

## **What happened in counseling?**

What was the goal (what would the counselor say they sought to accomplish)?

What did you do or talk about at each session?

How were you told that change would occur?

What was the basis or source of truth?

These are good questions to ask. People who are struggling with the problems of life go to counseling for answers. Often the counsel they receive affects their perception of God and His Word for the rest of their lives. Vital issues may be decided: how to change. The source of truth. Who am I? Who is God? Priorities. Self-esteem. Medications. Prayer. The role of the Word. By asking a counselee the questions above, you can find out what they learned in counseling.

I have heard answers to these questions many times over the years. Some I thought were great. "We talked about what the Bible said about my problem." "It was hard – I realized my anger was sin and that I needed to repent and forgive. With God's help, that's what happened." "I had realized I had never really become a Christian...I had always kept control of my life." "I learned so many things I never knew before from the Bible. I memorized verses about fear and overcoming it. God changed me." These were people counseled by biblical counselors.

Other answers caused me to think "That is so wrong!" After the death of a child a couple was told to express their anger at God. Parents of a young girl who was violated were told she would certainly rebel and be promiscuous in her early teens. A man whose wife had left sat with the counselor each week, trying to think of things about himself about which he could feel good. An angry wife was told she was a victim of her past and therefore did not need to work at loving her husband, she needed to be loved by him; the husband had come from an abusive home and was told the same thing. All of these were counseled by people calling themselves "Christian" psychologists or counselors.

If you have referred people for counseling or know people who have been counseled, ask them these questions. Some pastors who ask these questions of counselees find that they agree with what occurred in counseling. Others are surprised. There is no shame for any counselor in this – they are each teaching people what they believe is true about problems, man and God. Asking these questions will allow you to really understand the various options in counseling. After you get answers to these questions from each person, ask yourself: is this what I believe the Bible teaches about problems, man and God? Choose the type of counseling for members of your church that does fit this criteria.