

# Qualifications of a Biblical Counselor

## How to Disciple and Counsel from Scripture

Fall 2021 Conference – Bruce Groves

### Introduction

**Question:** What qualifies someone to be an effective counselor? Education, experience?

### Three Passages: Godly Characteristics to Counsel Effectively those with Struggles, Needs

1. Romans 15:1–16
2. Galatians 6:1–4
3. 2 Tim. 2:24–26

### Biblical Qualifications of Those Who Should Disciple, Counsel

#### I. Spiritually Mature (15:1a)

Rom. 15:1 Now **we who are strong** ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength

Gal. 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you** who are **spiritual**, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness;

1. **Mature:** those **strong** in their convictions—freedoms in Christ—are commanded to help the spiritually weak, those immature in their faith.
  - a. **strong** = Metaphorically it means strong, firm, fixed, established, mature (Rom. 15:1; 2 Cor. 12:10, 13:9; WSNTDICT).
  - b. **Rome:** Paul addressed the threat to unity that arises when mature (strong) believers—both Jews and Gentiles—conflict with immature (weak) believers. (Rom. 14:1-2, 4, 10-13, 19-21)
    - i. **Strong Jewish believers** understood their freedom in Christ: ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law (Sabbath) were no longer binding.
    - ii. **Mature Gentiles understood** that idols are not gods, so they could eat meat that had been offered to them.
    - iii. In both cases, the weaker brother's conscience was troubled and tempted to:
      - violate his conscience, out of guilt become more legalistic, or commit a sin
    - iv. Paul challenged the strong, mature Jews and Gentiles to help those who were weak.
2. **Spiritual:** own walk is Spirit-led which qualifies the believer to assist the walk of others.
  - a. Motivation: motivated by love for God and others; not self (*crucified the flesh*, Gal. 5:24)
  - b. Control: And do not get drunk with wine ... but be filled (*controlled*) with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
  - c. Love: fruit, evidence of being **spiritual** (*Spirit-led, controlled*); love is defined as (Gal. 5:22-23):
    - i. **joy** (love exhilarated), **peace** (love at rest), **patience** (love on trial)
    - ii. **kindness** (love with internal tenderness), **goodness** (love in active care)
    - iii. **gentleness** (love without personal rights), **faithfulness** (love with confident endurance),
    - iv. **self-control** (love with restraint) [*Who is Qualified to Restore?* Dr. John Street, 2009 ACBC Conf.]

**Question:** In your marriage, home, church, workplace, do you have the reputation of being spiritual? With the Lord's help, what priorities, attitudes, words, and behaviors need to change?

## II. Can Understand, Apply and Teach Scripture

2 Tim. 2:24-26 - <sup>24</sup> **The Lord's bond-servant [slave] must ...be ... able to teach**

Rom. 15:4, 14-15 <sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in earlier times was **written for our instruction**, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of **the Scriptures** we might have hope. ... <sup>14</sup> And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are ... **filled with all knowledge** and **able** also to **admonish one another**. <sup>15</sup> But I have written very boldly to you ... because of the grace that was given me from God, <sup>16</sup> to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, **ministering as a priest the gospel of God** ...

1. Biblical Counselor must be convinced that all of Scripture was written for our edification.
2. Counselor must be convinced that the knowledge of Scripture is key to life transformation
  - a. 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **training in righteousness**;
  - b. **Teach** (what to believe, how to live) → **reprove** (in error, off track) → **correct** (*set straight again*) → **train in righteousness** (instruct with discipline to form habits, develop character)
3. Counselor must be able to study, comprehend, apply, teach, admonish others using gospel truth
  - a. **admonish** (*noutheteo*) = to provide instruction as to correct belief and behavior; to warn, exhort
  - b. Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

**Question:** Are you able to study, understand and apply Scripture to your own life, relationships?  
Are you able to admonish others (*teach, reprove, correct, train*) from Scripture with clarity?

## III. Restores with an Attitude of Humility, Gentleness

Gal. 6:1-3 <sup>1</sup> ... **you** who are **spiritual**, restore such a one in a **spirit of gentleness**; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ... <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup> But each one must examine his own work ...

2 Tim. 2:24-26 <sup>24</sup> **The Lord's bond-servant [slave] must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, ... patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup> with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition,**

Romans 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**; but to think so as to have sound judgment, **as God has allotted to each a measure of faith**.

