



MYFILADELFIA

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Introduction to Pastoral Counselling

BAM142

Notional Hours: 160

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2. IMPORTANT NOTICE

Candidates following this course must register through www.myfiladelphia.com. All registered candidates will have the opportunity to be assessed after completing a Module.

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4. PLAGIARISM

1. Plagiarism is defined as: “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source.”¹
2. Plagiarism is a very serious offence and will be dealt with accordingly. This may include: suspension, financial penalties (because the marker has to remark your work) and the requirement to re-do the parts where plagiarism was detected.
3. Please use your own words when answering the assignments – this is also applicable when writing a book report, or summary.
4. Your assignments are going to be run through a plagiarism checker.

5. LEARNING SUPPORT

1. Study guide
2. Study leader
3. Discussions
4. Facebook pages
5. Skype
6. Electronic mail
7. Telephone
8. Visitation

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize>. Accessed 16 September 2015.

9. Research
10. Filadelfia library
11. Other library
12. Contact sessions

6. APPLIED COMPETENCE

This course is structured to develop competence in the following areas:

1. FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCE

This embraces the intellectual / academic skills of knowledge, together with analysis, synthesis and evaluation, which includes information processing and problem solving. The desired competence will be achieved through a progressively more difficult learning process and assessed through formative and summative means. There will be frequent transitions from theory to application in problem solving. It is also the goal of these course to continually relate theory to happenings as reported in the media.

2. PRACTICAL COMPETENCE

This includes the concept of operational context. This will be achieved through case studies, supervised practical assignments and contact sessions.

3. REFLEXIVE COMPETENCE

This incorporates learner autonomy. The learner will be guided to independently identify and source quality academic and scientifically based information. Following this, the learner will be guided into the successful contextual application of said material.

7. ASSESSMENT

1. CRITERIA

- a. Define and describe the various topics discussed.
- b. Conversant in subject matter.
- c. Identify pivot points in the pastoral intervention when applied to subject matter.
- d. Insight into topics under discussion.
- e. Interpret various scenarios and propose outcomes.
- f. Apply (under supervision) skills learnt in a controlled environment.
- g. Position oneself and one's function in space, time and function.
- h. Pass mark is 50%.
- i. Cum Laude is 80% and above.

2. APPROACH

- a. Formative assessment: Assignment
- b. Summative assessment: Essay
- c. Year end examination

3. CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION

- a. Assignment passed.
- b. Essay passed.
- c. Year end examination passed.

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1. Introduction

A word of welcome!

We trust that this course will contribute to your spiritual growth and that it will equip you to be more effective in your service in the Kingdom of God. Pastoral work is evangelical in that the Good News of Jesus Christ, is ministered into everyday scenarios.

We trust that you will be able to live out your calling and join us in a passionate journey that seeks to glorify Him!

Included, is the study programme, which stretches over a year, as well as all-important dates. The programme is structured in such a manner, that the necessary theory will have been covered, before the assignment is due.

As with any course, or series of courses, or qualifications offered by any institution, remember to maintain a portfolio of evidence of what you have done.

2. Where are we headed?

- The nature of pastoral counselling.
- Empathy, compassion and understanding.
- Restoring relationships and forgiveness.
- The pastoral conversation.
- The use of effective and scientifically based aids.



3. Outcomes

1. To introduce the students to pastoral counselling as a sub-field within Practical Theology.
2. Introduce basic problem areas as commonly encountered in the pastorate.
3. The fundamentals of Biblically based pastoral counselling.
4. Develop the required pastoral communication skills.
5. Lay the foundation to further studies in pastoral counselling.
6. Understand the role of Father, Son and Spirit in Biblical pastoral counselling.
7. Grow in Christ.

4. Prescribed books

1. COLLINS, G.R. Christian Counselling a Comprehensive Guide. (Compulsory)
 - <http://www.takealot.com/christian-counseling/PLID36011765>
 - <http://www.loot.co.za/product/gary-r-collins-christian-counseling/bbck-120-ga80>
 - http://www.amazon.com/Christian-Counseling-3rd-Revised-Updated/dp/1418503290/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1392813005&sr=1-1&keywords=christian+counseling+a+comprehensive+guide

5. Work schedule and learning

	Study unit	Notional hours
1	The nature of Pastoral Ministry	31
2	Empathy, compassion and understanding	32
3	Restoring relationships and forgiveness	37
4	The Pastoral Conversation	15
5	The effective use of scientifically based aids	45
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Study Unit 1

The Nature of Pastoral Counselling

1.1 Introduction

By definition, the Biblical counsellor is one who is persuaded of and allegiant to, a Christian worldview, that is, one who functions within a frame reference that consciously sees all of the realities and relationships of life – a perspective that is Biblically coherent and consistent and thus honours God of Scriptures.

The one element of such a worldview, that most dramatically distinguishes it from all pretenders, is the commitment to a theocentric perspective on all of life and thought.

Thus, any model of counselling that is authentically Biblical, will be framed, designed and executed in happy submission to the Biblical demand that our lives be lived out entirely for the glory of God!

In short, Biblical counselling is animated by a Godward focus.

The temptation today, even within the Christian community, is to do otherwise, to conduct counselling with a primary focus on someone, or something, other than God. The Biblical counsellor must be committed to a Godward focus in counselling.

There are three basic reasons:

1. Because God demands it;
2. Because the natural exaltation of self, is destructive;
3. Because the soul-satisfying life God intends for His children, can only be found through Jesus' spiritual paradox, in denying self and focussing on God.

The essence of who we are, is made up of events and how we respond to those events. We are the sum of what we encountered in life and our reactions to those experiences.

Memory, the recalling of the past, is our spirit gazing at the substance of our soul, which at times, directs our life, rather than the Word of God. Thus, most of our problems are due to ignorance on how to Biblically respond to life and to use life's adversities to our advantage, as opportunities to grow and mature in Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

These spiritual resources are available to those who are born by the will of God. Having accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, the believer is enabled by the Holy Spirit to face life, to counter adversities, to grow in grace and strength and to live in peace and joy (John 1:12; John 3:16).

The issue is the self, the soul of man. The self, created by God, belongs to God. The self, tempted to be god, without God, became enslaved by Satan (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:1-6).

The living soul is what we will deal with, *learning*:

1. To set it free.
2. To again be completely dependent upon God.
3. To follow Him and to glorify Him.

Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:3-11 tell us to work out our salvation daily, being conformed to the image of Christ. The key is daily, being God-conscious twenty-four hours a day.

Either we are thinking God's thoughts, or we defer to lower level thinking. There is no grey area. You are either for God, or you are against Him (Matthew 12:30).

Throughout the counselling session, the goal is to change the counsellee's focus on the false self, a self of lusts and appetites, to a realisation of his true self, a self in union with Christ. This is accomplished by a continuous process of judging self, one's own sins, not others; changing focus from self needs, to one of accomplishing God's purposes for his life, by:

- Loving Him and others foremost;
- Daily dying to the old man and putting on the new man;
- Maintaining a state of forgiving and reconciling throughout life.

The ultimate goal now, is for the counsellee to be a disciple, to help and restore others to this same position, whereas they, in turn, will do likewise.

1.2 False Self

All of life in the natural sphere, conditions and inclines one to deal with life's experiences from a horizontal perspective, that is, to react from a self-protective and self-defensive posture, to insure one's survival in a competitive and fallen environment. This pronounced

self-focus degenerates, in time, until life is characterised by guilt, shame, anger, bitterness and fear: a life devoid of the presence of God.

Life becomes filled with the presence of self, attempting to meet the needs of self, by a fruitless search for the meaning of life in a world system, energised by evil.

A person in this condition, seeks relief by:

- the fashions and customs of this world,
- the lusts and appetites of the flesh,
- justifying his own behaviour,
- placing the blame on others,
- finding peace and joy in things, people and possessions.

Emphasis is on what others have done, or failed to do and the remedy is to change others and the circumstances of life, by whatever human (fallen) resources are available.

The focus is on self, to save self and to use others and the things of the world, to find the meaning of life.

1.3 True Self

All that was done to us, what we have done to others, the failures, the ills, the violations of our persons, the brutalities, the perversions of life, rejections, death of loved ones, tragedies, loneliness, abandonment – Jesus paid the penalty for all these sins and provided the means to handle the tragedies of life. We do not need to deal with these violations, or the tragedies of life, on our own. Christ is in us to work out our salvation daily (Philippians 2:12-13; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 6:3-6; Ezekiel 18:20).

Being in Christ, we are new creatures and we are to deal with life now from a Biblical perspective. Our problem is not with Satan, not with people, not with the circumstances of life, but our problem lies in our relationship with God. Our focus is to change from a concern about self, to a concern about God's glory. That is accomplished by our godly responses to others and to life in general (Romans 5:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

1.4 Biblical Counselling

Ever since apostolic times, counselling has occurred in the church as a natural function of corporate spiritual life. After all, the New Testament itself *commands* believers to

"admonish one another" (Romans 15:14); "encourage one another" (Hebrews. 3:13); "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18); "encourage one another and build up one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11); "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

The apostle Paul wrote, "We who are strong, ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). And, "Even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

All those instructions apply to all believers, not only to some priestly caste of experts. Counselling, particularly counselling that fully employs and applies God's Word, is a necessary duty of Christian life and fellowship. It is also the expected result of true spiritual maturity:

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, sing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

☞ What are the common commitments? What are the fundamentals of Biblical counselling?

Here are seven core elements:

1. **God is at the centre of counselling.** God is sovereign, active, speaking merciful, commanding and powerful. The Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the central focus of counselling and the exemplar of the Wonderful Counsellor. The Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, are foundational to all significant and lasting life change. The Word of God is about counselling, giving both understanding of people and methods of ministering to people. The Bible is authoritative, relevant and comprehensively sufficient for counselling. God has spoken truly to every basic issue of human nature and to the problems in living. His Word establishes the goal of counselling, how people can change, the role of the counsellor, counselling methods and so forth. Christians have the only authoritative source for counselling wisdom: the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Word of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and wisdom is the only worthy goal of counselling.
2. **Commitment to God has fundamental consequences.** First, other sources of knowledge must be submitted to the authority of Scripture. The sciences, personal experience, literature and so forth, may be useful, but may not play a constitutive role in counselling. Second, there is a conflict of counsel built into human life.

Genesis 3, Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 23 are paradigmatic. Counsel that contradicts God's counsel, has existed since the Garden of Eden, challenging God's counsel and building from other presuppositions and towards other goals. Such false counsel must be noted and opposed. Specifically, in our time and place, secular psychology has intruded into the domain of Biblical truth and practice. Secular theories and therapies substitute for Biblical wisdom and deceive people, both inside and outside, the church. The false claimants to authority must be exposed and opposed.

3. **Sin, in all its dimensions (for example, both motive and behaviour; both the sins we do and the sins done against us; both the consequences of personal sin and the consequences of Adam's sin), is the primary problem counsellors must deal with.** Sin includes wrong behaviour, distorted thinking, an orientation to follow personal desires and bad attitudes. Sin is habitual and deceptive. Much of the difficulty of counselling consists in bringing specific sin to awareness and breaking its hold. The problems in living that necessitate counselling, are not matters of unmet psychological needs, indwelling demons, poor socialisation, inborn temperament, genetic predisposition, or anything else that removes attention from the responsible human being. The problem in believers is remnant sin; the problem in unbelievers is reigning sin. Sin is the problem.
4. **The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer.** Forgiveness for sin and power to change into Christ's image, are the greatest needs of mankind. Christ deals with sin: the guilt, the power, the deception and the misery of sin. He was crucified for sinners, He reigns over hearts, by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will return to complete the redemption of His people from their sins and sufferings. These core truths must infuse the counselling process.
5. **The Biblical change process, which counselling must aim at, is progressive sanctification.** While there are many ways of changing people, Biblical counselling aims for nothing less than transformation into the image of Jesus Christ, amid the rough and tumble of daily life. Change is not instantaneous, but progresses throughout life. This progressive view of sanctification has many implications. For example, the process of change is only metaphorically, not actually, healing. The metaphor is meant to capture the process of sanctification: ongoing repentance, renewal of mind unto Biblical truth and obedience to the power of the Spirit.
6. **The situational difficulties people face, are not the random cause of problems, encountered through everyday living.** These difficulties operate within the sovereign design of God. They are the context in which hearts are revealed. Faith and obedience are purified through the battle between the Spirit and the flesh. Influential aspects of one's life situation do not cause sin. Heredity, temperament,

personality, culture, oppression and evil, bereavement, handicaps, old age, Satan, physical illness and so forth, are significant for counselling, but do not ultimately cause sin.

