

# Counsel the Word

The Institute of Soteric Counseling

## The Counsel of a Friend

by J. R. Ensey

Much of our counseling is done on a friend-to-friend basis. The rigid model of being seated across a desk from the counselee is becoming rarer every day. If the meeting is in my office, I generally prefer to sit in one of the side chairs rather than the "power position" behind the desk in a high-back "judge's chair." I prefer to be on the same level as the person seeking guidance. Communication is generally more easily reached in that arrangement. There are times, however, that a counselor may need to project a stronger presence or position of authority, especially if the counselee has been here on several occasions, or has been uncooperative with advice he has received.

Quite often, the setting is not the office but a more informal exchange on a church pew, or over lunch, a drop-in visit to their home, or even a chance meeting in a store. At such a time, the relationship is more one of friend-to-friend rather than professional counselor and client. Many times

what is said there is just as impacting and helpful as in a more formal setting. Don't hesitate to be a "friend in need" and touch people when and where you find them. You can still maintain an authoritative stance there if that is necessary, but it usually is not.

Normally, we have lots of "friends," people who touch our lives with some regularity—co-workers, fellow church members, neighbors, acquaintances, etc. But most do not have many true friends with whom they fellowship—getting together to play board games, going on vacations together, and sharing confidential information when things aren't going well. Counselors need to make a difference between the two groups of "friends." Through the years I have made it a practice not to "analyze" my close friends. Some have even asked for it, but it is refused. If I do, they will probably not be a friend for long. It changes the relationship. If a close friend needs counseling,

## Editorial

(The following article is excerpted from Sister Doty's newest book: *The Seven Secrets of Mental Health*, to be released this summer.)

### God, Give us a Vision!

What I am speaking of here is the kind of vision that Webster calls "unusual wisdom in foreseeing what is going to happen." The architect has a vision of the finished product before he sets pencil to paper. Chopin had a vision for his Polonaise long before it was finished. People thought Nathaniel Wilson was crazy for buying property that

was, at that time, so far out in the boon-docks, but he had a vision—and today there stands an awesome work for God, surrounded by luxury homes and shopping centers. He had a vision, and that was the thing that kept him pressing on through all the obstacles. We, too, must have a vision, or somewhere down the line, we will give up and give in.

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### Inside this issue:

The Counsel of a Friend	1
Editorial	1
The Counsel of a Friend (con't)	2
Resources	2
Editorial (con't)	3
Book Reviews	3
Book Reviews (con't)	4
Information	4

### Events:

- The 3rd Annual ISC Training Conference will be held October 28, 29, 2004.

# The Counsel of a Friend (continued)

I send them to someone else—a kind and caring person who is capable and who is willing to listen.

In the first group, the acquaintances, there can be friend-to-friend counseling without too much risk. One does not have to be a "trained" counselor, or even a minister, to offer spiritual help and guidance. This doesn't mean that saints should let it be known that if anyone needs help "just come see me." But sometimes just a word of encouragement passed to a friend will make a lot of difference. Fathers and wise, older women can surely help keep the pastor's schedule from overflowing by just putting a hand on a shoulder, extending an offer to help through prayer, stating that you understand, and when necessary, recommend that they see the pastor as soon as possible about the situation.

In her book, *The Counsel of a Friend*, Lynda Elliott offers this advice when counseling a friend:

"There is no guarantee that you can tell the truth without offending, but prefacing your statements may soften your words. For example, you might say, "I can understand why you did that, and I might have done the same thing, but have you thought about...?" or, "It's hard for me to say this, because I know you may be disappointed, but..." or, "You usually make such good judgments. How did you come to your decision?" Comments such as these may lead

your friend to reexamine his or her decisions or actions, relieving the need for further comment on your part.

"It is important to lovingly express the truth. Truth that is not clothed in love may simply create another wound within your friend. Love will cloak the truth in gentleness, and love will empower the truth to make a needed change.

**"It is important to lovingly express the truth."**

"Ask God to show you how to be honest with your friend in a kind and gentle manner. Pray that your words will come at a time in which she/he can receive them. When your words are given in love, your attitude will cover any mistakes you may make in the telling (Proverbs 10:12)."

As one translation puts Proverbs 27:6, "The wounds of a friend are more to be trusted than the spontaneous kisses of an enemy." In verse 9, the wise one says, "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, So a man's counsel is sweet to his friend" (NASB). Friends can help friends when it is done in love and understanding

## Resources

Let the Word speak for you in counseling:

### Depression

- Due to guilt (Genesis 4:6,7; Psalm 32:3,4)
- David experiences and confronts (Psalms 42 and 43)
- Repentance and forgiveness can help pull one out (Psalm 51:1-19)
- Asaph experiences and finds the solution (Psalm 73)
- Beauty, joy, and praise given to displace (Isaiah 61:1-3)
- Relief found in Jesus (Matthew 11:28)
- Self-discipline leads to godliness (I Timothy 4:7)
- Not inevitable when troubled with life's hardships (Daniel 3:16-18; II Corinthians 4:8,9,16,18)
- Does not mean one loses faith in God (II Corin-



