Part Three

**BASIS FOR NOUTHETIC COUNSELING:**

I. **Bringing About Restoration:**

What is counseling? The answer is simple and yet very profound. While the work of counseling is not necessarily easy, it is very much needed. It is that process by which one Christian restores another to a place of usefulness to Christ in His Church. The command in the Word of God is very clear that we "restore" any brothers or sisters whom God providentially places in our pathway day by day.

Galatians 6:1 gives us the command to restore another. This original word in the Greek was used by fishermen and physicians when they described the mending of fishnets and the setting of fractures. They both called their work "restoration." A torn net is of little or no value; the fish easily slip through and are lost. Likewise broken bones in the arm make it useless until they are set. Both nets and arms need to be restored to their former use.

God has given a heavy burden, and a broader authority that corresponds with it, to those who are official church counselors. They must search out problems among the members of the church in order to care for them immediately. As shepherds they are required not only to handle the problems that they come upon in life’s road, but to keep watch over the souls of every member (Hebrews 13:17). The pastor-counselor is commanded to "keep watch" or to "remain awake and to be alert" to problems that may arise.

The ultimate goal of all restoration is to glorify God. When we counsel another we must ask, "How has his usefulness to Christ been diminished by His problem?" The goal ought to guide one’s method, attitudes and activities in helping the counselee. We counsel not to punish, to gloat over the persons or to know their sin. We will desire to bring them to usefulness and victory in the Lord (I Corinthians 10:31,32; Colossians 3:23).

II. **Giving "Nouthetic" Counseling:**

A. **Christ is at the center of all true counseling:**

1. All things were created by Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16,17).

2. It was God through Christ who formed man out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7).

3. The Lord specifically and intricately designed every single body differently (Psalm 139:13-16).

B. **Nouthetic Counseling is the work of every Christian:** (Romans 15:14; 15:1; Galatians 6:1; Colossians 3:16).


2. Every Christian, who is spiritual, who is Spirit-filled should be involved in the work of counseling.
C. Nouthetic Counseling includes at least three elements:

The word, nouthetic, comes from the Greek word -nouthesia. This is the word from which the name nouthetic counseling comes. It is simply a designation for Biblical counseling. It is a comprehensive term which denotes a use of the Scriptures foremost in the counseling process. The Greek word "nouthesia" has often been translated "admonish, warn, and teach." A. T. Robertson, a Greek authority, has translated it "to put sense into" also translated "counsel." Jay Adams transliterates it "nouthetic" because no one English word in itself defines it.

Jay Adams gives the following: "It contains the three elements: change through confrontation out of concern. It presupposes,

* that there are sinful patterns and activities in the life of the counselee that God wants changed.
* that this change will be brought about through a verbal confrontation of the counselee with the Scriptures as the counselor ministers them in the power of the Holy Spirit.
* this confrontation is done in a loving, caring, familial manner for the benefit of the counselee. There is deep concern."

note: Ready to Restore---What Is Counseling?" -- Pg 9

III. Some Basic Elements in Nouthetic Counseling:

Nouthetic counseling suggests that there is something wrong with the person who is to be confronted nouthetically, or Biblically. It arises out of the fact that there is a condition which God desires changed. The fundamental purpose of nouthetic confrontation then is to effect personality and behavioral change-- conformity to the image of Christ. God wants change. All counseling aims at change. Without this element whatever we might be doing, it is not counseling. In the word, "restore" we had a term which required change. Usefulness was lost. The change must take place because of the Christian who is caught in sin (Galatians 6:1). The change that is contemplated in the restoration to usefulness is a change in life patterns in which sinful beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are replaced by righteous ones (see Ephesians 4:22-24).

A. All counseling has to do with changes in beliefs, judgments, values, relationships, thoughts, behavior, and other such moral elements of life. Sin in human life has led to distortions of life in each of these categories. There is the resulting sinful thought and action that is the object of change in Christian counseling. The counselor "aims" at straightening out the individual by changing his patterns of behavior to conform to Biblical standards. The sinful responses are to be replaced with righteous ones.

B. Also in Biblical counseling there ought to be the aim of preventive counseling. If we would labor in this area both in teaching and preaching, maybe many of the problems people face could be alleviated in the first place.

C. Problems are solved by verbal means, that is, there must be some Biblical confrontation of the problem at hand. This implies personal, verbal contact in which the Word of God is applied to the counselee. There is no idea here of nastiness, or harshness, or a know-it-all-attitude, in the concept of confrontation. We will deal with this further a bit later. There is training by the mouth, that is, it is a person-to-person verbal use of Scripture-- sometimes by encouragement and sometimes by reproof. There must be a "speaking the truth in love" a truth telling which pleases God (Ephesians 4:15, 25).
D. **There must be the element of concern** or otherwise confrontation will be sterile, lifeless, cold, professional, harsh, and probably out of a critical spirit. In this care for another there ought to be strong desire and untiring effort to relieve the person of the misery that sinful life patterns have brought upon him. This is true biblical counseling.