1. **Gentleness** (*prautes*) is an **inwrought grace of the soul toward God** that believes that all His dealings with us are good, so God and His will is not disputed, resisted.  
(CWSNT, Zodhiates; cf James 1:21; 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:15)
2. Counselor's **confidence** in God's sovereign goodness results in the ability to respond with **gentleness**, especially toward those who are in opposition [Moses (Num. 12:3), Christ (1 Pet. 2:23)]
3. Counselor is **humble** toward God and others because he knows his strength, abilities are from God, which gives him "entree into the lives of others whom he may influence for good."
4. **Biblical Counselor** should not think more highly of self than (s)he ought; quick to admit when wrong or sinful after examining own heart, behavior; models repentance. (Rom. 12:3; Gal. 6:3-4)

5. Rather than respond with harshness to defend oneself, a **biblical counselor** courageously engages problems with a motivation to help others; knows *how to pour oil on troubled waters* (Mt. 5:9)
6. Biblical Counselor with a **Gentle mindset** knows **when** to speak or act, **how** to speak or act, and **what** to say or do for another, so (s)he can provide effective counsel to those caught in sin or overwhelmed with burdens. ([Jay Adams](#), *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (1986), 259-60)

**Question:** How do you respond to opposition from others? Are you defensive, harsh, quarrelsome?  
How frequently do you freely admit your failures, sins to your spouse, children, friends?

#### IV. Bears the Burdens of Those who Suffer, are Weak

Rom. 15:1 Now we who are strong ought to **bear** the **weaknesses** (*asthénēma*) of those without strength

Gal. 6:2 **Bear** one another's **burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ

1 Thess. 5:14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, **help the weak** (*asthenēs*), be patient with everyone.

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick (*weak, asthenēs*)? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him.

1. Biblical Counselors joyfully obey the command to help the weak *shoulder* their burdens
  - a. **to bear** = word means "to pick up and carry a weight"
  - b. strong are not to simply **tolerate** the weaknesses, struggles of their weaker brothers, but are to help the weak shoulder their burdens by showing loving, practical consideration for them (Gal. 6:2; cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-22; Phil. 2:2-4).
2. **Weak** (*asthenēs*) believers could be those who are **fragile in faith, beset by doubts** (1 Cor. 8:1-13, 9:19-23, 10:23-33)
  - a. Faith may not be strong enough to enjoy their freedom in Christ (Gal. 5:1; Col. 2:16-23).
    - i. Some weaker believers have such **sensitive consciences** over their past sins that they **perceive things as sin** that are not sin at all (Rom. 14:13-23; 1 Cor. 8:7).
  - b. **Weak** are **more susceptible** to:
    - i. theological error (Eph. 4:14)
    - ii. repeated temptation
    - iii. sin more than stronger believers (sick, weak from sin, James 5:14; 1 Cor. 8:9-13)

**Question:** How patient, gracious and involved are you when helping those who struggle (repeatedly) in areas where you are strong?

#### V. Denies Self to Love Others

Rom. 15:1-2 <sup>1</sup> ... and not *just* please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us is to **please his neighbor for his good, to his edification**. <sup>3</sup> For even **Christ** did not **please Himself**; but as it is written, "The reproaches (*slander, insults*) of those who reproached You fell on Me."

1. Primary objective of a biblical counselor is to *please his neighbor for his good, to his edification*.
  - a. **please his neighbor:** intentional, deliberate, continuous attempt to gratify, make another happy
    - i. Phil. 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

**b. for his good**

- i. Phil. 2:4 *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*
- ii. Rom. 14:21 - *It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine ... by which your brother stumbles.*
- iii. **his good:** his benefit, profit, usefulness to serve, glorify God and bless others

**c. to his edification**

- i. **edification** = process of building; to increase the spiritual potential, profit, advancement
- ii. Rom. 14:19 ... *we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.*
- iii. Example: **Barnabas** accepted, championed such that **Paul's ministry** outshined his own

**2. Jesus modeled for counselors how to deny ourselves, so we can serve Him and edify others**

- a. Phil. 2:6-8 <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, ... <sup>8</sup> He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:25-29)
- b. Luke 9:23 ... If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
- c. John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends

**Question:** Are you willing to sacrifice your own comfort, preferences to help, serve others?

Are you willing to champion the interests of a fellow believer, even if it results in him/her having a greater impact for the kingdom? (John 3:30, Acts 17:4-5)

## **VI. Finds Encouragement, Hope in Scripture**

Rom. 15:4 <sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures **we might have hope.** ...  
<sup>13</sup> Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace **in believing**, so that you will **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**1. Biblical counselors have the conviction that the **God of Hope** revealed in Scripture is the primary source of encouragement, joy, peace and hope to all who sin or suffer.**

- a. Ps. 19:7-8 <sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

**2. The example of how other men and women responded to similar trials and temptations in the past encourages us today on how we can respond in faith and obedience.**

- a. Heb. 12:1-2 <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also **lay aside every encumbrance** and **the sin** which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith ...

**Question:** When you experience trials and temptation, do you run first to Christ and His Word?  
When others struggle, do you point them to Christ and His gospel truths?

## **VII. Understands that Heart Change is a Work of the Spirit**

Rom. 15:13 Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the **power of the Holy Spirit.**

2 Tim. 2:24-26 <sup>24</sup> The Lord's bond-servant must ... <sup>25</sup> ... correcting those who are in opposition, **if perhaps God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may **come to their senses and escape** from the **snare of the devil, having been held captive by him** to do his will

1. Biblical counselor rests in the truth that the **Spirit alone** can *change* a **man's heart**
2. Biblical counselor is committed to fulfilling **his roles, responsibilities** in the **power of the Spirit**
  - a. Admonition: teaches gospel truths in love (Eph. 4:15)
  - b. Fellowship: exercises the one-another commands
  - c. Role Model: practices what he preaches: admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone (1 Thess. 5:14)
  - d. Intercedes: prays for God to help the ensnared, encourage the burdened (James 5:16)
3. Biblical counselor **prayerfully entrusts counselees** to the **sovereign responsibility of the Spirit**
  - a. Regeneration: Spirit alone can draw a man to Himself, convert Him (Acts 26:18, Jn 3:5, 6:44)
  - b. Indwelling: indwelling Spirit gives believers the power to change (Rom. 8:9-11, Gal. 5:16)
  - c. Illumination: believer understands Scripture through Spirit alone (Lk 24:45; 1 Cor. 2:10-13)
  - d. Conviction: Spirit alone produces conviction of sin in men's hearts via gospel (John 16:8-11)
  - e. Fruit of Spirit: godly lifestyle when a believer is led, controlled by the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)
4. **Sin, hurt or conflict** can occur when a counselor *neglects* his roles, responsibilities
  - a. Neglect to warn a counselee to flee from an obvious opportunities for sin.
  - b. Neglect to inform (or require a counselee to do it) someone in authority (parent, spouse, elder, boss, etc.) about a problem for which they should be notified, responsible.
  - c. Neglect to follow through on any commitment made to your counselee
5. **Sin, hurt or conflict** can occur when a counselor *over-reaches* his roles, responsibilities
  - a. Parent: unilaterally assume a role, responsibility with a child, teen that is the parent's
  - b. Authority: undermine the counsel of a person in authority over your counselee on preference issues
  - c. God: Use **fleshly guilt, manipulation** to *coerce* a counselee into *believing truth, making a decision*

**Question:** Are you trustworthy in fulfilling your own roles, responsibilities when serving others?

Are you convinced that the Spirit alone is able to save sinners, illuminate Scripture, convict of sin and produce change, spiritual fruit in others?

## VIII. Willing to Patiently Correct When Opposed

2 Tim. 2:24-26 <sup>24</sup> The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome ... patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup> with gentleness **correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may **come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him** to do his will

1. Motivated by love, a biblical counselor gently corrects those who *believe* lies, *behave* sinfully
2. BC speaks truth because he is more concerned about the condition of his counselee's soul and his standing before God than he is about his counselee's reaction. (2 Cor. 5:10; cf Ezek 3:15-21)
3. BC is **patient** when correcting; allows the **Spirit** time to *convict of sin, reveal truth*, and then *release their counselee from captivity*.

