play?
8. Are you married? Do you have children? Have you ever been divorced? How does your marriage and family situation affect how you counsel people?

Remember...

Counseling is an interactive process. It is established and maintained on the basis of trust. Open and honest dialogue between a counselor and a counselee is the most important component of building trust. If you cannot establish this foundation early on, so that you are confident that the counselor will be wise, biblical, loving, and faithful in your interaction, you may need to look elsewhere. If you find a wise counselor who uses God's Word to help you grow in your Christian walk, your marriage and your family, Scripture says you will be blessed!

This page draws from material developed by CCEF's David Powlison and Family Life Today of Little Rock, AR.

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