

Qualifications of a Biblical Counselor Wayne Johnston

Romans 15.14

“I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to *instruct* one another.”

Colossians 3.16

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and *admonishing* one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

“Competent to Counsel,” Jay Adams, 1970:

Goodness
Knowledge
and Wisdom.

“Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands,” Paul Tripp, 2002:

>Love
>Know
>Speak
>Do

1. Goodness.

Our working definition for “goodness”: “the habit pattern of doing good.”

“Goodness” in Romans 15.14 refers to the habit pattern of doing *good* works and deeds.

Ephesians 2.10

“created in Christ Jesus for **good** works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

2 Timothy 3.16-17

“teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness”

“that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every **good** work.”

Why is goodness so important in Biblical Counseling relationships?

A. You represent Jesus Christ as His disciple.

John 13.34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love as He loves you.

Study and prepare well for your sessions.

Lay down your life for your counselees.

Example case.

B. We *must* love.

Philippians 1.8

“For God is my witness, how I *yearn* for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

2 Corinthians 4.5

“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

2 Corinthians 12.15

“I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.”

C. What if you already have it?

- Communicate your love for counselees and others for the purpose of identifying yourself as a disciple of Christ.
- Love your counselees with true Christ-like love.
- Rely on God’s grace and Word to love selflessly, regardless of the counselee’s response to the Word or to you.
- Enjoy the interaction between you and your God as you honor Him with care, compassion, and involvement in the lives of your counselees.
- Be strong in love.

D. What if you don’t?

- Know that you must love.
- 1 John 3.16
- 1 John 4.11
- Study God’s love and study the love of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.
- Appreciate and give thanks daily for God’s love and the love of Jesus Christ.

E. How will this benefit my biblical counseling ministry?

- The biblical counselor who is effective in goodness will be trusted more, will be heard more clearly when he confronts sin, and will better honor God.

2. Knowledge.

Romans 15.14

“I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you are full of goodness, filled with all *knowledge* and able to instruct one another.”

We are told to *know* truth, to *know* God, and to *know* the Son of God.

John 17.17: Jesus said, “Your word is truth”

A. Know the Word.

- *Know* the Word by studying and applying it in your own life each day.

Hebrews 4.12-13.

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

2 Chronicles 16.9

God searches the hearts of all people on earth every day, seeking to find the hearts that are completely His.

Proverbs 17.3

“the Lord tests hearts.”

Hebrews 4.15-16.

We need God’s mercy to be restored to full fellowship with Him after we repent of the sins He exposed. We also need His *grace* to help us to replace sinful heart motives with purposes that are in accord with his Word.

1. Know the Scriptures by reading daily.

>>>see the resource at the end of this section in your Conference Notebook.

2. Know God’s Word better through advanced studies.

B. Know God.

- We can know *about* God the Father and God the Son accurately by studying everything revealed about Them in the Bible.
- Systematic theologies are topical studies of the Bible.
- By studying the Theology Proper (God the Father) and the Christology (God the Son) sections of accurate theology books, you will gain a deep and detailed understanding of each.
- Which Systematic Theologies? A list is printed at the end of this outline.

C. What if you already have it?

- Worship the Lord in humility.
- Systematically replace sins with righteousness by God's sufficient grace and Word.
- Study carefully to grow in knowing God and His Word.

D. What if you don't?

- Read and apply the Word daily.
- Use good resources and other formats of study that are recommended by your Elders or Small Group Leader, or develop a way to read and apply the Word that works best for you.
- If and when it seems to you or your mentors that it would benefit you, begin to include theology reading, detailed studies of books of the Bible, or original language studies.

E. How will this benefit my biblical counseling ministry?

- The lifelong practice of pursuing the knowledge of God and His Word strengthens you to think more accurately.
- This pursuit results in a growing treasury of Scripture understanding that equips you to more accurately answer the recurring question in the biblical counseling room: "What does the Bible say about that?"
- The Word exposes the desires of your heart.
- This is key to make progress in becoming more like Christ.
- Growth in sanctification equips you to better empathize, understand, and counsel others.

3. Wisdom.

Colossians 3.16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and *admonishing* one another in all wisdom..."

Wisdom is a qualification for nouthetic counseling.
The book of Proverbs contrasts the wise person with the foolish person.
The wise acts, thinks, and sets his or her desires based on a right understanding of God and the purpose of honoring Him.

Proverbs 13.20

He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 15.28

The heart of the wise ponders how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

Proverbs 15.31

He whose ear listens to life-giving reproof
Will dwell among the wise.

Proverbs 17.17

A friend loves at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.

The foolish acts, thinks, and sets his or her desires based on selfish purposes to the disregard of the Almighty Creator.

Proverbs 12.22

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,
But those who deal faithfully are His delight.

