

Me...An Evangelist?

Part I

Most Christian Counselors do not define their work as *evangelism*. We are more familiar and perhaps more comfortable with the biblical roles of teaching, encouragement, discipleship, and restoration. We often assume that because a client has selected a counselor with a biblical orientation that surely he/she is already a believer. Beginning with that supposition can lead to ineffective treatment results that carry great eternal ramifications.

While it is certain that none of us can fully know the true spiritual condition of another person's heart, we must be receptive to what the Holy Spirit reveals when we begin a counseling process. A thorough and ongoing spiritual assessment must be at the foundation of everything a counselor does.

Typically a counselor is consulted at a point of great distress and brokenness. God can and will use this vulnerability to open the client's heart to the gospel message. The fact that a non-believer has selected a biblical counselor is evidence alone that God is working in that client's life. Jesus said:

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44a).

When broken and tender, the heart of the client is searching for truth and peace that can only be gained through a personal relationship with Jesus. The Lord uses that pain and suffering to draw us into a situation where the truth can be spoken and received. Since there are no errors or accidents in the timing of God, the counseling session can be His appointed moment. Paul wrote:

For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

It is critical that counselors deal with the spiritual first—the physical second. What answer have we offered if we deal with matters of marital communication, emotion, behavior, etc. and fail to teach our clients to have access to the *Way*, the *Truth* and the *Life* (John 14:6)? Until and unless the client comes to accept Christ as his Savior, any and all techniques of support and guidance will bear no gain. Jesus defined it clearly:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Thus, there can be no fruit (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control*) without an abiding relationship with Christ. Without "spiritual fruit" (Galatians 5:22-23) there are no remedies for marriage problems, parenting issues, depression, anxiety, addiction, or anger. In fact, the client and the therapy can "do nothing" without the *True Vine* of nourishment and hope.

A client enters our office at perhaps the most crucial point in his/her life. Perhaps they are thinking of suicide; considering divorce; contemplating an affair; or simply seek escape. We must not throw them a communication technique, an emotional release, or a psychiatric medication; but rather let us give them the *Chief Cornerstone* (1 Peter 2:6) upon which they can build a structure that can withstand all of life's storms and challenges (Matthew 7:24-25).

As biblical counselors, we must expand our spiritual calling if we are to be effective and useful to the Kingdom. We may never preach a revival or conduct an altar call, but we have an ordained role as witnesses and advocates of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are indeed evangelists, one and all.