

A top-down view of a group of people sitting around a wooden table. They have their hands clasped together in the center of the table. Several Bibles are open on the table, and a pen is visible. The scene is dimly lit, with a blue and purple color cast. The text 'bmedia' and 'BIBLICAL COUNSELING' is overlaid on the image.

bmedia

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

An Introduction to Biblical Counseling

What is counseling?

The dictionary defines “counsel” as:

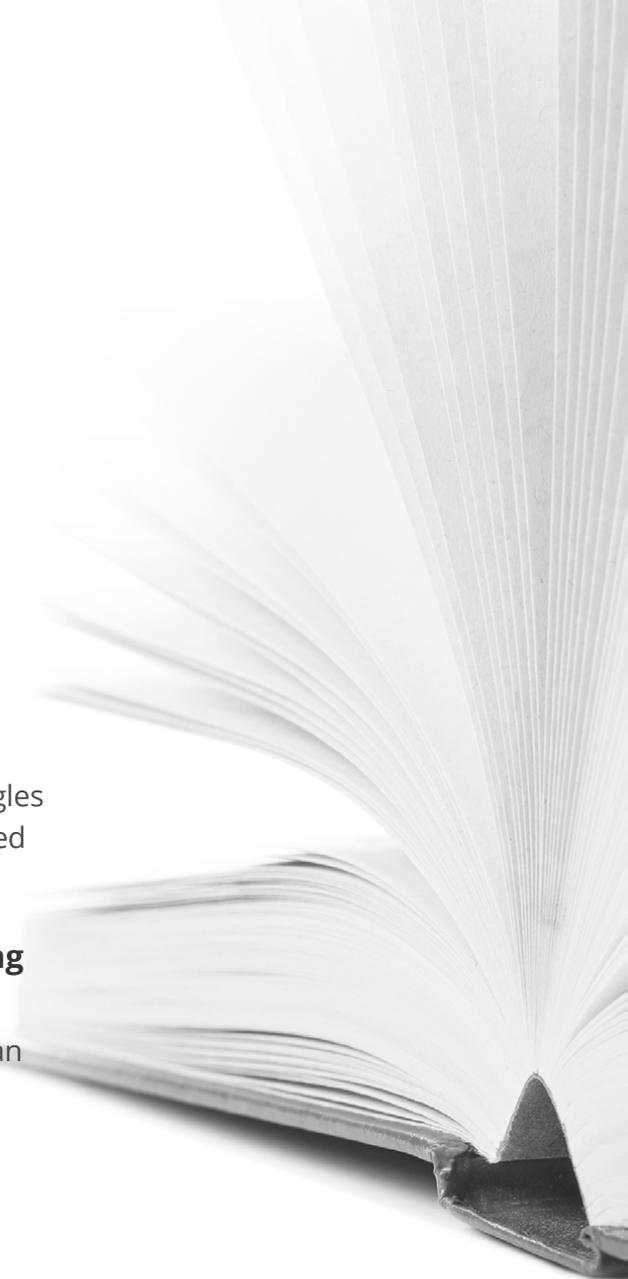
- 1 The act of exchanging opinions and ideas; consultation
- 2 Advice or guidance, especially as solicited from a knowledgeable person
- 3 A plan of action

What is biblical counseling?

In Biblical counseling, a counselor relates the Bible, God’s Word, to a person’s struggles with suffering or the weight of personal sin, leading to genuine inner change oriented toward being pleasing to God.

Biblical counseling is to be distinguished from other forms of counseling in several ways:

- Biblical counseling acknowledges that the God who created man understands man better than man himself.
- In biblical counseling, faith and beliefs form the foundation of actions rather than feelings and desires (*James 1:14-15*).



- In biblical counseling, morality and ethics are defined by the Scriptures rather than by the society, individual or experience of the moment.
- Biblical counseling assumes that God has given to man everything that man needs to make the right decisions and to solve all of life's problems (*2 Peter 1:2-4*).

Where is the ministry of counseling found in the Bible?