Proverbs 13.4

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing,
But the soul of the diligent is made fat.

Proverbs 16.5

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;
Assuredly, he will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 23.4-5

Do not weary yourself to gain wealth,
...When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.

God teaches us what to want and how to think and act to obtain wisdom.

Proverbs 1.1-7

To know wisdom and instruction,

To discern the sayings of understanding,
To receive instruction in wise behavior,
...A wise man will hear and increase in learning,
...The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 4.5-8

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!
...Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;
Love her, and she will watch over you.
The beginning of wisdom is:
Acquire wisdom;
And with your acquiring, get understanding.
Prize her and she will exalt you.

For the Biblical Counselor, wisdom is the ability to answer the question, “What does the Bible say about that?”

Every case presents that question to the counselor, often on multiple occasions.

The Biblical Counselor speaks the wisdom of God’s Word in regard to the counselee’s situation.

The counselee then chooses a response...either to want, think, and do according to Scripture, or to be foolish and live for sinful selfish purposes in disregard of the Lord.

A. What if you already have it?

- Test it by Scripture.
- Use it to gather data and communicate Scripture at the heart level.
- Sharpen it by the daily spiritual disciplines and by God’s Word.

B. What if you don’t?

- Grow in wisdom through study and application of Proverbs.
- Grow in wisdom through topical study of Scripture and solid theology resources.
- Do the hard work of systematic study of the Bible’s truth about the will and about topics in your own life and in the lives of counselees.

4. “How will this benefit my biblical counseling ministry?”

Those who by practice have developed a stronger ability to discern how the Scriptures address motives and life issues will be able to more effectively counsel from God’s Word.

5. Other pertinent studies.

- A. 1 Timothy 3.1 states, “This statement is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” (ESV)

Perhaps the same is true for a woman desiring the office of deaconess, or a man aspiring to serve as a deacon.

The passages that describe the qualifications for elders, deacons, and deaconesses are useful for self examination. God regards these qualities as necessary for church leaders. Take the time to go through each one and consider with the Lord how you do or do not meet his standard.

Rejoice in the qualifications you already meet and work on growing in sanctification for the others, one at a time.

1 Timothy 3.1-7; 1 Timothy 3.8-12; Titus 1.5-9

- B. NANC Board Member and Medical Doctor Robert Smith wrote Chapter 7 in the book, “Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically” by John MacArthur.

Doc Smith skillfully develops the points in the outline printed in your Conference Notebook as his answer to the question of this hour.

I recommend this resource.

Relationship to the Lord

Reading God’s Word

Scripture Memorization

Prayer

Relationship with a Local Church

Worship

Theological Correctness

Goal of Christ-Likeness

Stewardship

Relationship to Others

Evangelizing Others

Discipling Others

Serving Others

Dealing with Criticism

Personal Relationships

Marriage

Family

Relationship to Self

Potential for Sin

Response to Sin

Personal Discipline

Total Life View

- C. Dr. Donald S. Whitney, Professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, wrote the book, “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.”
I recommend this excellent and practical book. In it, Dr. Whitney unpacks these eight Spiritual Disciplines for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4.7):

Bible Intake
Prayer
Worship
Evangelism
Serving
Stewardship
Fasting, Silence, and Solitude
Journaling and Learning

D. Systematic Theologies

- Akin, Daniel. A Theology for the Church. Tennessee, Broadman and Holman, 2007
Barackman, Floyd. Practical Christian Theology. Michigan; Kregel, 1981
Berkhof, Louis. The History of Christian Doctrines. Michigan; Baker, 1937
Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology. Pennsylvania, Banner of Truth, 1949
Chafer, Lewis Sperry. Major Bible Themes. (revised by John Walvoord), Michigan; Zondervan, 1926/1974
Demarest, Bruce. The Cross and Salvation. Illinois; Crossway, 1997
Enns, Paul. The Moody Handbook of Theology. Illinois; Moody, 1989
Erickson, Millard. Christian Theology. Michigan; Baker, 1984
Feinberg, John. No One Like Him. Illinois; Crossway, 2001
Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology. Michigan; Zondervan, 1994
Recent clearly written systematic theology featuring generally well reasoned conclusions and practical applications of theology. We disagree with chapters 8, 17, 20, 30, 39, 52, and 53.
Lewis, Gordon and Demarest, Bruce. Integrative Theology. Michigan; Zondervan, 1996
McCune, Rolland. A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity, (3 Volumes). Michigan; Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005
Reymond, Robert. A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith. Tennessee; Nelson, 1998
Ryrie, Charles. Basic Theology. Illinois; Moody, 1986
Thiessen, Henry. Lectures in Systematic Theology; revised by Vernon Doerksen; Michigan; Eerdmans, 1949 / 1977