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Counselor Peaks & Valleys- Reigniting Your Fire While Protecting Your Heart(Col. 2.1-10)

I've been involved in counseling for over 20 years, and I can tell you, counseling can be a difficult profession! People rarely come in for counseling unless, "the wheels are falling off" in their life. Counselors hear the most difficult and gut-wrenching things in the lives of those they seek to serve. Families are under attack, lives are being shattered, hope is being lost. Counselees dump their problems and issues out and they can begin to swirl around your life like a tornado, causing damage and impacting you. How do you maintain a thriving counseling practice in the midst of this?

All these tense conversations and counseling sessions, leave many counselors feeling overwhelmed, defeated, and discouraged. Is it possible to "insulate" your heart from all the dirt and drama while still being an effective, compassionate counselor? Is it possible to build resilience into your life so that your practice isn't limited in scope or time? If you're already "burned out" or dejected, is it possible for your fire to be "re-ignited?" This training will seek to answer those questions and equip you to build a sustainable counseling practice.

"For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:1-10, NKJV)

In Colossians 2, Paul is addressing the church at Colosse and Laodicea regarding two damaging teachings that were infecting the body of believers: Gnosticism and Judaism. Gnosticism is the belief (in this context) people could please God through growing in knowledge. Judaism is the religious system that teaches people could please God through keeping a list of rules and regulations. Today, we could relate these two issues as Humanism and Legalism. Humanistic belief, (like Gnosticism) teaches man is sufficient in himself and his own intellect and capacities. Legalism teaches a list of performance-based rules that must be kept and rigidly adhered to.

While there are shades of truths contained in both these systems, (ie, we do possess human abilities, and there are definitely things we should and shouldn't do), both of them fall short in yielding a God-approved, Bible-directed life. The people you counsel will fall, many times, into one or both of these camps. The danger comes in, when, you as the counselor, fall into the same trap.

Most people who believe God is pleased by our performance have good motives and desires. They want to live a life that pleases Him, and work hard to do so. However, life (and counseling) become increasingly frustrating as you see your inability to maintain "performance" for God. To address this, Paul focuses on six truths that would set them free from falling into Humanism or Legalism. These same truths serve to protect our counseling practice today and ensure we finish our mission well.



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Six Ingredients of An Effective Counselor

- I. Encouragement
 - A. We need positivity going into our lives
 - B. Positivity must be rooted in reality (Scripture)
- II. Companionship
 - A. Friends and colleagues
 - B. Effort and consistency
- III. Wisdom
 - A. **Man's wisdom is insufficient**
 - B. God's wisdom is completely sufficient
- IV. Gratitude
 - A. Meditating on God's blessings
 - B. Expressing our gratitude
- V. Authority
 - A. Your (human) authority will always fall short
 - B. Christ's ultimate authority is always effective
- VI. Power
 - A. Human desire, intellect, and techniques lack transformative power
 - B. The Holy Spirit's power in/through you changes lives forever

Your Heart - Isolated or Insulated?

- I. Focus Upon Christ's Sufficiency, Not Yours
- II. Intentionally Build and Maintain Counselor Thinktanks
- III. Nourish and Enrich Your Personal Faith

Examples and Resources



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Suffering University- Turning Life's Toughest Times into Victory(James 1.2-4)

Universities offer the highest level of education available to people today. It takes a significant amount of money, time and effort to receive a "degree." Many of your counselees will claim to have a university-level degree in suffering, which has cost them much money, time, and effort. What do you, the counselor, say to this person is currently **attending "Suffering University?"**

Scripture says, "*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*" 2 Corinthians 4.17.

"Light and momentary troubles?!" The suffering in today's world doesn't seem so "light" or "momentary." In fact, in the lives of many of your counselees, they feel just the opposite! Suffering can become so intense that it drains the very life out of people! The counselee comes *to* you looking for answers; for an end to the suffering. What do you do? How do you begin? Is it even *possible to* significantly alleviate this suffering?

How you answer these questions (and how you counsel) is determined by what you've:

- Been exposed to
- Studied *to* build knowledge
- Experienced and believe

The aim of this study is to do exactly that - expose you to information on this often-misunderstood topic of suffering, give you a platform of study, so you can experience this for yourself and believe in God's perspective of suffering. By going through this focused training, you'll be better-equipped, as a counselor, to help your counselees who are suffering greatly.

I. Pain Vs. Suffering (Distinctions)

- A. Are they the same?
 1. Pain - physical or emotional discomfort caused by illness or injury
 2. **Suffering - our response to the "pain stimuli"**
- B. Examples
 1. Chronic back pain
 2. Depression
- C. Are they unavoidable?
 1. Pain is an unavoidable part of the human condition
 2. Suffering may not be eliminated, but can be greatly reduced
- D. Physical and mental functions are related

II. Pain and Suffering (Pre-dispositions)

- A. Physical
 1. Genetic and non-genetic illnesses
 2. Injuries
- B. Environmental
 1. Family unit and upbringing
 2. Friends
- C. Psychological



1. Programming and auto-suggestion
2. Negativity and doubt

III. **Biblical Principles that Address Suffering**

- A. Core beliefs are vital (count it all joy)
 1. Make a conscious decision
 2. To be joyful in advance
- B. Faith-filled obedience grows us (knowing the testing of our faith)
 1. Our faith will be tested
 2. Obedient response to the "test" yields hopeful endurance
- C. Hopeful endurance completes us (patience brings wholeness)
 1. The refining process
 2. The completing result

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

2 My brethren, *count* (hegeomai, 62233, lead thoughts to believe) it all joy when you fall into various *trials* (peirasmos, 63986, examination to prove or test),

3 *knowing* (ginosko, 61097, known by experience) that the *testing* (dokimion, 61383, battle-tested genuineness) of your faith produces patience.

4 But let *patience* (hypomene, 65281, hopeful endurance) have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Lead your thoughts to believe joy when you fall into a character examination knowing by experience that the battle-tested genuineness of your faith produces a hopeful endurance that completes and fulfills you

PREPARED ATTITUDE (lead your thoughts to believe joy when you fall into character examination) based upon a

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE (knowing by experience that the battle-tested genuineness of your faith) of an

ASSURED RESULT (inevitably produces a hopeful endurance that completes and fulfills you)

IV. **Practical Behaviors to Alleviate Suffering**

- A. Teach counselee distinction between pain and suffering
- B. Reduce the pain, when possible
- C. Help counselee re-interpret the pain signals
- D. Divert focus away from the pain toward biblical promises
- E. Give counselee physical things to do

V. **Counseling Example and Resource Materials**