7. **Counselling is fundamentally a pastoral activity and must be church-based.** It must be regulated under the authority of God's appointed shepherds. Counselling is connected, both structurally and in content, to other aspects of the pastoral task: teaching, preaching, prayer, church discipline, use of gifts, missions, worship and so forth. Counselling is the private ministry of the Word of God, tailored specifically to the individuals involved. The differences between preaching and counselling are not conceptual, but only methodological. The same truths are applied in diverse ways.

These seven commitments have unified the Biblical counselling movement. They have provided a framework, within which many secondary differences of Bible interpretation, of theological commitment, of setting for counselling, of personality, have been able to exist constructively, rather than destructively. There are numerous other issues that demand clear Biblical thinking and firm commitment:

- the place of the past,
- the place of feelings,
- the Biblical view of human motivation,
- the relationship of Biblical truth to secular psychology,
- the place of suffering,
- how to apply various aspects of Biblical truth to different kinds of problems,
- how to apply methods of Biblical ministry to different kinds of problems.

Will Biblical counsellors draw the boundaries in the right places? Or will the lines be drawn too narrowly, creating a sectarian party spirit? Or will the lines be drawn too widely, inviting compromise and drift? Only within properly drawn creedal boundaries, can energies for edification and evangelisation be guided and released.

1.5 The Task of Edifying

How will Biblical counsellors develop greater skill in the cure of souls? How will we become wiser practitioners, thinkers, apologists and Christian men and women?

The task of edifying Biblical counsellors, demands advances, which are both exegetically sound and case-trying. It demands that we think well about many issues. One of the often ignored aspects of Jay Adams' work, has been his repeated observation that his work is a starting place and that much work remains to be done, to build on the foundation. Biblical counselling has been rediscovered. Perhaps it is more accurate to say, that the *idea* of Biblical counselling and the *call* to do Biblical counselling, have been rediscovered. This has brought into focus many fresh discoveries and new insights into the cure of souls. For example, the concern to specify counselling methodology (such as techniques of asking questions, building relationships, setting goals, speaking the truth and using homework), has produced helpful developments. The concern to translate general Biblical truths into a specific renewal of both inward and outward, is refreshingly new. Will Biblical counselling continue to develop intellectually and practically? Or will we stagnate and turn yesterday's breakthroughs into tomorrow's formulaic-truisms and techniques?

1.6 The Task of Evangelizing

How will Biblical counsellors spread the cause of Biblical counselling? The task of persuasion must be undertaken with three distinct groups of people:

1. The great bulk of the believing church;
2. The integrated community;
3. Members of the secular psychological culture.

Many people remain ignorant of the existence of Biblical counselling, while others dismiss it on the basis of a caricature, that bears no resemblance to anything the Bible teaches, or anything wise counsellors think and do. Biblical counselling needs evangelists and supporters with sensitivities and passions for each of these communities. We have answers people need; answers that are better than those they already have. Biblical counsellors must think well, pray pointedly and discuss actively, to develop energetic and creative apologetic and evangelistic efforts, to help people find these answers.

1.7 Theology and Counselling

What is theology and what is its relationship to counselling?

In its simplest form, theology is nothing more, or less, than the systematic understanding of what the Scriptures teach about various subjects. Biblical passages concerning any subject, let us say, the teaching of the Bible about God, are:

- located,

- exegeted in context,
- placed into the stream of the history of redemption
- their teachings classified, according to the several aspects of that subject (God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, for instance).

Within each classification, these teachings are compared to one another (one passage supplementing and qualifying another), in order to discover the total scriptural teaching on this aspect of the doctrine. Each aspect, likewise, is compared to other aspects, in order to understand the total scriptural teaching about that question (and various subjects also, are studied in relation to each other for further amplifications and modifications, according to the light that one subject throws upon another).

Thus, simply stated, theology is the attempt to bring to bear upon any given doctrine (or teaching), all that the Bible has to say about it. Biblical theology also notes the development of special revelation, particularly in relationship to the redemptive work of Christ.

Because his counsel is dependent upon Biblical principles, a Christian counsellor (like a Christian preacher) must understand *all* that the Scriptures say on a given topic, in order to give fully Biblical direction to their counselees.

One of the principal problems with which counsellors must deal (often as a complicating problem) when seeking to help counselees, is the problem of counsellee frustration and discouragement. Much of the apathy encountered, stems from the failure of counselees to understand the Bible theologically. As the result of quite faulty understanding of the Bible, they take all sorts of actions (like using prayer as a rabbit's foot) that fail. Then, on the one hand, either doubts about God and the trustworthiness of the Scriptures or, on the other hand, doubts about themselves ("maybe Paul could do it, but I'm not Paul"), arise.

Where the counsellee already has received basically un-theological instruction, counsellors should anticipate (and look for) complications to original problems, that stem from faulty solutions. It is imperative that the counsellor approach such counselees in full consciousness of what theology can do to help.

In the counselling process, not only is it necessary to have a theological (i.e., a full orbbed, systematically understood) orientation toward the Scriptures, to avoid misleading counselees and to correct errors in the thought and practice of counselees, but it is vital also to have this orientation, in order to communicate truth authoritatively. The counsellor, who himself is theologically unsure, will communicate his Biblical insecurity in the way that he speaks to counselees (and in the way that he writes about counselling).

Authoritative proclamation of the Word in preaching and in counselling (not authoritarian), grows only from a sound knowledge of theology. It was because the scribes and Pharisees were speculative, rather than theological, in their thinking, that Christ's authoritative teaching stood out in such stark contrast to theirs: "He taught them as an authority and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:29). The scribes based their teaching, not upon an exegetical and theological understanding of the Bible, but upon the contradictory debates, ramblings and speculations found among the body of materials, called the "traditions of the elders", which so often made the clear intent of various passages, of no effect (Mark 7:13). It doesn't surprise, therefore, that Christian counsellors today, lack authority; there is so much speculation and so little theological depth among them.

Typically, the self-appointed Christian "professional" has spent years studying psychology at graduate level, but has little more than a Sunday school (or, at best, a Bible school) knowledge of the Bible. That is woefully inadequate for a full-time counsellor, or teacher, of counselling! Theological principles and method take not only time to develop and learn, but on top of that, it takes years of hard effort in applying them to the study of the Scriptures, to yield the kind of satisfying results, that are needed in counselling.

People often ask: "Why aren't there more people who approach counselling Biblically?" The answer is that there are so few persons in the field, who are adequately prepared theologically, to do so. How can a counsellor, who doesn't even possess the word "exegesis" as a part of his everyday speaking vocabulary and who doesn't even understand the problems of theological reflection upon the truths of the Scriptures, begin to develop a Biblical system? The very idea is absurd.

It is important:

1. To become aware of one's own commitments and the grounds for arriving at and holding them,
2. To make revisions of these and any future commitments consciously, on the basis of satisfactory Biblical theology,
3. To study theology continually, for further implications of truths, that will lead to a more Biblical sort of counselling and will lend a proper sort of authority to that counsel.

In summary, the relationship between counselling and theology is organic; counselling cannot be done apart from theological commitments. Every act, word (or lack of these) implies theological commitments. On the other hand, theological study leads to counselling implications. The attempt to separate the two, must not be made – they

cannot be separated, without doing violence to both. The separation is as unnatural (and as perilous), as the separation of the spirit from the body. Paraphrasing James, we may say that counselling, without theology, is dead.

1.8 What is Counselling?

There are many theories and definitions of counselling, but in a practical sense, counselling can be seen as a process where the counsellor acts as someone to:

L – Learn.

E – Evaluate.

A – Advise.

N – Nurture.

Lean on (temporarily) in order to assist a person to:

M – Motivated

O – Objective/optimistic

V – With a vision

E – Encourage/enthusiastic

Move on permanently and competently in life.

Counselling is also a process of helping people, not by taking over, or providing solutions, but by creating favourable conditions for them, to achieve their own insight and to change from within. In this way, they gain confidence in their ability to use their own resources and become encouraged to assume self-direction and responsibility for their lives.

In short, counselling can be seen as helping people to help themselves, individually, or as a group. If a person is hungry, you can satisfy that need, by giving him a fish, but if you teach that person how to catch a fish, he will be able to satisfy this need forever, without your help.

1.9 Communication

Successful counselling is about successful communication, both verbally and non-verbally. Communication is the interaction between two people, where spiritual contact takes place through speaking, listening, sharing, accepting and trusting.

The most important communication skill in counselling is the ability to listen effectively. Listening is an active process, which takes into account both verbal and non-verbal messages.

1.10 Verbal Communication

Encouraging responses, based on USA (Understanding, Sincerity and Acceptance), for example:

- Uh-Uh.
- Yes.
- I am listening.
- Go on.
- I hear what you say.
- It is safe to say what you feel.
- Yes, tell me more.
- Would you like to talk about it?

The above must be accompanied by empathic head-nodding, as well as a friendly, warm tone of voice.

1.11 Listening Skills

Effective listening requires commitment in a relaxed atmosphere, as well as adequate time. The following basic listening skills are of the utmost importance:

- Sympathetic silence. Keep yourself from commenting immediately, even if you disagree strongly. It will show that you are willing to listen.
- Passive listening is an active process, by giving undivided attention, e.g. "Yes, I see," while nodding.
- Tell me more technique, e.g. "Yes, tell me more," or "would you like to talk about it?" without judging, cross-examining, or curiosity.
- Summary. Summarise the most important points and repeat it to the person, to ensure that you understood correctly. Highlight the crux of what was said, to show that you listened.
- Suitable questions may be asked at the right time, to get more information, not to accuse. Open-ended questions help the communication process, e.g. "what makes you sad?" instead of "are you sad?"

- Exercise patience, by giving the other person a chance to finish his or her story. Do not interrupt.

1.12 Factors which may Hinder Effective Listening

- External hindrances. Telephone, TV, door bell, etc. *Suggestion: Manage your surroundings as far as possible.*
- Internal hindrances. Stress, tension, priorities, pressures at work, emotions, moods, time. *Suggestion: Your problem is important, needing my attention now.*
- Scripted thoughts. While person speaks, you are busy thinking of your own point of view and you do not listen. *Suggestion: Think before you speak!*
- Lack of confidence in your own listening skills. The power of negative thoughts will keep you from even trying to listen. This attitude will cause you to fail. *Suggestion: Try – you can if you want to. Be positive.*
- Listening only to echoes. It is pleasant to listen to people who agree with, or echo, your point of view and unpleasant to listen to someone who disagrees with your values, faith, etc. You want to listen to what you would like to hear! This is poor listening! *Suggestion: Remember - every person has the right to his or her own opinion. Nobody can be another you.*
- Lack of understanding that listening is hard work. True listening requires intellectual and emotional effort and total concentration. It is exhausting! *Suggestion: Be prepared to put in the effort.*
- Good listening is not simply politeness. People very often learn to hear, but not to listen. This can cause many communication problems. *Suggestion: Listen with ears, mind and emotions.*

1.13 Helpful Guidelines to Improve Communication

The following guidelines are recommended:

- Create a climate of acceptance, in which the person can communicate freely about his problem.
- Speak to the person as well-mannered as you would to a stranger.
- Do not humiliate the person and prevent his peers from doing this among themselves.
- Give your exclusive attention when the person expresses the need to discuss something; listen calmly and try to see his point of view as well, even if you disagree with his attitude, or behaviour.

