

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-1 Introduction to Biblical Counseling

You are beginning a course on biblical counseling. It is 'biblical' because the principles and approaches will be taught using examples from the Bible, the Word of God. Confidence in the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit are the foundation stones of our Christian faith. We have the confidence that if God said it, it will come to pass. God told Isaiah that his word would not return to him empty. It will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it (Isa 55:11). And again, Jesus taught that "until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter" of what God has spoken will disappear "until everything is accomplished" (Matt 5:18). We live as Christian men and women by trusting in those words spoken by God. As we grow in his Word our confidence in him increases.

This first lesson focuses on the importance of being trustworthy as a counselor. A person who provides counsel must observe the principle of "keeping someone's situation in confidence." If someone confides in you, they trust you to keep private and secret whatever they share with you. They have confidence that you will act in a trustworthy way. You will protect the information they have shared with you. Others before you may have broken their confidence. Now they trust that their confidence will not be broken again. Jesus is our example of One who can be trusted.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Jew who strictly kept the Law of Moses and the Jewish traditions. According to these Jewish teachers, 'separated ones,' God's grace extended only to those who kept his Law. Noticing Christ's public behavior, however, gave him confidence to seek him out for a personal conversation late one night. He did not want a public meeting, but a one-on-one uninterrupted conversation. Perhaps he also wanted to avoid being seen by any of the other Pharisees who often listened in the crowds. Nicodemus had knowledge of the works and teachings of Jesus.

The apostle John tells the story: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him'" (John 3:1-2).

"No man can do the miracles that you do except God be with him," Nicodemus said. He could tell that Jesus' words and deeds were not like those of other men of the Jewish faith. Often people will first have noticed your behavior, deeds, and lifestyle, before speaking to you. They come to have faith that the things spoken to you will be kept in confidence. It is that Spirit of God within you that often draws, and sometimes pushes, people to or from you. Nicodemus saw and believed that Jesus was trustworthy and would not betray his trust in him.

Nicodemus was a learned man in the Jewish faith and law. He held great influence in the court of the Jewish leaders. It seems clear that Nicodemus became a believer as a result of his personal nighttime conversation with the Christ. He later stood up for Jesus when the other Pharisees were wanting to condemn him. And after the death of Christ he came with Joseph of

Arimathea, “also a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews” (John 19:38). They brought 75 pounds of spices to wrap the body of Christ for burial.

In conversations and in counseling sessions there is often a lot of information being shared. One person will share their questions and concerns, and the counselor may share some of their experiences. This information must be held in the strictest of confidence. It should never be used in sermon illustrations, in conversation with your friends or relatives, or in idle talk. Sharing it becomes gossip. It is a secret to be kept just between you and the other person, and with the Holy Spirit as you pray privately.

Often the client will give you information about others. It too should be kept in confidence. Unless it is something that you need to know in helping the client, it should be discarded and forgotten. This practice of keeping all things in confidence will build trust. It will encourage the person to have faith in you as God’s servant. The person will become more reliant on the Holy Spirit for future guidance.

In the same way, let your light shine, as Jesus’ light shined in his life. And all people, like Nicodemus, will “see your good deeds, and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). You are the light that will draw many to Christ. Nicodemus was drawn to Jesus by the things he witnessed in Jesus’ life.

This lesson is **important** because it emphasizes the basic principle of counseling. God’s servant must be trustworthy and keep private whatever information may be shared with them.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the Holy Spirit will draw needy people to you. This happens as they see by your words and deeds that you are trustworthy.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. What will help build someone’s confidence in you? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “You build people’s confidence by being trustworthy,” you are correct.
2. How did Nicodemus know Jesus was more than just a good man? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “He observed the miraculous signs Jesus performed,” you are right.
3. How are we to keep the information people share with us? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “We must keep information in the strictest of confidence,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story of Nicodemus several times until you can tell it to someone else. As you retell the story in your own words, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. In the next week, make new efforts to have your behavior come up to the standards Jesus showed in his life. Teach someone else that the first principle of counseling is to keep private any information people have confided to them. Ask the Holy Spirit to draw people in need to you. Believe God for signs and wonders in your ministry to others.