While there are not many times when the words “counsel” or “counseling” are referenced in the Bible, we do see the following examples:

- **Exodus 18:20, 23: Jethro gives counsel to Moses**

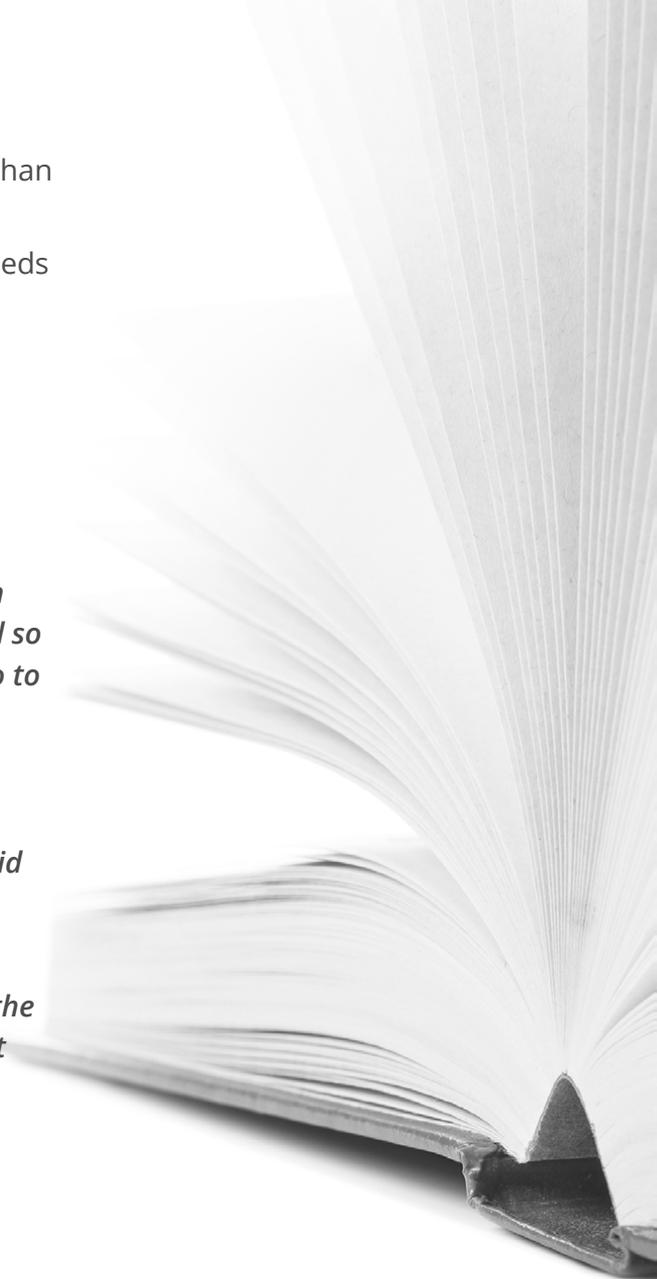
And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do... If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.

- **2 Samuel 16:23: Ahitophel was a counselor to David and Absalom**

Now the advice of Ahitophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithopel both with David and with Absalom.

- **Psalm 16:7-8: God is the source of counsel**

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.



In the New Testament, the word most often translated “counsel” is the word *sumbouleo* which means “to give or to take advice jointly.” Simply put, “to recommend, deliberate or determine.”