- Always keep the door open on every subject; do not regard certain topics as too sensitive for discussion.
- Encourage the person to test his thoughts and ideas, refraining from passing judgement and critical remarks about him.
- Build the person's self-concept and self-confidence, by encouraging him to participate in the discussion.
- Remember that the person needs to challenge opinions and behaviour, in order to achieve the separation, which is essential for the establishment of his own sense of identity.

1.14 Non-Verbal Communication

Talking is not the only way we communicate with one another. Our body posture, hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact and even our mode of dress, convey a wide range of messages and signals. Actions speak louder than words. What you say, should be reinforced by your non-verbal messages.

The basic elements of physical attendance, during an exercise in communication, can be summarised as follows:

- Face client squarely (smiling, friendly).
- Adopt open posture (relaxed).
- Lean toward the client at times.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Remain relatively relaxed with client.

Successful communication may establish successful relationships. People need people and unsuccessful relationships drive people away from one another, which may create problems and unhappiness. Try to memorise and apply the following:

1.14.1 The Ten Commandments of Successful Inter-Personal Relationships

1. Talk to people.
2. Smile at people.
3. Listen to people.
4. Use and remember people's names.
5. Be friendly and helpful.
6. Be warm and sincere.
7. Show interest in other people.

8. Compliment people.
9. Consider and respect people's feelings and opinions.
10. Be understanding and accept people for who they are.

1.15 Characteristics of a Successful Counsellor

The success of the counselling process depends on the characteristics of the counsellor. A counsellor should have a caring attitude, which is understood and interpreted as such, by the client. A counsellor must also be likeable, trustworthy, accepting, acceptable, valuing, open, helpful, respectable and non-threatening.

The counsellor should have the following qualities: friendliness, sympathetic attitude, sense of humour, stability, patience, objectivity, sincerity, tact, fairness, tolerance, neatness, calmness, broad-mindedness, kindness, pleasantness, poise, democratic attitude, consideration, consistency and social intelligence.

The guidance counsellor wishes to give something of him-/herself to the task of school guidance and counselling and it is in this, that the significance of being a guidance teacher, lies.

Inherent characteristics, like the following, are important for the successful youth counsellor:

- Love for children.
- Interest in children in need.
- Patience with children in need.
- Sympathetic attitude towards children.
- Empathy with children in need.
- Consideration for each child.
- Integrity of conduct.
- Honesty.
- Reasonableness.
- A flair for handling children.

- Balanced conduct.
- Humility towards children.
- A sense of humour.
- An open mind.
- A capacity for sympathetic, authoritative guidance.
- Wide interests.
- A sense of responsibility.

To be a role model for pupils, as well as your colleagues and the community as a whole, the expression: *“practice what you preach”*, does apply to the lives of counsellors. The counsellor should strive to be a role model, in order to help others.

Important: Nobody is perfect, therefore you cannot be expected to exhibit all these personality traits, but you are expected to display as many of them as possible.

- In charge of yourself.
- Able to make decisions.
- Know yourself and remain constant and predictable.
- Realistic about yourself.
- Not wish you were somebody else.
- Reveal yourself.
- Not hide behind a mask.
- Confident person.
- Self-reliant.
- Able to think for yourself.
- Come to your own conclusions.
- Assume responsibility for your own life.
- Have goals.

- Have a time table.
- Live in the present.
- Know your feelings and limitations, but are not afraid of them.
- Enjoy life, people, work and nature.
- Care for the world and its communities.
- Work to make it a better place.

Self-concept is the way a person perceives him-/herself in terms of social, physical and intellectual attributes. People with a positive self-concept, are better adjusted than those with a negative self-concept.

1.16 A Few Practical Hints

People respond very positively towards:

- A friendly smile.
- A comment, question, or compliment, where, or when you meet, just to show that you care.
- A physical touch, depending on the kind of relationship that exists. Handle this issue with great care.
- Communication by way of a short letter, or card, during illness, grief, happiness or success.
- An apology, if you've made a mistake, or neglected the person.
- Sharing something about yourself (not too personal), as a friend, if it could be of any help, or comfort, in their situation. Remember it is always about them, not you.

Always ask yourself: would I share my problems, anxieties, fears, or dreams, with a counsellor like me? Why? Why not?

In order to be a successful counsellor, the person must be able to trust you, confide in you, feel free to be him-/herself, in your presence, LEAN on you, if necessary (temporarily), in order to MOVE on in life, on his/her own.

Study Unit 2

Empathy, Compassion and Understanding

2.1 Introduction

When clients present themselves to counsellors, there is no way of reading what is in their hearts. This unfolds over the course of counselling sessions, but it is not visible in the beginning. There is no single mould of story-telling. There are several varieties involved.

1. One deals with the quality of the story told. At one end of the spectrum, are clients who try to tell their stories up front, clearly and in detail; at the other end, are clients who tell stories that are general, partial and ambiguous.
2. A second variety deals with concern about self-presentation. At one end, are clients who are not especially concerned about what their counsellors think of them; they have no particular need to be seen in a favourable light. At the other end, are clients who are extremely concerned about what their counsellor thinks of them and they will skew their stories, to present themselves in the best light.
3. A third variety deals with the truthfulness of the story. At one end, are clients who tell their stories as honestly as possible; at the other end, are clients who, for whatever reason, lie. The latter might not give a hoot about what the counsellor thinks of them, but they still lie.

In all three varieties, there is every shade in between. Throw all of these together, with their various combinations and variations, add every other possible motivation and you have an "infinite" number of storytelling styles.

Rather, each client has his or her own style. Add the enormous diversity, found in clients and in story content and it is clear to confident counsellors, that each client represents an N = 1 (sole subject) research project.

Counsellors, whether professional, or lay, as well as ordinary people, engage in mini-versions of the helping process, more often than they realise. That is, the whole process, which can take weeks, or months, or even years, can also take place, literally, within minutes. No matter how long it takes, however, counsellors need to adopt a whole-process mentality. Consider the following scenario.

Lara, a pastoral-care worker in an urban hospital, gets a call from a nurse, who says that a patient, who is to undergo surgery the next day, wants to see someone from the pastoral-care team. She visits the patient, a man who is going to have surgery for colon cancer. She listens to his concerns, sees his anxiety and realises that he is seeking some modicum of peace in the face of adversity. She gently asks whether praying together, might help. He says that, although he has not been very "religious," he would like to face the "Almighty" in a better frame of mind. She chooses the Psalm that begins with the words "The Lord is my Shepherd." She emphasises the themes that are most relevant to his current plight and state of mind. Between phrases of the prayer, they talk about his concerns. At the end, he says that he is still frightened, but feels he is in a much better state to face the next day. Lara says that she will have the nurse stop by to see whether he might want something for his anxiety. Later, the nurse drops by and gives him some medication, to help reduce his anxiety and get some sleep.

Lara listens to the patient's concerns and helps him give expression to them, realises that he wants some relief from his anxiety and to feel more at peace, from a religious point of view, about facing surgery. She uses prayer and dialogue about the themes within the prayer, to help him find some of the peace he is looking for. Counsellors need to develop a holistic-process mentality.

2.2 The Importance of Empathic Relationships

In day-to-day interpersonal communication, empathy is a tool of civility. Making an effort to get in touch with another's frame of reference, sends a message of respect. Therefore, empathy plays an important part in building relationships. It gives concrete expression to the value of respect. However, the communication skills, as they are practiced in helping settings, don't automatically transfer to the ordinary social settings of everyday life.

In everyday life, empathy does not necessarily have to be put into words. Given enough time, people can establish empathic relationships with one another, in which understanding is communicated in a variety of rich and subtle ways, without necessarily being put into words. A simple glance across a room, as one spouse sees the other trapped in a conversation with a person he/she does not want to be with, can communicate worlds of understanding. The glance says, "I know you feel caught. I know you don't want to hurt the other person's feelings. I can feel the struggles going on inside you. I also know that you'd like me to rescue you, if I can do so tactfully."

2.3 Listening to and Understanding Verbal Messages

Primarily, counsellors listen to clients' verbal messages; their "stories", which are mixtures of clients' experiences, behaviours and affect. Traditionally, human activity has been divided into three parts: *thinking*, *feeling* and *acting*. A slightly different approach is taken here.

- Clients talk about their experiences, that is, what happens to them. If a client tells you that she was fired from her job, she is talking about her problem situation as an experience.
- Clients talk about their behaviour, that is, what they do, or refrain from doing. If a client tells you that he smokes and drinks a lot, or if he says that he spends a great deal of time daydreaming, he is talking about his problem situation as a behaviour.
- Clients talk about their affect, that is, the feelings and emotions that arise from, or are associated with, either experiences, or behaviour. If a client tells you how depressed she gets after verbal fights with her fiancé, she is talking about the affect associated with her problem situation.

All three are totally interrelated in the day-to-day lives of clients and in counselling dialogues, clients talk about all three together.

Most clients spend a fair amount of time talking about what happens to them, for example:

- "I get headaches a lot."
- "My ulcer acts up when family members argue."
- "My wife doesn't understand me."

Experience talk, often focuses on what other people do, or fail to do. At times, the implication is that others are to blame for one's problems:

- "She doesn't do anything all day. The house is always a mess when I come home from work. No wonder I can't concentrate at work."
- "He tells his little jokes and I'm always the butt of them. No wonder I feel bad about myself most of the time."

Some clients talk about experiences that are internal and out of their control.

- "These feelings of depression come from nowhere and seem to suffocate me."

- "I just can't stop thinking of him."

2.4 Listening to and Understanding Clients in Context

People are more than the sum of their verbal and nonverbal messages. Listening, in its deepest sense, means listening to clients themselves, as influenced by the contexts in which they "live, move and have their being."

2.4.1 The Helping Context is also Important

One needs to be sensitive about how the other may feel about talking to one, who is quite different. One also needs to understand that the client might well have some misgivings about helping professions. In other words, the counsellor tries to pull together the themes he/she sees emerging in the client's story and tries to see those themes in context. Events may be social and not merely personal events. The counsellor listens actively and carefully, because he/she knows that their ability to help, depends, in part, on not distorting what is heard.

2.4.2 Empathic Listening

Both empathic listening and empathic responding, are important concepts and skills. However, there is so much confusion in the psychological literature as to what empathy means. Empathy can be seen as an intellectual process, which involves understanding correctly, another person's emotional state and point of view.

Empathy can also refer to empathic emotions experienced by the counsellor. The intellectual process is stressed. It is important that counsellors understand the feelings and emotions of their clients and their meaning for the clients, even though they might not "feel along with" the clients. Furthermore, this intellectual process is presented as a communication skill.

Empathic listening centres on the kind of attending, observing and listening; the kind of "being with", needed to develop an understanding of clients and their worlds. Although it might be physically impossible to actually get "inside" the world of another person and experience the world as he or she does, it is possible to approximate this. Even an approximation is very useful in helping. Indeed, if people are to care for one another, some form of empathy is essential. Caring for clients and their concerns is part of respect.

Rogers talked passionately about basic empathic listening, being with and understanding the other, even calling it "an unappreciated way of being". He used the word unappreciated, because in his view, few people in the general population developed this "deep listening" ability and even so-called expert counsellors, did not give it the attention it deserved. Here is his description of basic empathic listening, or being with:

It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear, or rage, or tenderness, or confusion, or whatever that he or she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in the other's life, moving about in it delicately, without making judgements.