**Question:** Do you love enough to confront? Do you give the Spirit time to *convict, reveal, release*?

## IX. Peacemaker: Pursues Unity with Honor

Rom. 15:5-6 <sup>5</sup> Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the **same mind** with one another according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with **one accord** you may with **one voice** glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. BC desires and pursues reconciliation and unity between spouses, family and church members
  - a. Father and the Son are glorified when believers from different cultural backgrounds and different convictions on conscience issues have the *same mind, one accord, one voice*
2. As Paul challenged the church in Rome, biblical counselors are to **admonish believers**—that have different convictions on conscience issues—to *honor, respect* each other's differences
  - a. **Gentiles** are not to be arrogant, conceited toward the branches (**Jews**) of God's olive tree that were broken off (Rom. 11:18, 20)
  - b. Paul urged both **Gentile, Jewish believers** to present their united bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God ... and not to think more highly of themselves than they should (Rom. 12:1, 3)
  - c. **Commands that Foster Unity:** be of the same mind toward one another, do not be haughty in mind, associate with the lowly, do not be wise in your own estimation (Rom. 12:16)
    - i. **Gentile believers** are not to judge, regard others with contempt anymore (Rom. 14:10, 13)
    - ii. Determine to no longer put an obstacle, stumbling block in a brother's way (Rom. 14:13)
    - iii. Do not **destroy** with your food **him** [brother] for whom **Christ died** (Rom. 14:15b)
    - iv. Pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another (Rom. 14:19)
    - v. Do not **tear down** the **work of God** for the sake of **food** (Rom. 14:20a)

**Question:** Do you value, foster reconciliation and unity in your own, other people's relationships?

## X. Accepts, Serves all Believers

Rom. 15:7-12 - <sup>7</sup> Therefore, **accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us** to the glory of God.

<sup>8</sup> For I say that **Christ** has **become a servant** to **the circumcision** on behalf of the truth of God to *confirm the promises given* to the fathers, <sup>9</sup> and **for the Gentiles** to glorify God for **His mercy** ... <sup>12</sup> ... Isaiah says, "There shall come the **root of Jesse**, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, **in Him shall the Gentiles hope.**"

1. Jesus is a servant not only to His fellow Jews (*the circumcision*), but to all Gentiles
2. Likewise, biblical counselors need to accept and serve believers of all cultures, languages, economic status, educational backgrounds, genders<sup>1</sup>, ages<sup>2</sup>, levels of beauty, popularity, etc.

Gal. 3:26-28 <sup>26</sup> For **you are all sons of God** through **faith in Christ Jesus**. ... <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus**.

<sup>1</sup> **Warning:** Never counsel the opposite gender alone; always include your own spouse, their spouse, friend

<sup>2</sup> **Order of Preference:** (1) Counsel parents, (2) counsel child with parents, (3) counsel child with another

**Question:** How well does your speech, facial expression, behavior communicate acceptance to others?

## XI. Eternal Goal: Train Disciples to Emulate Christ

- <sup>15</sup> But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,
- <sup>16</sup> to be a **minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles**, ministering as a **priest** the **gospel of God**, so that *my offering of the Gentiles* may **become acceptable**, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

1. Paul was a minister, servant of Christ Jesus to all nations
2. As a priest (ambassador), biblical counselors minister both to **unbelievers** (*evangelize*) and **believers** (*sanctify*) using **gospel truths** (Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:13):
  - a. Biblical Counseling is a phenomenal tool for personal, corporate evangelism.
  - b. Biblical Counseling can be one of your churches most effective vehicles for making disciples:
  - c. At **Ambassador Bible Fellowship**, we require the following to receive counseling:
    - i. **Regular Bible Reading**: what from God's Word applies to their problem?
    - ii. **Weekly Small Group**: practice *one anothers*, share burdens with others
    - iii. **Sunday Equipping Hour Class**: specialized training from God's Word
    - iv. **Weekly Sunday Worship**: grow in becoming a worshipper of Jesus, not idols

**Why?** Spiritual disciplines started in counseling are the same ones for training disciples!

3. Goal of counselors is the same as Paul's goal: to offer new Jew/Gentile worshipers to God

**Question:** Want to become an evangelist and disciple maker? **Become a biblical counselor!**

## Resources to Help You Become Qualified to Disciple and Counsel Others

1. Competent to Counsel, Jay Adams (Zondervan, 1970)