**note:** The counselor seeks to minister the Scriptures, to help the person interpret and apply the principles and practices of the Word of God in an attempt to help bring about the changes that will relieve him of his miseries. Such a ministry is conducted prayerfully, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The counselor will seek wisdom to minister the Scriptures with the goal to bring change which will lead to restoration unto usefulness.

The counselor in the contact or personal conference and discussion (counseling) will direct toward change in the direction of greater conformity to Biblical principles and practices. The goal must be to meet the obstacles or sin problems as the Holy Spirit directs, helping the person to understand the problem. The purpose is God’s glory in the life.

E. **Nouthetic counseling may be defined in short as** ... 1) meeting the person where he is.... 2) pointing out what is wrong.... 3) and helping him obtain the desirable personality and behavioral change -- based upon Scripture. *This will also necessitate helping him to understand his sinful thinking behind the actions.*

F. **Nouthetic Counseling is always Biblical counseling:** In II Timothy 3:16,17 we find the ultimate purpose of the Word of God in the life of every Christian. Not only is the Word of God given to make us wise unto salvation and to be the instrument God uses to bring this about (I Peter 2:23; Titus 3:5), but also He would use it to bring about sanctification in daily life.

**As we use the Word of God it becomes to the counselee (II Timothy 3:15- 17) ---**

1. **Doctrine**— by which we know truth. And the truth shall set you free (John 8:32, 36).

2. **Reproof**— by which we compare our lives with the biblical standard, and become aware of our sinful condition through conviction. Without conviction there never will be change. This is a **convicting activity** which must be pursued when the counselee is unaware of his sin or is still unrepentant. The Holy Spirit must work the conviction in the life as the counselor presents the Word of God (James 1: 19-25).

3. **Correction**— by which we recognize the change needed and begin to bring about that change. Repentance leads to a change in behavior as a change of mind and will take place through correction by the Word of God. This activity is "to set straight" in which we show the counselee how to break sinful habits and how to overcome failures and weaknesses. This includes reconciliation, restitution and putting on new patterns.

4. **Instruction**— for the Scriptures would bring instruction in righteousness. By the Word of God we recognize how far short we are of God’s plan and how sin brings much misery. There will be instruction concerning putting off the old ways and putting on the new ones and about staying out of sin in the future.

5. **Discipline**— in righteousness. This **structuring activity** would involve laying out a personal biblical pattern of living for the counselee to replace the unbiblical one. *This will involve regular Bible study, and the ministry of the Word of God.*
Part Four

THE COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING:

I. The Case For Pastoral Counseling:

We have seen that the Scriptures were given to us... for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is the book God has provided to guide us in counseling and it includes all that is needed to bring about the change required to live a life pleasing to God. Surely that very fact would cause us to realize the importance of the pastor’s being involved in a counseling ministry.

A. The Definition of Pastoral Counseling:

The pastor is a *poimen* (shepherd), a *presbuteros* (elder) and *anepiskopos* (overseer). He is a mature Christian whom God has placed over his people. His appointment and ordination is a recognition of the divine call upon his life. His responsibilities include evangelizing (II Timothy 4:5), leading by example (Peter 5:3), teaching, admonishing, rebuking, warning, training, edifying, and restoring. His primary ministry is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God (II Timothy 4:2). But in the midst of all of this is the very important ministry of counseling.

The designation "pastoral counseling" is limited primarily to the pastoral use of the Word of God in restoring sick or distressed members of the flock of God. Such counseling involves a decision to deal with an individual to alleviate his distress in a particular way. It is to help the person think differently, biblically and feel differently about a whole area or several areas of his life. It is the use of the Word of God to bring about change in the person's thinking, feeling, and actions, and to help him realize in his own experience the abundant life that Christ promised (John 10:10).

B. The Lack of Pastoral Counseling:

While many biblical pastors know there is a great need for counseling many excuse themselves for not taking the responsibility.

Some are troubled with thoughts of incompetence when they face the strange theories and vocabulary of psychology and the great variety of psychotherapies. (the world’s approach) They wonder whether or not they could master the subject of counseling sufficiently to be any practical use. There is the greater problem of understanding how to counsel without the involvement of man's methods. Primarily one must be an expert in the use of the Word of God, for it is the greatest of therapeutic agents.

C. Arguments for Pastoral Counseling:

1. *The Word of God is very clear about the great needs that people face which affect them mentally, emotionally, and physically. We cannot get away from the fact that there is a biblical Psychology which is a legitimate study. (Note Psalm 42, 43.) Throughout the history of Christianity, pastors and spiritual leaders have sought to understand the workings of troubled minds in order to more skillfully apply the Word of God as a means of relief.*
2. *Pastors are the major source of counseling.* The pastor is often the first, and sometimes the only, professional person to whom people go for comfort and counsel. Surveys prove that 42% of the people with problems would prefer to seek out a pastor. The pastor has the kind of ready made atmosphere for counseling that most others do not have.