Such empathic listening is selfless, because counsellors must put aside their own concerns, to be fully with their clients. Of course, Rogers pointed out that this deeper understanding of clients remains sterile, unless it is somehow communicated to them. Although clients can appreciate how intensely they are attended and listened to, they and their concerns, still need to be understood. Empathic listening begets empathic understanding, which begets empathic responding.

Empathic participation in the world of another person, obviously admits of degrees. As a counsellor, you must be able to enter clients' worlds deeply enough, to understand their struggles with problem situations, or their search for opportunities, with enough depth, to make your participation in problem management and opportunity development, valid and substantial. If your help is based on an incorrect, or invalid, understanding of the client, your helping may lead him/her astray. If your understanding is valid, but superficial, you might miss the central issues of the client's life.

2.4.3 Tough-Minded Listening

Skilled counsellors not only observe the experiences, behaviours and emotions of clients within the helping sessions and listen to their stories, but also listen to any slant, or spin that clients might give their stories.

Although clients' visions of and feelings about, themselves, others and the world, are real and need to be understood, their perceptions of themselves and their worlds, are sometimes distorted. For instance, if a client sees herself as ugly, when in reality she is beautiful, her experience of herself as ugly, is real and needs to be listened to and understood. Her experience of herself does not square with the

facts. This, too, must be listened to and understood. If a client sees himself as above average in his ability to communicate with others, when, in reality, he is below average, his experience of himself, needs to be listened to and understood, but reality cannot be ignored.

Tough-minded listening includes detecting the gaps, distortions and dissonance, which are part of the client's experienced reality. This does not mean that counsellors challenge clients, as soon as they hear any kind of distortion. Rather, they note gaps and distortions and challenge them, when it is appropriate to do so.

To be client-centred, counsellors must first be reality-centred.

2.4.4 Listening to Oneself

The conversation counsellors have with themselves during helping sessions, is the "shadow conversation." To be an effective counsellor, you need to listen, not only to the client, but also to yourself. Listening to yourself, can help you identify both what you might do to be of further help to the client and what might be standing in the way of your being with and listening to, the client. It is a positive form of self-consciousness.

Counsellors can use this to listen to their own verbal messages with themselves, their nonverbal behaviour and their feelings and emotions. These messages can refer to the counsellor, the client, or the relationship, for example:

- "I'm letting the client get under my skin. I had better do something to reset the dialogue."
- "My mind has been wandering. I'm preoccupied with what I have to do tomorrow. I had better put that out of my mind."
- "Here's a client who has had a tough time of it, but her self-pity is standing in the way of her doing anything about it. I had better go slow."
- "It's not clear that this client is interested in changing. It's time to test the waters."

The point is that this shadow conversation goes on all the time. It can be a distraction, or it can be another tool for helping. The client, too, is having his/her shadow conversation.

2.5 The Three Dimensions of Responding Skills

The communication skills involved in responding to clients, have three dimensions: perceptiveness, know-how and assertiveness. These three dimensions are discussed here, as they apply to basic empathy.

2.5.1 Perceptiveness

Your responding skills are only as good as the accuracy of the perceptions on which they are based.

2.5.2 Know-how

Once you are aware of what kind of response is called for, you need to be able to deliver it. For instance, if you are aware that a client is anxious and confused, because this is his first visit to a counsellor, it does little good, if your understanding remains locked up inside you.

2.5.3 Assertiveness

Accurate perceptions and excellent know-how are meaningless, unless they are actually used, when called for. If you see that self-doubt is a theme that weaves itself throughout a client's story and search for a better future and if you know how to challenge him to explore this tendency, but fail to do so, you do not pass the assertiveness test. Your skills remain locked up inside you.

Assertiveness is an overriding value in and of itself. To be assertive, without perceptiveness and know-how, is to court disaster.

2.6 Basic Empathy: Communication Understanding to Clients

If attending and listening are the skills that enable counsellors to get in touch with the world of the client, basic empathy is the skill that enables them to communicate their understanding of that world. The term "basic empathy", is used to distinguish it from empathic listening.

A secure starting point in helping others, is listening to them carefully, struggling to understand their concerns and sharing that understanding with them. When clients are asked what they find helpful in counselling interviews, being understood, gets top ratings.

Covey, naming empathic communication one of the "seven habits of highly effective people," said that empathy provides "psychological air"; that is, it helps people breathe more freely in their relationships. Care must be taken, however, not to make a cult out of empathy. It's certainly not a miracle pill. Although many people may "feel" empathy for others, the truth is that few know how to put it into words. Empathy, as a communication of understanding of the other, remains an improbable event in everyday life. Perhaps that's why it is so powerful in helping settings. There is such an unfulfilled need to be understood.

We are going to deconstruct basic empathy and look at the pieces.

2.6.1 The Basic Empathy Formula

Basic empathic understanding can be expressed in the following stylised formula:

You feel . . . [here name the correct emotion expressed by the client] . . . because (or when) . . . [here indicate the correct experiences and behaviours that give rise to the feelings]. . .

The formula is a beginner's tool to get used to the concept of empathy. The formula is used in the following examples. For the moment, ignore how stylised it sounds. Ordinary human language will be substituted later.

The accuracy of the counsellor's response does not solve the client's problems, but the client does move a bit. He/she shares his/her concerns and perhaps reduces anxiety by talking about it.

2.6.2 Experiences, Behaviours, and Feelings as Elements of Empathy

The key elements of an empathic response are the same as the key elements of the client's story, that is, the experiences, behaviours and feelings that make up that story.

Respond to the client's feelings. In the formula, "You feel. . .", is to be followed by the correct family of emotions and the correct intensity:

- The statements "You feel hurt", "You feel relieved", "You feel enthusiastic", specify different families of emotion.
- The statements "You feel annoyed", "You feel angry", "You're furious", specify different degrees of intensity in the same family (anger).

The words sad, mad, bad and glad, refer to four of the main families of emotion, whereas sad, very sad and extremely sad, refer to different intensities.

Note that the client may actually be talking about emotions felt in the past, that is, at the time of the event being discussed, or expressing feelings about the event that arise during the helping session, or both.

It goes without saying, that clients don't always name their feelings and emotions. However, if they express emotion, it is part of the message and needs to be identified and understood. Often, counsellors have to read their clients' emotions, both the family and the intensity, in their nonverbal behaviour.

Of course, you do not yet know the experiences and behaviours that give rise to these emotions. Naming and discussing feelings, threatens some clients. In this case, it might be better to focus on experiences and behaviours and proceed only gradually to a discussion of feelings. Some clients are hesitant to talk about certain emotions. One client might find it relatively easy to talk about his anger, but not his hurt. For another client, it might be just the opposite. Empathy includes the ability to pick up and deal with, these differences.

Finally, keep in mind that in most cases, feelings and emotions arise from the client's experiences and behaviours. Emotions should not be overemphasised, or underemphasised. They should be dealt with in an integrated way. Of course, once experienced, emotions go on to drive other behaviours. They are an important part of the problem situation, or the undeveloped opportunity, but they are only a part.

Since clients express feelings in a number of different ways, counsellors can communicate an understanding of feelings, in a variety of ways:

- By single words. You feel good. You're depressed. You feel abandoned. You're delighted. You feel trapped. You're angry.
- By different kinds of phrases. You're sitting on top of the world. You feel down in the dumps. You feel left in the lurch. Your back's up against the wall. You're really steaming.
- By what is implied in behavioural statements. (What action I feel like taking): You feel like giving up (implied emotion: despair). You feel like hugging him (implied emotion: joy). Now that it's over, you feel like throwing up (implied emotion: disgust).
- By what is implied in experiences that are revealed. You feel you're being dumped on (implied feeling: victimised). You feel you're being stereotyped

(implied feeling: resentment). You feel you're at the top of her list (implied feeling: elation). You feel you're going to get caught (implied feeling: apprehension). Note that the implication of each, could be spelled out: You feel angry, because you're being dumped on. You resent the fact that you're being stereotyped. You feel great, because it seems that you're at the top of her list.

Since ultimately you must discard formulas and use your own language, words that are you, it helps to have a variety of ways of communicating your understanding of clients' feelings and emotions. It keeps you from being wooden in your responses. Consider this example: The client tells you that she has just been given the kind of job she has been looking for, for the past two years. Here are some possible responses to her emotion:

- Single word. You're really happy.
- A phrase. You're on cloud nine.
- Experiential statement. You feel you finally got what you deserve.
- Behavioural statement. You feel like going out and celebrating.

Obviously, your responses to clients should be you, not canned responses from a textbook. With experience, you can extend your range of expression, at the service of your clients.

The client, too, talks about his/her experiences and behaviours and expresses feelings, the flavour of which is captured in the empathic response. The response, capturing as it does, both the client's enthusiasm and his/her lingering fears, is quite useful, because the client moves on to his/her need to make things happen.

2.6.3 Principles to Guide the use of Basic Empathy

Here are a number of principles that can guide you in your use of empathy. Remember that they are principles, not formulas.

Use empathy at every stage and step of the helping process. Basic empathic understanding is a useful response at every stage and every step of the helping process. Here are some examples:

- A teenager, in his third year of high school, who has just found out that he is moving with his family to a different city: "You feel sad, maybe even a bit betrayed, because moving means leaving all your friends." (Understanding

and clarification).

- A woman, who has been discussing the trade-offs between marriage and career: "You feel ambivalent, because if you marry Jim, you might not be able to have the kind of career you'd like." (Options among goals).
- A man, who is choosing to try to control his cholesterol level, without taking a medicine, whose side effects worry him: "You feel relieved, because sticking to the diet and exercise, might mean that you won't have to take any medicine." (Stage III — choosing action strategies).
- A married couple, who have been struggling to put into practice a few strategies, to improve their communication with each other: "You feel annoyed with yourselves, because you didn't even accomplish the simple active listening goals you set for yourselves." (Action phase).

Basic empathy, as a mode of human contact, a relationship builder, a conversational lubricant, a perception-checking intervention and a mild form of social influence, is always useful. Since empathy provides a continual trickle of understanding, it is a way of providing support throughout the helping process. It is never wrong to let clients know that you are trying to understand them from their frame of reference.

Clients, who feel they are being understood, participate more effectively and more fully, in the helping process. Empathy helps build trust. Basic empathy paves the way for stronger interventions on the part of the counsellor, such as challenging.

Respond selectively to core messages. It is impossible to respond with empathy to everything a client says. Therefore, as you listen to clients, try to identify and respond to what you believe are core messages, that is, the heart of what the client is saying and expressing, especially if the client speaks at any length. Sometimes, this selectivity means paying particular attention to one, or two, messages, even though the client communicates many.

At other times, selectivity means focusing on experiences, or actions, or feelings, rather than all three.

Responding to core messages is also the social-influence process. The search for core messages is a selection process. The counsellor believes that the messages selected for attention, are core, not just for him-/herself, but primarily for the client. The counsellor also believes, at some level, that certain messages should be

important for the client. If true dialogue with the client is established, this does not rob clients of their self-responsibility. Everything gets checked out.

Respond to the context, not just the words. A good empathic response is not based just on the client's immediate words and nonverbal behaviour. It also takes into account the context of what is said, everything that "surrounds" and permeates a client's statement. This client may be in crisis. That client may be doing a more leisurely "taking stock" of where he/she is in life. You are listening to clients in the context of their lives.

Use empathy to stimulate movement in the helping process. Although empathy is an excellent tool for building the helping relationship, it also needs to serve the goals of the helping process. Therefore, empathy is useful to the degree that it helps the client move forward.

What does "move forward" mean? That depends on the stage, or step, in focus. For instance, empathy helps clients move forward, if it helps them explore a problem situation, or an undeveloped opportunity, more fully. Empathy helps clients move forward, to the degree that it helps them identify and explore possibilities for a better future, craft a change agenda, or discuss commitment to that agenda. Moving forward means to clarify action strategies, choose specific things to do and set up a plan. In the action phase, moving forward, means identifying obstacles to action, overcoming them and accomplishing goals.

