

Counseling People from Other Churches

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Introduction: It is important to get the context of people who come for counseling and do not belong to your church. Church membership is normally the counseling setting, because the local church is the place for discipling and accountability. Col 3:16 Eph 4:4-16

There are two categories of counselees: people who come on their own, and people who are referred.

I. People who come on their own.

A. Regular attenders

1. Get *the reason for counseling with you* rather than their own pastoral team
 - a. *Reconciliation* may be needed
 - b. Fear of becoming the obvious subject of a *future sermon* Heb 13:17
 - c. Fear of the pastor knowing the problem will affect their *relationship with him*
 - d. Has little or *no confidence in the pastor's counseling ability*
 - 1) *Previous* counseling experience
 - 2) Sermon content hasn't been *practical*
 - 3) Pastor has openly confessed *he does not counsel*
 - e. May have already been told what to do!
 - f. Pastor is not able to be *objective*

2. Have them get *permission* from their pastor Heb 13:17; Acts 20:17-20, 27
 - a. He will give an account for your counselee's growth
 - b. The *co-elder principle* of ministering together geographically
 - c. Develop *relationships* with other pastors
 - d. *Accountability* to local churches
 - e. The other pastor's insights may be useful Prov 18:17; 13

3. Respect *doctrinal* distinctives

<i>Eternal security</i>	<i>"Holiness" issues</i>	<i>Pentecostal concerns</i>
<i>Church government options</i>	<i>Worship styles</i>	<i>Baptism modes</i>
<i>End time beliefs</i>	<i>Husband/wife disagree</i>	

B. Backslidden or irregulars

1. Check *soteriology* (salvation)
How they got saved; what does it mean to be “saved”; etc.
2. Check *ecclesiology* (doctrine of the church)
3. Assign regular church attendance as a part of homework ASAP
 - a. Get reason for *non-attendance* (don’t assume- work? sports?)
 - b. *Reconciliation* may be needed (maybe an agenda item?)
 - c. Check with the pastor (with permission) for insight
 - d. Look for possible *church discipline*
 - e. If not a member, direct them to a good local church

II. Working with referrals

- A. Agree to keep the pastor *informed* of progress (with permission)
- B. Use local church as the support group

C. Seek to involve other pastor or designated lay person in counseling

- 1) Intern with you, learning OJT
- 2) Encourage them to take BCI training
- 3) Use someone mature in their church to be an accountability partner
- 4) Seek a personal visit with the pastor or a member of the leadership team to promote

BCI training for their church members, with a vision to provide certified counseling to their own members eventually.

NOTE: These insights aren’t to be thrust ahead of other pressing concerns in the early sessions. They are meant to be kept in your mind, and brought up later, after gathering the data, and after some progress has been made on other problems. “If you want to continue to grow, you must have a vital relationship with a biblical local church where there is good preaching and teaching.”

Recommended Reading

Church Membership, Joe Propri

Help! I Need a Church, Jim Newheiser, lifelineminibooks.com