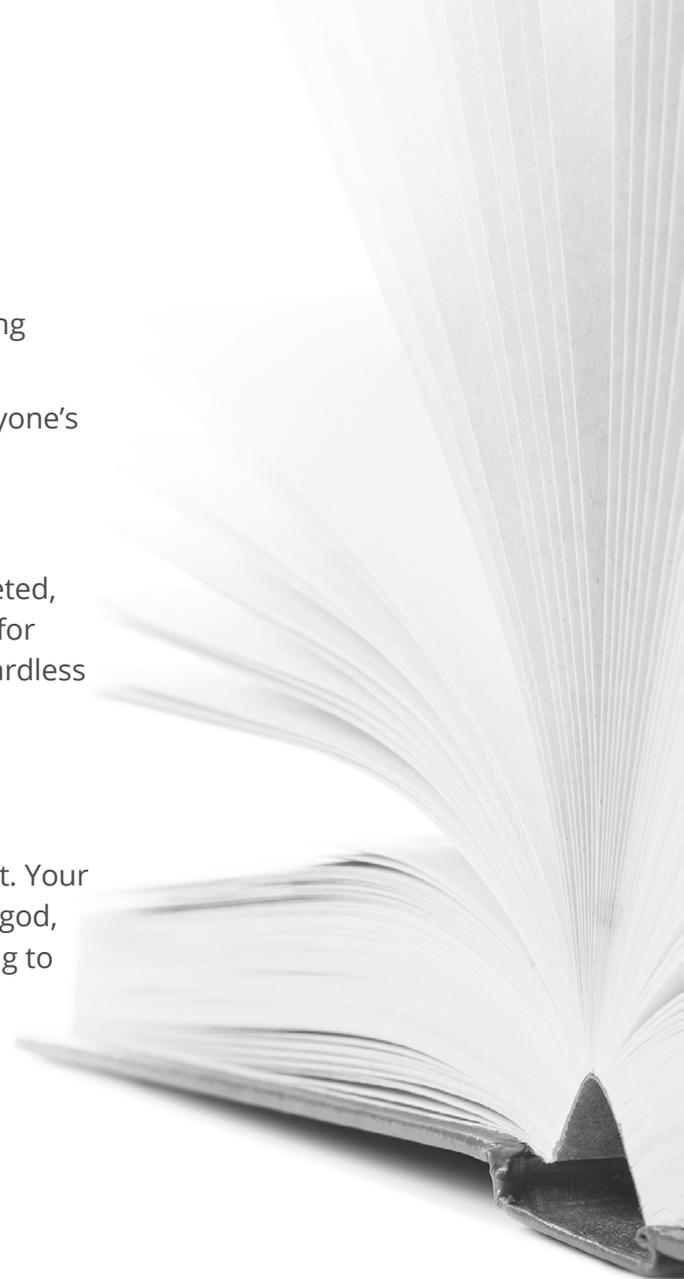
- Most of the time it is used in a negative sense of the opponents of Jesus taking counsel how they might destroy Him (*Matthew 26:4*).
- The primary positive use of the word reminds us that God does not need anyone’s counsel (*Romans 11:33-36*).

Key Beliefs

First, the Bible, given by God, is sufficient for life in that, when properly interpreted, it reveals to the believer all the data necessary for one to understand his need for Christ, how he can please the Lord, and how to live in a God-honoring way regardless of the circumstances.

Second, the Bible is the authoritative source with which all truth claims.

The genuine heart change is totally dependent on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Your view of counseling practice includes the importance of prayer, dependence on god, a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, and an understanding of ministering to people.