Basic empathic statements, that hit the mark, put pressure on the client to move forward. So, basic empathy itself, even though it is a communication of understanding, is also part of the social-influence process.

2.7 Recover from Inaccurate Understanding

Although counsellors should strive to be accurate in the understanding they communicate, all counsellors can be somewhat inaccurate at times. You may think you understand the client and what he/she has said, only to find out, when you share your understanding, you were off the mark.

Therefore, empathy is a perception-checking tool. If the counsellor's response is accurate, the client often tends to confirm its accuracy in two ways:

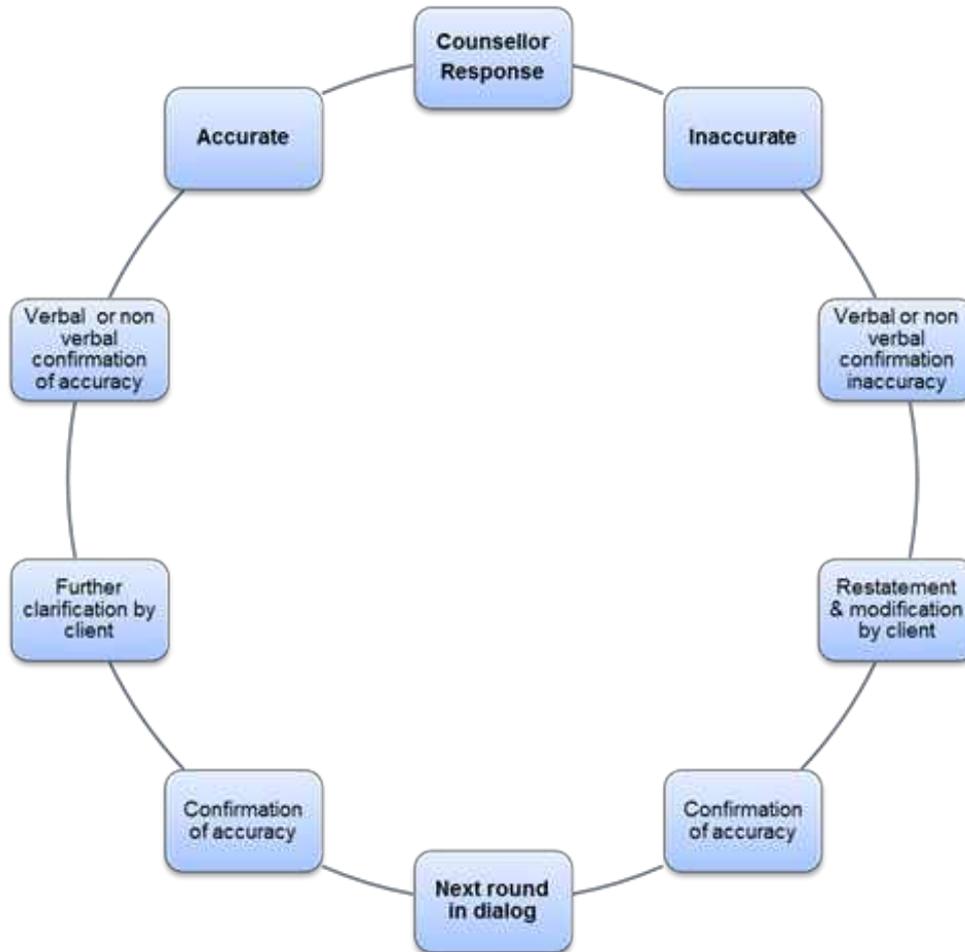
1. The first is some kind of verbal, or nonverbal, indication that the counsellor is right. That is, the client nods, or gives some other nonverbal cue, or uses some assenting word, or phrase, such as "that's right", or "exactly."
2. The second and more substantive way in which clients acknowledge the accuracy of

the counsellor's response, is by moving forward in the helping process, for instance, by clarifying the problem situation, or preferred-scenario possibilities, more fully.

On the other hand, when a response is inaccurate, the client often lets the counsellor know in different ways: He or she may stop dead, fumble around, go off on a new tangent, tell the counsellor "That's not exactly what I meant", or even try to provide empathy for the counsellor, to get him/her back on track. A counsellor, who is alert to these cues, can get back on track.

Use empathy as a way of bridging diversity gaps. This principle is a corollary of the preceding two. Empathy, based on effective attending and listening, is one of the most important tools you have in interacting with clients, who differ from you in significant ways.

Don't pretend to understand. Clients are sometimes confused, distracted and in a highly emotional state. All these conditions affect the clarity of what they are saying about themselves. Counsellors may fail to pick up what the client is saying, because of the client's confusion, or because they themselves have become distracted in one way, or another. In any case, it's a mistake to feign understanding. Genuine counsellors admit that they are lost and then work to get back on track again. A statement like: "I think I've lost you. Could we go over that once more?" indicates that you think it important to stay with the client. It is a sign of respect. Admitting that you're lost, is infinitely preferable to such clichés, as "uh-huh," "ummmm," and "I understand."



2.8 Poor Substitutes for Empathy

Many responses that novice, or inept, counsellors make, are really poor substitutes for accurate empathy. An example will be used to illustrate a range of poor responses:

Robin is a young woman, who has just started a career in law. This is her second visit to a counsellor in private practice. In the first session, she said she wanted to "talk through" some issues, relating to the "transition" from school to business life. She appeared quite self-confident. In this session, after talking about a number of transition issues, she begins speaking in a rather strained voice and avoids eye contact with the counsellor.

ROBIN: Something else is bothering me a bit.... Maybe it shouldn't. After all, I've got the kind of career that a lot of women would die for. Well, I'm glad that none of my feminist colleagues is around. I don't like the way I look. I'm neither fat, nor thin, but I don't really like the shape of my body. I'm uncomfortable with some of my facial features. Maybe this is a strange time of life to start thinking

about this. In two years I'll be thirty... I bet I seem like an affluent, self-centred yuppie.

Robin pauses and looks at a piece of art on the wall. What would you do or say?

Here are some possibilities that are better avoided:

- No response. It can be a mistake to say nothing, though cultures differ widely in how they deal with silence (Sue, 1990). In most cultures, if the client says something significant, respond to it, however briefly. Otherwise, the client may think that what he/she has just said, doesn't merit a response. Don't leave Robin sitting there, stewing in her own juices. A skilled counsellor would realise that a woman's non-acceptance of her body, could generalise to other aspects of her life and therefore should not be treated as just a "vanity" problem.
- Distracting questions. A counsellor might ask something like, "Is this something new, now that you've started working?" This response ignores what Robin has said and the feelings she has expressed and focuses rather on the counsellor's agenda to get more information.
- Clichés. A counsellor might say, "The workplace is competitive. It's not uncommon for issues like this to come up." This is cliché-talk. It turns the counsellor into an instructor and may sound dismissive to the client. Clichés are hollow. The counsellor is saying, in effect, "You don't really have a problem at all, at least not a serious one."
- Interpretations. A counsellor might say something like this: "Robin, my bet is that your body-image concerns are probably just a symptom. I've got a hunch that you're not really accepting yourself. That's the real problem." The counsellor fails to respond to the client's feelings and also distorts the content of the client's communication. The response implies that what is really important, is hidden from the client.
- Advice. Another counsellor might say, "Hey, don't let this worry you. You'll be so involved with work issues, that these concerns will disappear." Advice giving at this stage is out of order and, to make things worse, the advice given, has a cliché flavour to it. The values of self-responsibility suggest that advice giving be kept to a minimum.
- Parroting. Empathy does not consist of merely repeating what the client has said. Such parroting is a parody of empathy. COUNSELLOR: "So, Robin, even though you have a great job, one that many people would envy, it's your feelings about your

body that bother you. The feminist in you recoils a bit from this news. There are things you don't like—your body shape, some facial features. You're wondering why this is hitting you now. You also seem to be ashamed of these thoughts. "Maybe I'm just self-centred," is what you're saying to yourself." This may be verbally accurate, but it sounds awful. Mere repetition carries no sense of real understanding, or of being with, the client. Since real understanding is in some way "processed" by you, since it passes through you, it should convey some part of yourself. Empathy always adds something. To avoid parroting, come at what the client has said from a slightly different angle, use different words, change the order, refer to an expressed, but unnamed, emotion; in a word, do whatever you can, to let the client know that you are working at understanding.

- Sympathy and agreement. Being empathic is not the same as agreeing with the client, or being sympathetic. An expression of sympathy has much more in common with pity, compassion, commiseration and condolence, than with empathic understanding. Although these are fully human traits, they are not particularly useful in counselling. Sympathy denotes agreement, whereas empathy denotes understanding and acceptance of the person of the client. At its worst, sympathy is a form of collusion with the client.

Note the difference between Counsellor A's response to Robin and Counsellor B's response.

COUNSELLOR A: This is not an easy thing to struggle with. It's even harder to talk about. It's even worse for someone who is as self-confident as you usually are.

ROBIN: I guess so.

Note that Robin responds with half-hearted collusion-talk. The helping process does not move forward.

COUNSELLOR B: You've got some misgivings about your bodily characteristics, yet you wonder whether you're even justified talking about it.

ROBIN: I know. It's like I'm ashamed of my being ashamed. What's worse, I get so preoccupied with my body, that I stop thinking of myself as a person. It blinds me to the fact that I, more or less, like the person I am.

Counsellor B's response gives Robin the opportunity to deal with her immediate anxiety and then to explore her problem situation more fully.

2.9 Tactics for Communicating Empathy

The principles outlined previously, provide strategies for the use of basic empathy. Here are a few hints, tactics, if you will, to help you improve the quality of your empathic responses:

- Give yourself time to think. Beginners sometimes jump in too quickly with an empathic response, when the client pauses. "Too quickly", means that they do not give themselves enough time to reflect on what the client has just said, in order to identify the core message being communicated. Even the experts pause and allow themselves to assimilate what the client is saying.
- Use short responses. I find that the helping process goes best, when I engage the client in a dialogue, rather than give speeches, or allow the client to ramble. In a dialogue, the counsellor's responses can be relatively frequent, but lean and trim. In trying to be accurate, the beginner is often long-winded, especially if he/she waits too long to respond. Again, the question "What is the core of what this person is saying to me?" can help you make your responses short, concrete and accurate.
- Gear your response to the client, but remain yourself. If a client speaks animatedly, telling the counsellor of his elation over various successes in his life and he/she replies accurately, but in a flat, dull voice, the response is not fully empathic. This does not mean that counsellors should mimic their clients. It means that part of being with the client, is sharing in a reasonable way in his/her emotional tone.

On the other hand, counsellors should not adopt a language that is not their own, just to be on the client's wavelength. A white counsellor, speaking African American slang, or vice versa, sounds ludicrous.

People with empathic relationships, often express empathy in actions. An arm around the shoulders of someone who has just suffered a defeat, can be filled with both support and empathy.

2.10 Suggestion for the Use of Empathy

1. Remember that empathy is, ideally, a way of being and not just a professional role or communication skill.
2. Attend carefully, both physically and psychologically and listen to the client's point of view.
3. Try to set your judgements and biases aside for the moment and walk in the shoes

of the client.

4. As the client speaks, listen especially for core messages.
5. Listen to both, verbal and nonverbal, messages and their context.
6. Respond fairly frequently, but briefly, to the client's core messages.
7. Be flexible and tentative enough, that the client does not feel pinned down.
8. Use empathy to keep the client focused on important issues.
9. Move gradually toward the exploration of sensitive topics and feelings.
10. After responding with empathy, attend carefully to cues that either confirm, or deny, the accuracy of your response.
11. Determine whether your empathic responses are helping the client. Remain focused, while developing and clarifying important issues.
12. Note signs of client stress, or resistance; try to judge whether these arise because you are inaccurate, or because you are too accurate.
13. Keep in mind that the communication skill of empathy, however important, is a tool to help clients see themselves and their problem situations more clearly, with a view to managing them more effectively.

