

# Choosing a Godly Counselor...

For whatever reason, you may choose *not* to seek support through the Biblical Guidance program at Bellevue Baptist Church, but we would like to help you find a reliable Biblical counselor. The following are guidelines that will help you discern important issues before choosing any counselor.

## Steps you should take:

- **Pray.** Ask God for wisdom. God promises to give you wisdom if you ask for it in faith (James 1:5-8). As you step out in faith, He will direct your steps to the right counselor. (See also Psalm 23, Proverbs 16:3 and Philippians 4:6-9.)
- **Seek Guidance.** If you belong to a church, seek the input from your pastor (Heb. 13:17) and other church leaders, as well as wise, trustworthy Christian friends. *Can they help you? Is there someone they would recommend?* The Bible teaches there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; and 24:6). If you do not have a church home, seek out godly, Bible-believing Christians to recommend wise & godly pastors who can help shepherd you. If you are trying to find Biblical counsel outside the church, ask lots of questions. Some that are listed in this document can help you make a wise decision.

## Qualities to look for in a Counselor:

- Loves people genuinely from the heart.
- Able to persevere through tough times without losing heart. (Heb. 12:3)
- Has full assurance that Jesus can bring change no matter what the issue. (Phil. 1:6)
- Believes that God's Word is given by God - to provide sufficient counsel for all of life's issues. (2 Pet. 1:2-4; Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Can give testimony of a growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Someone your pastor (or wise & godly Christian friend) believes would provide wise, biblical, loving, and faithful counsel.

## Suggested questions you should ask of a potential Counselor:

To help clarify what a counselor believes and how he/she conducts the counseling sessions, ask the prospective counselor the following questions on the phone before or during your first session. The type of counselor you will want is one who is humble and committed to the Scripture. He should be willing to clarify what source he is trusting (e.g. Biblical, Behavioral, Cognitive, Integration, et al.).

Write down the counselor's answers and explain that you would like to consider them before continuing with counseling. Then talk to your pastor, elder, or wise Christian friend about the counselor's answers in light of God's Word.

Ask your prospective counselor...

- ***How would you describe your approach to counseling?***

(All counselors will have a model from which they work— This includes training and theories that they have embraced, and will most likely determine how they will go about counseling you.)

- ***How do you understand people's problems?***

(Another way to ask is “What framework do you use in understanding people and their problems?”)

- ***Please describe your understanding of the process of change.***  
(What is involved in a person's life changing? What means are used to measure progress?)
- ***How do you help someone change and grow through counseling?***  
(What role do you take as you try to help someone change through counseling?)
- ***What are your goals in helping someone change?***  
(What is the end result of counseling with you? How will we know when we are done?)
- ***What books have most influenced your approach to counseling?***  
(This will reveal much about what philosophy the counselor is trusting.)
- ***What books or other resources do you recommend on a regular basis? Why?***  
(These reveal much about what direction the counseling will be headed.)
- ***What is your educational and professional background? What role do these play?***  
(To what degree is the counselor relying on any secular training?)
- ***Are you a Christian? What does that mean to you?***  
(...this is asked at this point in time to freely gather fair answers on previous questions)
- ***How does your faith affect your view and practice of counseling?***  
(To what degree is the counselor relying on God, the Holy Spirit, faith, the Word?)
- ***Do you pray with those you counsel?***
- ***Do you attend church? If so, where? How long have you been a member?***
- ***Are you married? Do you have children? How does your marriage and family situation affect how you counsel people?***

### **Remember...**

Counseling is an interactive and relational process, and you must take responsibility in the relationship. A counseling relationship, as is true with all relationships, is established and maintained on the basis of trust. Open and honest dialogue between a counselor and a counselee is the most important component of building trust. If you cannot establish this foundation early on, establishing that the Counselor will be wise, biblical, loving, and faithful in your interaction, you may need to look elsewhere. If you find a wise counselor who uses God's Word to help you grow in your Christian walk, your future will be blessed! Psalm 1:1-3