Instilling Hope

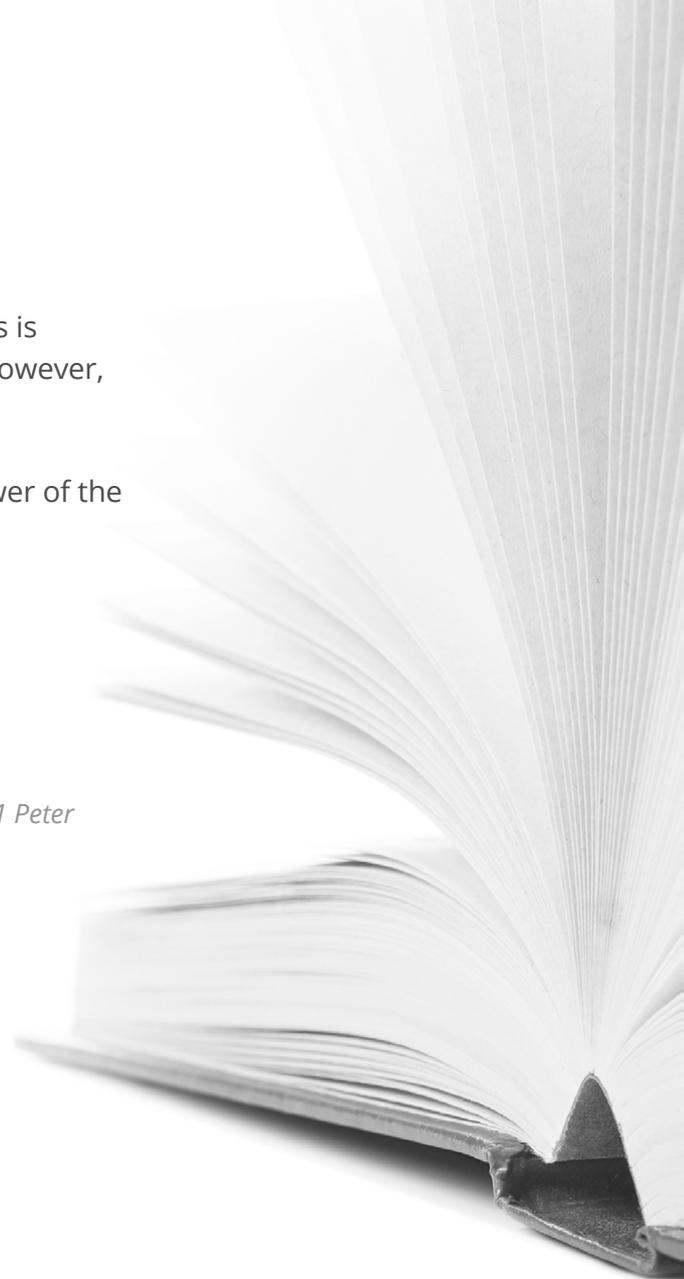
One of the main tasks of a counselor on the front end of the counseling process is instilling hope. We live in a world where so many people feel like hope is lost. However, we know as Christians that we have powerful resources available to us.

It's imperative that the counselor build hope in the counselee based on the power of the Word of God, the grace of God and the Spirit of God.

There are significant reasons why Christians can have hope in any situation:

1 Because of whom God is:

- God is love (*Jeremiah 31:3, Romans 8:37-29, 1 John 4:8,16*).
- God is faithful (*Lamentations 3:22-23; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 4:19*).
- God cares about us (*1 Peter 5:6-7*).
- God will never forsake us (*Hebrews 13:5*).
- God is always working to complete that which concerns us (*Philippians 1:6*).



2 Because what God can do:

Our hope is not dependent upon what we can do, but what God can do. A good definition of hope is confidence in God's ability to restore our lives in such a way that we can experience in facing life's challenges.

- With God all things are possible (*Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 1:27; 18:27*).
- God can do what man cannot do (*Hebrews 11:1*).

3 Because of the resources that are available to us

- We have the Holy Spirit.
- We have the Word of God.
- We have the grace of God.

4 Because of whom we are in Christ

If I am a Christian then...

- I am a child of God (*John 1:12*).
- I have direct access to the heavenly Father (*Ephesians 2:18*).
- I am a new creation in Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).
- I am a member of Christ's spiritual body (*1 Corinthians 12:27*).
- I am forgiven (*Ephesians 1:7*).
- I am a citizen of heaven (*Philippians 3:20*).
- I am God's temple (*1 Corinthians 3:16*).



- I am God's workmanship (*Ephesians 2:10*)
- I am seated with Christ in heavenly places (*Ephesians 2:6*)
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (*Philippians 4:13*)

There are certain people who especially need a sense of hope. These people include:

- People with long standing problems
- People with particularly difficult problems
- People who have been improperly labeled by psychiatrists
- People who are harassed by fear
- People who have tried and failed
- People who have or are contemplating suicide
- People who have suffered life-shattering experiences
- People who are without Christ

If people do not have hope, they will often give up on or give in to the issue. It is critical that we build a sense of hope so that he or she will be motivated to work on the problem.