2.11 Definitions

Compassion A sympathetic consciousness of other's distress together, with a desire to alleviate it.

Antonyms: heartlessness, cold-hearted and hard-heartedness

Understanding A mental grasp; comprehension.

Antonym: incomprehension.

Empathy the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing: the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another, of either the past, or present, without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner; also: the capacity for this.

Antonym: unsympathetic

Study Unit 3

Restoring Relationships and Forgiveness

3.1 Introduction

A pastor arranged for a gathering of the women's auxiliary. It was to be a garden party on the church lawn, under the old oak. At the last moment, the morning of the party, Mrs. Preacher discovered she left Sister Hissyfit off the invitation list. The pastor called the dear sister and begged forgiveness. "I'm so sorry we didn't catch this sooner, Mrs. Hissyfit, won't you please come to the garden party?" "Begging won't help now, Preacher", said the offended Mrs. H., "I've already prayed for rain."

The primary Greek word for the word Jesus used for "forgiveness", is *aphiemi*, formed by the combination *apo*, meaning "from," and *hiemi*, meaning "to send." *Aphiemi* is used 142 times in the New Testament and most of those uses, describe actions, other than forgiveness. For example, Mark 1:34 says, "And Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out [*aphiemi*] many demons." In the 45 instances where *aphiemi* is used to describe the act of forgiveness, it still retains the sense of releasing something closely held, or trapped.

Notice how the verses below take on new meaning, when *aphiemi* is translated with "release", instead of "forgive":

- Release our debts, as we also have released our debtors (Matthew 6:12).
- For if you release men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also release you. But if you do not release men [from] their sins, your Father will not release your sins (Matthew 6:14, 15).
- The servant's master took pity on him, released the debt and let him go (Matthew 18:27).
- This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you, unless you release your brother from your heart (Matthew 18:35).
- And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, release him, so that your Father in heaven may release you [from] your sins (Mark 11:25, 26).

According to Jesus, regardless of the magnitude of the hurts we receive at the hands of others, if we don't find a way to release and pardon the people who hurt us, our pain and anger settle at the bottom of our souls. Without our knowing it, they find each other and begin to grow. Over time, the rage and tears of other hurts are added and the sum of the parts, takes on a life of its own. What we're forced to deal with, is no longer one isolated incident, but all of them together. It becomes like a monster coming to live with us, the moment we choose not to forgive. We can also choose to forgive.

The illusion is, that over time, we can isolate the monster, domesticate it and cage it and get on with our lives, but that's an impossible task. Living with the monster, changes everything about us. Nothing in our lives goes untouched. The monster can't be tucked away in a corner closet in the basement of our lives. Just when we think we're free from its tantrums, just when we think we've soothed it enough to sit still and watch a video, it kicks over the television and scares everyone away. The monster ruins marriages. It ruins friendships. It growls at family gatherings and beats its chest at church.

An unforgiving heart affects everyone and everything we touch

3.2 How to Slay a Monster

If ever someone experienced rejection throughout his life on earth, it was Jesus. From the day of His birth, He had to flee from death. There was no room for Him in the inn (Luke 2:27), no room for Him among His people (John 1:11) and no room for Him in the synagogue (Luke 4:29).

The words: "They sought to kill Him", are often repeated in the Bible. When they at last succeeded in nailing Him to the cross, He uttered these words:

Matthew 27:46: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

He, who had such an intimate relationship with His father, was now rejected, discarded, as though His father had turned His face from Him. Yet, despite the terrible inner pain and rejection, He prayed:

Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

What an example of complete, unconditional forgiveness, leading to absolute victory!

The first step to the healing and freedom of our inner pain, freedom from turmoil and rebellion due to rejection, is:

3.2.1 Acknowledge

Acknowledge the pain and hurt. Acknowledge what happened to you as a child. Acknowledge what happened to you the other day. Acknowledge what happened to you yesterday. Be honest towards yourself, but also towards God. He knows what you have been through and is compassionate towards you. Acknowledge that you have been rejected - no matter to how small a degree. If necessary, check the list of causes and write down what comes to your mind. Write down the symptoms, which you have discovered are present, thus helping you to clarify your problems.

3.2.2 Make a List

Make a list of people who have caused pain and hurt in your life, people through whom you have experienced rejection. This list should include anyone, no matter who it is, or whether they are aware of what they have done, or not, since it is you yourself, who experience the pain.

Begin as far back as you can remember, to your childhood days. This list is a confidential and personal matter between you and the Lord, so keep it safe and private, unless you want to discuss certain items with a dependable counsellor. This is very often a good idea. Write down the name of the person and precisely what the person did to you, or neglected to do.

As you begin to write, you will be astonished to find how many things come to mind; pain that you have tried to forget, negative incidents which you have hidden in your subconscious mind. This process could last for days, or weeks and once you begin, you may find that months later, certain incidents still emerge. Often, when we find ourselves in situations, which we subconsciously associate with what had happened to us as a child, we will react in a certain way and when we ask ourselves what caused us to react in this way, we will discover that the pain we experienced years back, as a child, is still there.

Don't evade this, or try to repress it again, but deal with it, or write it down to be dealt with later, no matter how much pain it may cause you. We can never experience complete healing, if we stick psychological plasters over a festering sore; it has to be opened and cleaned, before it can heal and the same applies to inner emotional pain.

You may ask: "Why write these things down?" The reason is that, by using four of our five senses, we are carrying the message to our thoughts, our mind and subconscious minds, that this matter is being dealt with. When we later take the

matter to the Lord, by speaking to Him in an audible voice, so that we can hear ourselves dealing with the matter, the message which then reaches our subconscious mind, is clear and is firmly dealt with. Our mind then relays the message to our emotions and healing begins to take place.

3.2.3 Forgive

The Word of God instructs us to forgive. Forgiveness is therefore not optional. It is an instruction which we are to carry out, regardless of whether we feel like forgiving someone, or not. Carefully consider the following Scriptures:

- Matt 6:14, 15: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
- Mark 11:25, 26: “And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”
- Luke 6:37: “Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven.”

Amplified Bible: “Judge not, neither pronouncing judgement nor subjecting to censure and you will not be judged; do not condemn and pronounce guilty and you will not be condemned and found guilty; acquit and forgive and release (give up resentment, let it drop) and you will be acquitted and forgiven and released.”

- Ephesians 4:31, 32: “Let all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passion, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger, animosity) and quarrelling (brawling, clamour, contention) and slander (evil-speaking, abusive or blasphemous language) be banished from you, with all malice (spite, ill will, or baseness of any kind). And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tender-hearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you.”
- Colossians 3:13 “Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has [freely] forgiven you, so must you also [forgive].”

According to the above Scripture references, we will realise that through unforgiveness, we become bound. Unforgiveness binds us to the other person and we cannot overcome, or be free from, inner pain, if we do not forgive.

This also hinders our spiritual growth and, in the end, we find that relationship-wise, we cannot be the person we so badly would like to be, or the person God wants us to be.

3.3 Forgiveness is a Process

Forgiveness begins in our thoughts, our minds and then moves to our emotions. When once we begin to carry out the Lord's command to forgive, even though we do not feel like forgiving, we find that later, our emotions begin to co-operate.

When once we begin to forgive, we discover that it becomes an ongoing process. It becomes a way of life. As soon as we begin to really forgive, we experience the liberating power of God. We become excited and uplifted in our hearts and we will want to continue forgiving. Almost every day, we have to do with people who offend, or hurt us and in due course, we learn to forgive immediately. In so doing:

1. We retain the peace of God,
2. We protect ourselves from emotional pain,
3. We protect ourselves from bitterness,
4. Our attitude towards others, begins to change.
5. We find that we do not have problems concerning relationships, especially if we allow the love and peace of God, to rule in our lives.

Very often, when we begin this process, we are amazed to discover all that comes to mind, often instances which we thought we had forgotten, as well as names of people whom we no longer thought about. This process can indeed be a very revealing one, causing us to be amazed at all the "junk" which we have stored up throughout the years.

The Holy Spirit plays a great role here, since God cannot be fooled. He knows our innermost being, our very thoughts. When He sees our willingness to do His will, He is faithful and will reveal to us the things that hinder us from becoming the person He wants us to be.

Psalm 94:11: "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity."

3.4 Forgiveness is a Decision of our Will – A Choice

Throughout our lives, we are busy making decisions and choices and we reap the fruits of our decisions and choices, whether negative, or positive. Forgiveness is a choice, or a decision we make and this decision can influence our whole life. Human nature would rather seek vengeance, or we may be inclined to confront those, who have caused us pain and grief, but the Word of the Lord says: FORGIVE!

We have a choice to either continue with all the negative symptoms of rejection, or be free to be able to become the person God wants us to be. Remember, forgiveness is not a feeling – we often do not feel like forgiving. We cannot wait for a feeling to forgive, since this is against human nature. Forgiveness is a choice, a decision of our will.

Consider the following Scripture, Matthew 26:36 – 39: “Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Grief and anguish came over him and he said to them, ‘The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me.’ He went a little farther on, threw himself face downward on the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me! Yet not what I want, but what you want.’”

I don't think that Jesus felt like being crucified, but He did what had to be done.

Through forgiveness, you choose to let go of the debt list, which you feel is still owing to you by others. Once you have released, or acquitted, each one of those on your list, it is no longer your concern. No one owes you an apology, an "I'm sorry". Everything has been acquitted and cannot be held against them any longer. It is definitely not easy to "let go", or to "release", since human nature would like to see them vindicated and we may feel that we would like to see how God deals with them. Should this be the case, your motives are far from pure and right. Forgiveness does not still hope that the other person is punished. When Jesus died on the cross, He did not hope that those who crucified Him, would be punished. His forgiveness was unconditional, filled with love and compassion.

It is necessary for us to understand that we cannot expect "circumstances" to change. When we change, we begin to see our circumstances from a different perspective. When we really forgive, we find that situations and other peoples' attitudes also change, due to the fact that our own attitude towards others, has changed. We often quote "prayer changes things", but the truth is, that "prayer changes people" and then things begin to change.

3.5 How to Forgive

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what the circumstances were that caused the pain you experienced and also who the people were that were involved.
2. Make a list of the persons' NAMES and WHAT the persons did, or said, which caused pain and rejection. Be specific in your list, since your aim is to remove all the negative input in your mind. Do not think that anything is too small, or of little consequence - EVERYTHING must be dealt with, before there can be complete healing.
3. Take the list with you to a quiet place where nobody can bother you, or hear you. It may be necessary to take a day, or two, off work and just to retreat to a quiet place in the country, where you can be absolutely alone, to work through your past – just you and the Lord, together. Ask the Lord to help you to really forgive from your innermost being. Be absolutely honest with yourself, but also towards the Lord. Mention every person's name before the Lord and also what the person did to hurt you – and forgive the person. Use the following words, speaking in an audible voice, so that you can hear yourself saying them. Remember, faith comes through hearing; you will find that, as you hear yourself forgiving, it becomes a reality to you, your faith is built up and you find that victory is gained. The words you use are as follows:

Lord, I forgive _____ for _____, because _____ does not really know what he/she has done, or is doing, to me. I release _____ from any blame and I ask You to bless _____.

We cannot honestly ask the Lord to bless someone, while there is still bitterness, hatred and unforgiveness in our hearts towards them.