3. *We must have emotionally well people who are mature if we are to also have evangelism.* Christian maturity is basic to service. Emotionally ill saints do not win many souls. Depressed and defeated Christians are likely to provoke the unconverted to turn away from Christ or Christianity. We must edify the saints if we are to help them qualify for service and outreach.

4. *Tremendous needs do exist among the saints of God.* Probably every failure and/or sin experienced by the unconverted is also experienced by God's people. The Word of God has much counsel about such things as anxiety, depression, fear, jealousy, anger, sexual sins, marriage failures, frustration and resentment, etc. In almost every instance these problems involve sinful behavior and irrational thinking.

   a. There is the **worried, anxious and fearful person** who walks in unbelief. (Or he is his way due to other sinful practices.)
   b. There is the **depressed believer** who feels rejected, unloved, inadequate, and worthless. (Potential source-- anger, bitterness.)
   c. The **jealous person** is usually troubled with selfish sinful attitudes. (Potential source-- pride, personality weakness & sin.)
   d. Many believers are **angry** because they selfishly and irrationally believe that everything ought to go the way they wish. *When their wills are crossed or their plans are thwarted, they become angry.* Research reveals that much anger is related to a perceived attack upon one's self.
   e. Many emotional factors are involved in many sins that believers commit. (Some are highly emotionally motivated.)

D. *World conditions have brought a profound impact toward the need of pastoral counseling.* This is a list of things which bring pressure, stress and emotional problems to mankind:

* Materialistic outlook of modern Americans
* Our infatuation with self
* TV, and the new morality
* The urbanization of society
* A rootless society
* Competition in an open economy
* Working wives and mothers
* Religious apostasy
* Moral relativism has increased the incidence of sin and guilt
* Mankind becoming just a number in many instances
* A very transient population
* Pastors who abdicate their responsibility

**note:** Pastors have a God-given responsibility to teach, warn, rebuke and admonish the sheep of their flocks (Colossians 3:16; II Timothy 4: 2). The word, "admonition," or *nouthesia*, upon which Dr. Jay Adams bases his Nouthetic counseling, signifies "putting people in mind" of the truths they specifically need at a particular time.

Emotional and sinful distress cannot help but influence one's worship, spiritual outlook, and Christian walk. The need for victory over sin and effectiveness in service and witness
make it imperative that the pastor be involved when his people have problems. It would seem obligatory for pastors to help their people avoid the dangers of walking "in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm 1:1).

**note:** Even though the secular psychologist does not seek to contradict or destroy the counselee's religious faith, he still could do much spiritual harm to a believer and certainly would be at a handicap in dealing with the believer's problems. The pastor, working with the person in a biblical context, can do what the secularist can never do.

## II. The Commitment To Pastoral Counseling:

**A. The pastor will be committed because he is burdened** about the disturbed person, the perplexed person, the potential divorcée, those in financial bondage, the quarreling church member, the aged, the rebellious youth, the newly married, and soon to be married, etc. (See *Caring And Counseling* book for further thoughts.)

**B. He is committed toward bringing change.** Good counseling is communication between two or more people by which one person endeavors to effect change for one or more persons through the power of the Holy Spirit by the means of the Word of God. The task of the Christian counselor is to call for repentance, which is a call for a change of mind leading to a change of life. The one who needs to repent may not be the counselee. Jay Adams writes, "Counseling has to do with living. It has to do with how you evaluate and meet life situations. It has to do with how people live at home with other people and how they live with God. That’s what counseling is all about-- attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavior.”

**C. He is committed to Christian growth.** Richard Gantz says, "Biblical counseling is teaching people to live the Christian life.” It is assisting Christians in growth or progressive sanctification (Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 3:18; I John 3:2). The pastor must be committed to the task of counseling. He must comprehend the biblical explanations for Christian growth, not men’s proposals, ideas, and methodology.

**D. He will be committed regardless of the past.** Tim LaHaye said, "During the past 30 to 40 years western civilization has become increasingly obsessed with the idea that whenever a person becomes upset, he needs to see a secular, professional counselor.” It was the liberal ministers who started a movement called "Clinical Pastoral Education" in America some 50 to 60 years ago.

In the past, conservative Bible believing pastors were either too busy with evangelism and rebuilding ministries lost to the liberals, or they were overreacting to the point of believing that counseling is wrong since liberals and secularist were doing it. And because the average pastor did not feel prepared to counsel his people he would refer those in need to the world’s psychologists. This was and is a great error.

The lack of training and lack of a balanced ministry caused many pastors to neglect the Divine call to minister to those in need (see John 21). With the Bible school movement there was an emphasis on evangelism to the loss of a balanced edification ministry. Also, there was a suspicion of higher education because of the liberals who were educated "out of" their adherence to the Bible. As a result many ministers did not receive a seminary education which could have given them the tools for an edification ministry among their own, that would include counseling.