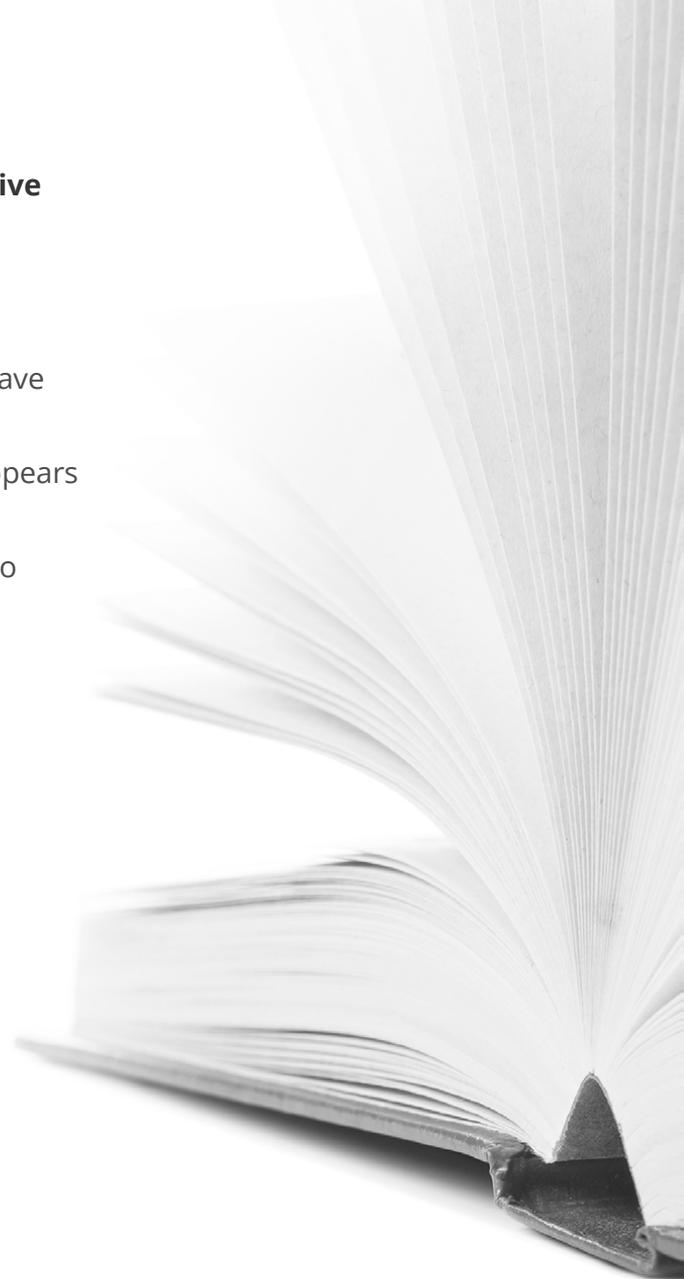


There are some assurances that you can give to people that will help to give hope.

- We can assure them that God has an answer.
- We can assure them that we will help them.
- We can assure them that others have had this problem and by God's grace have overcome it.
- We can assure them that it is God's purpose to bring positives out of what appears to be negatives.
- We can assure them that God not only wants to fix their problem, He wants to make them a testimony to His grace and power.

There are also some cautions in relation to instilling hope.

- It's important that we not give false hope. False hope is misplaced hope.
- False hope is hope that denies reality.
- False hope is hope that is based on expecting results without change.
- We must also be careful not to minimize the effort that will be needed.