- Matthew 5:44: “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you....”
 - Romans 12:14: “Bless those who persecute you, who are cruel in their attitude toward you; bless and do not curse them.
4. If you do not have the WILL to forgive, confess it to the Lord. Sometimes people prefer to pamper their hurt and grief and pity themselves, thus gaining attention and sympathy from others. Tell the Lord how you feel, He understands you – so confess the fact that you are not willing to forgive. As soon as you begin to audibly express forgiveness, even though you do not feel like forgiving, the need will develop to really forgive. God asks us to forgive; He commands us to forgive, regardless of our

feelings, therefore He will help us in our weaknesses, if we ask Him to, since we are in His perfect will in forgiving.

5. Continue forgiving, until it becomes a reality and you experience that you are completely free. Matthew 18:21, 32 –: $70 \times 7 = 490!$ This is not about a number, it's about a principle. Forgive as often as it takes. When you begin blessing those who hurt you, you will be surprised to experience liberation and healing. This is when the Lord, in His own way, begins to work in the hearts of the people concerned. As soon as you acquit someone, the bond between you and the other person is broken, you are free, but the other person is also free and the Lord can begin working in their lives.

As a last resort, if you find that you really cannot get rid of negativeness towards a certain person and you really don't experience freedom and release, after applying forgiveness for a length of time, you can go to the person and say:

"Forgive ME for the bitterness which I allowed in my heart towards you",

without discussing, or mentioning, the reason. Should the person ask "What caused the bitterness" – just reply that it is a matter between you and the Lord and you do not wish to discuss the matter.

A warning: Please do not resort to this, unless you have really done all from your side to forgive the person, since it could cause problems from the other person's side, causing a further rift in the relationship. Only resort to this, if you feel that the Lord impresses it upon you. When done in the right spirit and with the right motive, it can do wonders in healing relationships, especially between husband and wife.

- Ephesians 4:31, 32: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
- Hebrews 12:14, 15: "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you and thereby many be defiled."

In many cases of rejection, we find it difficult to enter into a deep relationship with the Lord, since we cannot experience Him as our "Heavenly Father", due to the fact that we never had a relationship with our own earthly father, or did not experience any love from him. It is often our own earthly father who rejected us. It is disturbing to find how often people have experienced abuse, or molestation, by their own earthly father. These people find it almost impossible to really trust and love the Lord as their "Heavenly Father". It

takes much patience, time and prayer, before they experience deliverance from bitterness, hate, unforgiveness and rejection, before the emotional hurt is really healed. Wounds wrought in the subconscious minds of these people, can be healed and they can be released of their past through complete forgiveness, but often need the personal assistance of the counsellor.

Nowhere does Scripture say that we must forgive and forget, as people often quote, yet we do find that when forgiveness has been complete, the incidents and past hurt fade away, since there is no longer a reaction when we think of them, they no longer have a hold on us; we are free, therefore they no longer exist in our subconscious mind. We can test ourselves concerning forgiveness. Should we no longer react when recalling what people have done to us, we are free and forgiveness is complete.

Sometimes the counsellor will detect a "chain" of rejection, carried over from generation to generation, mainly through example; e.g. your father's father might have unknowingly rejected him by his attitude and actions and your father has followed his example, allowing you to experience rejection through his attitude and actions. This has all been done unknowingly. You could possibly do the same to your children and unknowingly reject your own children, but this chain can be broken, through complete forgiveness and in the Name of Jesus. There would still be an amount of self-discipline necessary from your side, but the mere fact that you discovered that your attitude has been detrimental to your children and that you have inherited the mime behaviour, brings a certain amount of victory. John 8:36 – "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

3.5.1 Summary

It should now be clear why the ORIGIN, or ROOT, of numerous other problems in peoples' lives, is REJECTION and why this root must be discovered and dealt with, before there can be complete victory over the symptoms. Since rejection also brings problems into marriages, it is advisable to begin at this point with both partners individually, before other problems are dealt with. Only when rejection has been dealt with, can a person's attitude towards himself, his fellow-man, life itself and God, change for the better. Ephesians 4:22-24: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man..."

3.6 The Full Meaning of Forgiveness

What the humanist would say about "forgiveness", would be: "You have rights, demand your rights; take vengeance; turn your back on those who have hurt you; enjoy the hate you feel towards the persons who have injured, or harmed you; demand everything that

the person owes you; fight to regain your self-esteem; do not give in to the person..." etc. The Lord says in His Word: FORGIVE – so that He can forgive you; so that you can experience perfect peace; so that your prayers can be answered; so that ...and so we can go on!

3.6.1 Forgiveness does not

1. Have any conditions, e.g. "I will forgive you, if you change". In other words, forgiveness cannot be earned by the other person.
2. Comprise a feeling. Forgiveness is a decision of your will – it is a choice. Forgiveness is not accompanied with the feeling to forgive. The feeling is usually the need to fulfil God's command in His Word to forgive. The feeling of absolute peace follows on complete forgiveness.
3. Keep account of the wrong that has been done. (1 Corinthians 13:5).
4. Act as though the situation never existed. Many people carry on with their lives as though they have never been hurt, or as if no injustice has been done to them. These people are often surprised at the number of times they react to certain incidents and often relive the pain and trauma caused by the person.
5. Try to forget the person, or the pain they inflicted. Many people find themselves in depression, due to "unfinished business," something that has never been faced and ended.
6. Mean that you accept and agree with someone's wrong attitude, or action. It means the complete opposite – that you acknowledge what happened, acknowledge the pain you experienced and acquit the person concerned.
7. Say: "Let's forget the whole matter". You would be side-stepping the whole matter and the whole incident will continue to gnaw at you, causing other problems.
8. Comprise a decision to bear the whole matter and the blame. It remains "unfinished business"
9. Strive to teach the person a lesson - it is the exact opposite.

3.6.2 What Forgiveness Is

1. Forgiveness is a decision of your will – you WILL do God's will and obey His commands.

2. Forgiveness brings complete victory and deliverance and restores your relationship with God and with your fellow-man.
3. Forgiveness brings healing to inner pain and hurt, which has been inflicted on you, although it does not guarantee that you will not be hurt again.
4. Forgiveness takes courage and strength to perform and is not for the weak. Only strong people can forgive. There are people who think that only those that are weak, forgive, but it takes strength of character, to be able to forgive. A weak person often prefers to wallow in self-pity and enjoys the sympathy he gains from others, not realising the harm he is inflicting upon himself.
5. Forgiveness is a revelation of God's love through us. 1 John 4:10: "In this is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins."

3.6.3 Why Some People Cannot Forgive

1. They feel insecure and afraid, since it is a prayer, a commitment to God, which is strange to them.
2. Some people wallow in the pleasure they experience and the animosity they hold against others. These people say: "I want to enjoy hating the person, who hates me." Ephesians 4:31, 32. These people do not realise that they later become like the very person they hate.
3. Jealousy can jeopardise forgiveness. You may feel that the person has more material possessions than you and that you are not willing to further humble yourself, by forgiving them.
4. Fear of being hurt again after you have forgiven, hinders your decision to forgive. There is no guarantee that you will not be hurt again, but by continuously forgiving, you will experience peace and will live in total victory.
5. Self-pity hinders true forgiveness. We often hear people say: "Nobody has gone through the pain that I have experienced and I just can't see why I have to continually forgive. I have done my share". Romans 8:28 says that if you obey the Lord, He will change the negative into positive, only good will be forthcoming from your obedience to His command.

6. Maybe you take an attitude of "I am not the guilty one", in which case you will not be able to forgive. The Lord does not ask who the guilty one is – as a matter of fact, He says in Matthew 5:23, 24 that if you are bringing a gift to the altar and you remember that your brother has a grievance against you, make peace with your brother, then come and offer your gift. Acknowledge your own guilt, but forgive the other person, whoever it may be and whether he is guilty, or not.
7. Pride often hinders us from true forgiveness. Forgiveness is a privilege, not a humiliation. Forgiveness is actually a blessing, since it brings so much joy, freedom and peace.
8. The fear that you will not "forget", can hinder forgiveness. You will never completely forget the incident, but because it does not matter anymore, you have "let go" of the incident. It does fade and you do not want to continually speak about what happened – it is past and done with and you will no longer react when the matter is, by chance, spoken about.
9. Sometimes a person is inclined to think that the guilty one does not deserve forgiveness. The Bible does not ask whether a person is worthy of forgiveness. God did not ask us to deserve forgiveness through our worthiness – He did not say that we are too bad to receive His forgiveness. He forgave us, regardless of our sinful state. He commands us to FORGIVE - regardless – unconditionally!
10. The fact that we continually forgive someone, makes us not to want to forgive any further. The Lord is interested in the attitude, the will, to continue forgiving. It becomes a way of life and lifestyle! It brings joy, happiness and freedom, as well as healing.
11. The craving to take vengeance, hinders forgiveness. The Word says: Hebrews 10:30: "Vengeance is Mine (retribution and the meting out of full justice, rest with Me); I will repay (I will exact the compensation), says the Lord."
12. After experiencing deep, emotional pain, you feel as though you will never be able to forgive. Should this be the case, make the following your prayer:

"Lord, help me to forgive. Forgive through me, because in my own strength, I cannot forgive. I want to do Your will and I want to obey Your command to forgive . I forgive I release and acquit them and let them go and I really mean what I am saying. Thank you for helping me...."

This will cost laying down your own will and allowing God's will to be wrought in and through you. If His Spirit abides in you, He will give you the ability to forgive and it will become a joy and way of life to forgive.

3.6.4 Myth#1: Forgiveness Equals Reconciliation

The first myth that needs to be addressed, is the belief that, in order to genuinely forgive someone, I must be willing to meet with him/her and try to bring about some measure of reconciliation between the two of us.

For most people, finally talking about it with the person who hurt us, will be a key part of the process of getting rid of the unforgiveness. What if that person is unwilling to go there with us? What if talking about it, would cause a tremendous amount of unwarranted pain for me and my loved ones? What if attempts at reconciliation, would end up causing more harm than good? God's answer is simple: don't attempt reconciliation.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are two similar, but unrelated actions. You *can* have one, without the other. Forgiveness is something you can do on your own; reconciliation takes two parties. Forgiveness is unilateral; reconciliation can't happen, if two people won't sit down at the chairs. Forgiveness is commanded in Scripture (Colossians 3:13, 14). Reconciliation is not commanded, but is highly suggested, *if possible* (Romans 12:18).

Jesus taught in Matthew 7:6: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet and then turn and tear you to pieces." No one really knows for certain what Jesus was referring to, when he used the word *sacred*. Many think he meant the message of the Christian faith. Others think it was faith in general. I think what Jesus meant by the word *sacred*, is our hearts. God is realistic. Sometimes it just isn't possible to reconcile, without getting our hearts trampled on and ripped to pieces. Because our hearts are sacred and vulnerable, sometimes reconciliation is not in our best interest. Sometimes it's not spiritually healthy for the other person, either.

Maybe the person, who hurt you, has passed away and you can't reconcile, even if you want to. Maybe you need to evaluate the benefit of reconciliation and possibly attempt to reconcile. Regardless of what Christians may have told you in the past, your ability to forgive is not dependent on a storybook ending with hugs, warm fuzzies and good-bye waves, as you drive away into the sunset with a tear running

down your cheek. You can still get rid of unforgiveness, without having the offender meet you.

3.6.5 Myth#2: If I Don't Forgive, God Won't Forgive Me

This is a disturbing thought. The truth is:

Our forgiveness is not dependent upon our forgiving others.

Let me explain why. Judgement is an old covenant consequence. When Jesus taught that to be forgiven, one must forgive, who was he talking to? The Bible shows us God relating to people in two different ways, at two different times. The first way, is called the Old Covenant. If the people of ancient Israel obeyed God's commands, they received God's blessing and favour. If they disobeyed God's commands, they didn't.

When God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross, that event initiated a new way for God to relate to us. No longer is the status of our relationship with God, based on commands we obey, but upon God's grace and mercy. This new arrangement is called the New Covenant and it is the way God relates to us now.

