

Counseling



A Source of Comfort and Guidance

By Jennifer Brady

Decked out in my blue and pink ski jacket accented by a matching scarf and earmuffs, I stood at the top of the mountain and looked down at the lodge. Filled with uncertainty, I regret to admit that my vogue appearance was not enough to make up for my inexperience on the slopes. They actually expected me to slide down this snow-covered incline with my feet cemented in tight "combatlike" boots, which were attached to long, skinny boards with no brakes carrying two flimsy poles which would impale me if (*or should I say WHEN*) I fell. To top all that off, once I reach the bottom, they expect me to ride a squeaky chairlift back up to do it over again. All I could think was "what SANE person would do this!"

This thought indicated my obvious perceptions and attitudes about skiing. Having little choice in the matter, I took a deep breath and started making my way down the mountain. Much to my surprise, I discovered that my initial thoughts about this sport were rather skewed. Not only was skiing easier

than I had imagined, it was actually a lot of fun! I am so fortunate that I did not allow my false assumptions about skiing to keep me from participating in a worthy activity.

Over the years, I have become increasingly aware of many incorrect perceptions and attitudes that some individuals have toward seeking help from a professional counselor. In their minds, many people ask the same questions that I had asked: "what sane person would do this!" Unfortunately, the **false assumption** that counselors only see "crazy" individuals keeps people from participating in a very worthy and helpful relationship.

This is not the only reaction I have encountered. Here are some other typical responses that people have concerning counseling.

- ❑ "I can handle it on my own."
- ❑ "Only weak people need to see a counselor."

❑ "If I have God to help me, why would I need to talk to a counselor?"

❑ "There must really be something wrong with me if I have to talk to a counselor."

❑ "I am afraid that everyone will end up finding out about my struggles."

❑ "I will not have one other person telling me what to do."

❑ "A Christian counselor is only going to shove spirituality down my throat."

All of these are incorrect assumptions about the counseling relationship and process. Here are five different truths which should help to combat your false beliefs and calm your fears about receiving Godly counsel.

God commands us to offer support, encouragement, and instruction to those who are weak or hurting. I Thes. 5:14 urges us to "warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, and help the weak." We are also told to carry each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2), to spur one another one toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24), and to encourage one another daily so that none of us will

become hardened by sin's deception (Heb. 3:13).

We will all have times when we are weak and need someone else to lean on. Two of my favorite men in Scripture show us that even the most Godly people encounter struggles. In weakness, King David, a "man after God's own heart," committed adultery and murder for his own personal pleasure. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul shares his individual struggle calling it his "thorn in the flesh." If these men of God wrestled with sin, weakness, and pain, how can we think we are immune to them? Jesus illustrates the truth so beautifully in the Garden of Gethsemane the week before His crucifixion. In the midst of His anguish, He asked for Peter, James, and John to be with Him. As His pain grew greater, He said to them "my soul is overwhelmed to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me" (Matthew 26:38). Even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, called on others for support in His time of sorrow.

God uses us as Christians to minister to the body of Christ. We have full confidence that God is 100 percent capable of meeting our needs, granting us strength to endure, and providing us with wisdom. However, sometimes His method of doing so involves using other Christians as a support system. Many times He uses people to speak His words of affirmation, guidance, or instruction. The need or desire for support and/or counsel does not correlate with a lack of trust in God.

The purpose of counseling is not to take away a person's choice but rather to guide him/her in making wise decisions based on the truth from Scripture. God affords all of us the freedom of choice. Of course, He sets guidelines and standards which He wants us to live by, but He never forces anyone to be obedient to Him.

The information shared in counseling is regarded with the greatest respect. The things you may share in a counseling session will not be shared with your pastor,

relative, or friend. Legally and ethically, there are two incidents which call for disclosure of information revealed in a counseling session. Confidentiality must be broken in the case of suspected or known child abuse as well as in any incident where physical harm to self or others is present. Naturally, the safety of humans is of utmost importance in these situations. In all other cases, no one else will know the struggles you are having.

© **Jennifer Brady** is a long-time member of Calvary Baptist Church and is a former counselor in Calvary's Counseling Center.