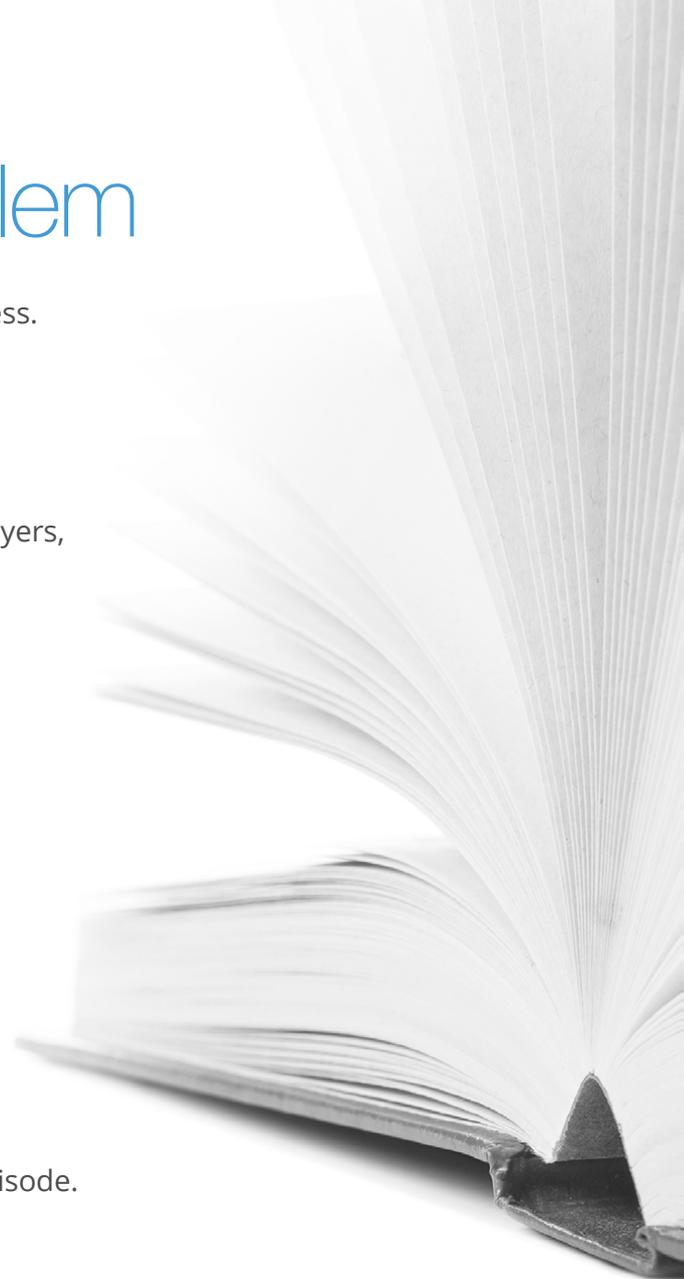


Breaking Down the Problem

We must be prepared to rebuild hope at various stages of the counseling process.

There are several aspects to nearly every problem.

- There are surface problems or symptoms. These can include:
 - Relational conflict (parents, spouse, in-laws, neighbors, co-workers, employers, etc.)
 - Pornography
 - Substance abuse
 - Explosive fits of anger
 - Sleeplessness
 - Procrastination
 - Physical issues
 - Depression
 - Stealing
 - Physical abuse
 - Cheating
 - Financial mismanagement
- There are also surface causes. Often, these things have triggered a recent episode.



- There may be certain settings or things that seem to trigger such behavior and they may appear to be the cause of such behavior. However, the real cause is likely much deeper.
- There are underlying attitudes. These are the “whys” of people’s behaviors. For example, the problem may be lying, but the underlying attitude may be a fear of man or a lack of trust in God’s ability to provide.
- There are common roots of a variety of problems. The Bible references several roots of sinful behavior.
 - The love of money (*1 Timothy 6:10*)
 - The love of self (*2 Timothy 3:2*)
 - Pride (*Proverbs 16:18*)
- There are also many things that can compound a person’s problem
 - Lifestyle issues (ie. Time management, financial management, relationship issues, occupational stress)
 - Stress factors (ie. Death of a loved one, personal tragedy, natural disaster. Relocation, job loss, financial reversal)
 - Physical; issues (ie. Physiological changes – puberty, menstrual cycle. Pregnancy, change of life; sleep issues, disabilities)

It’s important to break down complex problems into smaller parts—pinpointing underlying attitudes, tracing the problem back to the root, prioritizing problems and taking them on, one issue at a time.

