

## The Perfect Counselor

The world has never known a greater preacher than Jesus! There is no other perfect example of teacher, pastor, friend, father, spouse, or brother. He who is called “Wonderful Counselor” is also the perfect pattern for counselors. Who but Jesus could ever set himself up as the highest model of knowledge, wisdom, compassion, patience or love? Can anyone construct or apply an illustration as masterfully as Jesus did? Is there a greater soul winner we could look to for instruction or inspiration? Have any mastered the ability to use questions directed at individuals so effectively and wisely as He?

Jesus is the creator and giver of all these good gifts. He is the standard by which we judge success and failure, right and wrong, good and evil. He is the pattern we are to follow in all things that pertain to life and godliness. He is our hero, our God, our King, and our great Captain of the host. He alone is qualified to own our complete devotion allegiance, and adoration. When we aspire to serve Him in any capacity, He intends for us to seek Him first for instruction and guidance. Our admiration and focus is to be fixed on Him until His pattern and image is permanently etched into our mind. Then, and only then, can we even begin to discern the acceptable manner in which we are to carry out the great commission and minister to others.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”  
(Matthew 28:19-20)

1. Preach (proclaim) the Gospel – Win souls
2. Baptize – Add the obedient to the local church family
3. Teach to observe all things – Disciple believers to maturity

Jesus told Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep and my lambs. (John 21:15-17) One of the most precious comparisons of Jesus’ work and character is as the good and caring Shepherd. Perhaps the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is the most concise and poignant example of pastoral (shepherding) care that we have in all the Scriptures. In it we see the good shepherd expertly caring for and managing a flock of sheep. Yet we see him meticulously attending to the individual sheep in his flock as well. He provides protection, food and nourishment, but he also takes the time to examine the sheep one by one and lovingly mends cuts and scrapes, anointing the wounded sheep’s head with oil.

Those who counsel individuals know it is hard and tedious work. Teaching a group is a whole lot more fun. Nevertheless, we do not engage in such a ministry because we find it enjoyable, but because it is needful for the welfare of the sheep. Consider Jesus’ example:

- Jesus preached to small groups and large crowds. Yet He did not think it was a waste of time, or beneath his dignity, to counsel Mary or Martha.
- Jesus proclaimed the Gospel message to thousands who came to hear Him. Yet He also had time to proclaim the Gospel to a prostitute drawing water from a well.

- Jesus comforted, exhorted, rebuked, confronted, taught, encouraged and directed crowds of people. Yet He also did the same for individuals who needed Him.

The altar call is a precious time in any Bible preaching church, for nothing thrills the hearts of God's people more than seeing souls respond to the message that has just been preached. We expect souls to be saved when the Gospel is authoritatively proclaimed to crowds who have gathered to hear the Word of God. Yet no church member is obeying the great commission if he or she is not also going out into the world in which he lives, proclaiming the Gospel message to individuals. The preacher who wishes to be an example to the flock does not say, "I do all my soul winning from the pulpit." He knows he is responsible to speak to individuals just as he is called to speak to crowds. He follows in the footsteps of Jesus, the apostles and Paul by speaking to a lone sinner as well as to groups of them.

Likewise, no preacher who wishes to follow the pattern of Christ will declare, "I do all my counseling from the pulpit." The fact is, if he is proclaiming the Word, he DOES counsel. He may not take adequate time in counseling and he may not like to counsel, but everyone who preaches or teaches the Word counsels. Proclaim the Word of God in a practical, applicable way and individuals will seek you out just as surely as Nicodemus sought out Jesus. Win souls who have been entrenched in the filth of this world, and you will have your discipleship work cut out for you. The baby lamb is going to need one on one shepherding care just as he will need the food prepared for the entire flock. If he doesn't get clean pure water from you, he will seek it somewhere else and drink it, even if it's muddy and polluted. And if the immature lamb is caught in a thicket and in desperate need of deliverance, he will welcome the help of an evil, self-serving shepherd just as he will the good.

When Jesus preached the Word to crowds, individuals often lingered, seeking comfort, encouragement and instruction for their troubled souls. Jesus never turned such individuals away, yet He could not possibly deal with each individual sheep in his human limitations. Because He is our pattern, He gave us an example to follow that enables us to meet the needs of every individual sheep. Jesus carefully chose a small group of disciples whom he meticulously trained and taught. He also spent a great deal of time individually teaching others who were within his inner circle of influence. These were equipped to teach and counsel others who would then teach and counsel as well.

The Chief Shepherd calls under shepherds to oversee individual flocks. (1 Peter 5:2-4) These shepherds (pastors) are to train other faithful shepherds within the flock who will be able to teach and disciple others. (Acts 20:28) No pastor was ever intended to carry the burden of individual counseling and discipleship alone. No church member was ever intended to carry the burden of discipleship without the help of a corporate church body or the preaching of God's Word from the pulpit. And none of us was ever intended to carry the burden of any of God's work without the sustaining strength, wisdom, direction, or power that is given by God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always points us to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, our great example. "For unto us a child is born, unto

us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

Jesus *is* the perfect counselor. Consider these observations:

- Jesus was a master at asking questions in order to provoke conviction or bring enlightenment.
- Jesus knew when to end a counseling session and how to direct a confrontation to the real heart issues.
- Jesus never lost His temper or became impatient.
- Jesus never acted apart from the Father or inconsistent with the Scriptures.
- Jesus never minimized a problem.
- Jesus never overwhelmed people. He never quenched the smoking flax.
- Jesus was patient, kind, direct and to the point.
- Jesus gently led people toward increased faith and growth and never condemned those who looked to him for help.
- Jesus goal was always to increase the understanding of his listeners and enlighten them with truth.
- Jesus used the Scriptures masterfully and applied them appropriately.
- Jesus utilized examples and illustrations the people could relate to.