Let the Word speak for you

thians 11:23-28)

- God's peace guards the mind (Philippians 4:7)
- Love an antidote (I John 4:18)

### Healing

- Spiritual (Psalm 147:3; Isaiah 53:5; Jeremiah 30:17; Luke 4:18; I Peter 2:24)

### Peace

- Christ gives (Matthew 11:28-30; John 14:27; 16:33)

## Editorial (Continued)

It is vital that our beliefs and thoughts be consistent with scripture. The scriptures were given as a pattern for our lives, and it does not matter whether one believes them or not, it is how our lives operate. We all proceeded from the same Creator who produced the scriptures. It was by design that we would all learn to live by these guidelines. They were written from the heart of God to the heart of man. If this cord is broken or twisted, suffering results. Guilt, acknowledged or not, results. We have to have something higher than ourselves to look at, to reach for, to aspire to, to dream of. We have to have a vision. The Bible says that without a vision, the people perish. The way out of any problematic, painful situation is to look up. We can never find the answers by looking within. The vision lies not in ourselves, but upwards.

We all love to quote Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." And well we should take comfort in this promise He has given us. But all too often we neglect whose purpose the verse is talking about—not *our* purpose, but *His* purpose. We want to think that, in the end, everything will work out according to what we are hoping it will. Then, and only then, will everything be all right.

Once we begin to grasp that all things are working out according to His purpose, and submit our will to His, we can begin to experience true healing. We will finally begin to see

that peace in our lives for which we have searched so long. That will become our vision and everything that happens to us—good or bad—we will be able to see from that perspective. We will indeed be seeing through God's eyes! We will indeed have the mind of Christ!

So what is His purpose? It is found in the very next verse, 29. To be like Jesus...that purpose should become our purpose, and when we reach the place where we are willing to suffer—should that be His purpose for us—in order to become more

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like Him, we rise several notches in our relationship with our Lord.

And isn't that what Soteric counseling is all about? Growing in the Lord, becoming like Him. That should be the purpose behind every counseling session.



## Book Reviews

### *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*

by Dr. Ed Bulkley

Harvest House Publishers

It seems that today everybody is in need of a shrink—someone to guide them toward a more fulfilling life. Well, that someone is probably not your local shrink. Bulkley points us to the fountainhead of wisdom and truth rather than psychotherapy, and for good reason. He guides us to a biblical alternative to psychological counseling, offering trustworthy answers to those who need to break away from pain and guilt and know true freedom and inner peace. A good read written in an easy style that promotes understanding.

### *The Truth About Addiction and Recovery*

Dr. Stanton Peele and Archie Brodsky

Simon and Schuster

This is a blockbuster book that explodes many myths about

the habits people say they can't break. Are people really telling the truth when they say they have "no control"? Are we stripped of our will just because we have come to crave something very desperately? Is alcoholism and drug usage really "diseases"? If so, why are they often treated by psychotherapy? The authors show people how they can recover without the standard treatment methods our society has come to rely on. This book is worth the price

### *Can You Trust Your Doctor?*

John Ankerberg and John Weldon

Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers

Here is a book you will want to keep handy in this age of growing reliance on alternative medicines. The influx of Eastern cultures into America has flooded our stores with herbal remedies, our communities with Zen and Yoga classes, and our churches and schools with New Age claptrap. The authors have courageously taken on this movement and ad-

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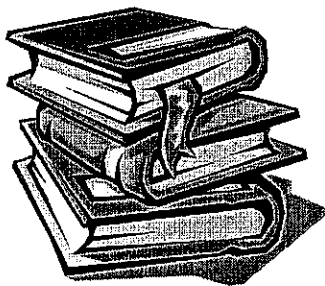


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### Book Reviews (continued)

dressed the practices that are even highly promoted by Christian groups, "Christian" doctors, parachurch ministries, using anecdotal testimonials to sell their snake oils. Let the buyer beware! Learn the threat these products and practices can pose for your family.

If you can't find these books in your local bookstores, they can usually be purchased from [half.com](http://half.com), [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com), or [bn.com](http://bn.com).



Study to show thyself approved

### Information

Welcome to ISC! We invite you to visit our website:  
[www.soteric.org](http://www.soteric.org)

Here you will find information about "Christian Counseling from Scripture," the course that is taking the church by storm. We have students all over the globe, and would invite you to order your set of materials today, [jnz@shawus.com](mailto:jnz@shawus.com) or call our toll-free number for more information. 1-888-462-2873

The National Association of Soteric Counselors (NASC) was formed to provide ongoing interaction among those involved in similar ministries. Convocations will be held annually that will be open to all, but NAS members will enjoy a reduced registration fee and other benefits, including a complimentary newsletter