Jesus lived under and taught from, the perspective of the Old Covenant. Those, who listened to Him, lived under the Old Covenant, as well. All the Israelites, from the time of Moses, until Jesus' death and resurrection, lived under the arrangement of the Old Covenant and had to obey God's commands, to receive His blessings. Jesus' life on earth was during the Old Covenant. However, His teachings, which appear in the four Gospels, stem from a new Covenant perspective.

When Jesus said that in order to be forgiven, one must forgive others, that's exactly what that teaching meant *to the people who lived under the Old Covenant arrangement*. Their relationship with God was based on their obedience to the law. How did Jesus respond when the rich young ruler approached Him and asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). "You know the commands," He said (v. 19), reminding the young man which Old Covenant commands he needed to obey, to go to heaven. Jesus replied as any person, living under the Old Covenant, would have. I believe that the situation was the same for those who first heard Jesus' teachings about forgiveness — their relationship with God depended upon obedience to the commands of the Old Covenant.

Our relationship with God is based on grace, not works.

Ephesians 2:8, 9 spells it out: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

We can be confident in the status of our relationship with God, because God's continual acceptance of us is not based on our obedience to the Old Covenant law, but upon our response to God's grace. We act out of our love for God and His love for people who are hurt, not because we're afraid God will send us to hell.

It's the same way with Jesus' teachings on forgiveness. The reason we forgive people now, under the New Covenant, is because of our desire to please God and because forgiving those who hurt us, is the best way to live, not because we're afraid we'll go to hell if we don't.

3.7 Sermon

THE DO'S & DON'TS OF RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Genesis 45:1-15.

3.7.1 Introduction

If you think your family has problems, consider the marriage mayhem created when 76-year-old Bill Baker of London, recently wed Edna Harvey. She happened to be his granddaughter's husband's mother. That's where the confusion began, according to Baker's granddaughter, Lynn.

She said, "My mother-in-law is now my step-grandmother. My grandfather is now my step-father-in-law. My mom is my sister-in-law and my brother is my nephew. But even crazier, is that I'm now married to my uncle and my own children are my cousins." From this experience, Lynn should gain profound insight into the theory of relativity.

Unfortunately, most stories of messed up relationships, aren't so funny. It is no laughing matter that half of all marriages in the church, are ending in divorce. However, this message is not just about marriage relationships, but all relationships.

Learning and applying relational skills, is vitally important, because God made us to live in relationship with others. When Adam was alone in the garden, God saw that it was not good for him to be alone. We can only live in relationships. We need each other. A rather crude and cruel experiment was carried out by Emperor Frederick, who ruled the Roman Empire in the thirteenth century. He wanted to

know what man's original language was: Hebrew, Greek, or Latin? He decided to isolate a few infants from the sound of the human voice. He reasoned that they would eventually speak the natural tongue of man. Wet nurses, who were sworn to absolute silence, were obtained and though it was difficult for them, they abided by the rule. The infants never heard a word, not a sound from a human voice. Within several months, they were all dead (Joe E. Trull).

Studies have also shown that single men are jailed more often, earn less, have more illnesses and die at a younger age, than married men. Married men with cancer, live 20% longer, than single men with the same cancer. Women, who often have more close friendships than men, survive longer with the same cancers. Married, or not, relationships keep us alive (Dr. Bernie Siegel, *Homemade*, May, 1989).

Clearly healthy relationships are vital to our very lives. We are going to take a look into an episode in the life of Joseph, in order to learn the do's and don'ts of restoring relationships. Let's look together at an encounter between Joseph and his brothers, so we can learn the Biblical principles for restoring relationships.

3.7.2 Scripture

Please read Genesis 45:1-15.

3.7.3 Body

1. Don't make a public spectacle of the other person. (v. 1)

Years after Joseph's jealous brothers sold him into slavery, in order to get rid of him, he still lived as a slave in Egypt and was then thrown in prison, on trumped up charges. After years of life in prison, he was set free, because he was able, with God's help, to interpret a disturbing dream that Pharaoh had. He was placed in charge of all Egypt and was second only to Pharaoh himself. In his new position, Joseph prepared Egypt for the famine, prophesied in the dream. When the famine came, Joseph's brothers were forced to go to Egypt, in search of food. Joseph recognised his brothers, but they didn't recognise him and so he devised a little test, to see if they would still sell out one of their brothers. They passed. When Joseph decided to reveal his true identity and confront his brothers, he first cleared the room, so that it could be done in private. There was a great deal of wisdom in that move. If someone has wronged you in some way, the last thing that you should do, is broadcast that everywhere.

Let me say right up front, that there are some serious exceptions to that rule. For instance, in the case of rape, or other violent abuse, the appropriate authorities need to be notified, for your own wellbeing and for the safety of others.

However, in most situations, if you need to confront the offender, do it in private. If you confront them publicly, or go around telling people what they did, you will only make matters worse. The Bible says, “If you argue your case with a neighbour, do not betray another man’s confidence, or he who hears it, may shame you and you will never lose your bad reputation” (Proverbs 25:9-11). It has been said that “Gossip is the deadliest microbe. It has neither legs, nor wings. It is composed entirely of tales and most of them have stings” (Morris Mandel in Bits & Pieces, June, 1990, p. 22).

So the next time you are tempted to talk about someone, T.H.I.N.K. before you speak.

T – is it true?

H – is it helpful?

I – is it inspiring?

N – is it necessary?

K – is it kind?

If what you are about to say, does not pass those tests, keep your mouth shut.

2. Don’t bottle up your feelings. (v. 2)

I guess Joseph didn’t buy into the philosophy that real men don’t cry, because when he confronted his brothers, he wept openly and loudly. He didn’t suppress, or bottle up, his feelings, but he let them out in a healthy manner. If our emotions are bottled up, they’ll eventually blow up. God created us to be emotional people and we shouldn’t try to deny that. If you are trying to act one way, while feeling another way, you are being emotionally dishonest. If we are going to restore relationships, we must start being emotionally honest with one another. If we are going to be emotionally honest with one another, we must let our true feelings out. If someone did something that hurt you and made you angry, there is nothing wrong with telling them how it made you feel – if circumstances are conducive to this and there is merit in doing so. Remember, that more harm, than good, can be done through insensitive confrontation.

Being angry is not a sin. The Bible says, “In your anger, do not sin: Do not let the sun go down, while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4:26). The Bible says that it is o.k. to be angry, but it is not o.k. to stay angry. How do we avoid staying angry? Let emotions out, instead of bottling them up. When anger is bottled up, it will build up, until it blows up. The Bible says, “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control” (Proverbs 29:11). We can avoid giving “full vent” to our anger, by letting off a little steam, as necessary. In 1948, Betz and Thomas classified 45 Johns Hopkins medical students in three personality groups, on the basis of psychological tests and questionnaires. The group, that was prone to losing control of their emotions, was labelled “gammas”. Thirty years later, Betz and Thomas looked at the health records of the former students. They found that 77.3 percent of the gamma group suffered from major disorders, including cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease and emotional disturbances. The incidence of disorders was only 25 percent among those who could control their emotions. The doctors repeated the study on another group of 127 male students from the classes of 1949, through 1964, with similar results (Readers Digest, November, 1979). Controlling our emotions is literally a matter of life and death. An emotional blow up will never make things better in a bad relationship, so we need to start being emotionally honest with one another.

3. Don't push away the other person. (v. 4)

During this very emotional time, Joseph called his brothers to come close to him, rather than pushing them away. Too often, when people wrong us, we respond by pushing them away. Surely, you can see that we will never restore a relationship with someone we are pushing away. If we are to restore relationships, we must begin drawing close to those who have hurt us. I will grant you, that sometimes we need a break from the other person. Joseph spent years apart from his brothers, before this day came. If healing is going to take place, we must eventually come together, because restoration never occurs during separation. It's time to stop shutting them out and start letting them in.

4. Do comfort the other person. (v. 5)

Joseph calmed his brother's fears. When they realised that this powerful and important man was really their brother, they also realised that he was in the perfect position to exact revenge. However, Joseph tells them that they do not need to be distressed. The greatest comfort that you can give to someone who has wronged you, is forgiveness. William A. Ward said, “Forgiveness warms the heart and cools the sting.” The Bible says, “You ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow” (2 Corinthians 2:7). Karl Menniger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients

in psychiatric hospitals, that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day!" (Today in the Word, March 1989, p. 8). The art of forgiving is a spiritual grace, every Christian should develop. Here are some practical suggestions for putting forgiveness into practice:

- 1) Begin by assuring yourself that, compared to Christ's suffering, you haven't been seriously wronged at all.
- 2) Recall the many kind deeds that have been shown to you, perhaps even by the person who has harmed you.
- 3) List the benefits you have received from the Lord.
- 4) Thank Him for blessing you with His love and forgiveness each day.
- 5) Make an honest effort to pray for the one who has injured you.
- 6) Go even further, by looking for an opportunity to help him.
- 7) If the offense is especially hard to forget, try to replace the memory, by thinking gracious and generous thoughts.
- 8) Finally, before you fall asleep at night, repeat slowly and thoughtfully that phrase from the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

5. Do minister to the other person. (v. 7)

Joseph was in the perfect position to make his brothers pay for what they had done to him, but he does just the opposite. He declares his intention to minister to their needs, brought on by the famine. Galatians 5:13 says, "Serve one another in love." In 1972, NASA launched the exploratory space probe, Pioneer 10. According to Leon Jaroff in Time, the satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons and beam data to earth about Jupiter's magnetic field, radiation belts and atmosphere. Scientists regarded this as a bold plan, for at that time no earth satellite had ever gone beyond Mars and they feared the asteroid belt would destroy the satellite, before it could reach its target. Pioneer 10 accomplished its mission and much, much more. Swinging past the giant planet in November 1973, Jupiter's immense gravity hurled Pioneer 10 at a higher rate of speed, toward the edge of the solar system. At one billion miles from the sun, Pioneer 10 passed Saturn. At some two billion miles, it hurtled past Uranus; Neptune at nearly three billion miles; Pluto at almost four billion miles. By 1997, twenty-five years after its launch, Pioneer 10 was more than six billion miles from the sun. Despite the immense distance, Pioneer 10 continued to beam

back radio signals to scientists on Earth. “Perhaps most remarkable,” writes Jaroff, “those signals emanate from an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a bedroom night light and takes more than nine hours to reach Earth.” ‘The Little Satellite That Could’, was not qualified to do what it did. Engineers designed Pioneer 10 with a useful life of just three years. It kept going and going. By simple longevity, its tiny 8-watt transmitter radio accomplished more than anyone thought possible. So it is when we commit ourselves to serving the needs of those who harmed us, in the strength God provides. God can work even through someone with only 8-watt abilities. The Bible says, “If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised, through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11). When you are tempted to think that you don’t have the power to help those, who have harmed you, remember that God is your source of strength.

3.7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that restoration results in celebration. In verse fourteen, we see that Joseph and his brothers threw their arms around one another and kissed one another. It reminds me of the celebration that took place when the prodigal son was restored to his father, or the celebration that takes place in heaven every time a sinner is restored to a right relationship with God. It is a Biblical principal that restoration results in celebration. It is that celebration that makes the hard work of restoration worthwhile.

One day, an angry man rushed through the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam until he reached Rembrandt’s famous painting “Nightwatch.” He then took out a knife and slashed it repeatedly, before he could be stopped. A short time later, a distraught, hostile man with a hammer, slipped into St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome and began to smash Michelangelo’s beautiful sculpture, The Pieta. Two cherished works of art were severely damaged. What did officials do? Throw them out and forget about them? Absolutely not! Using the best experts, who worked with the utmost care and precision, they made every effort to restore the treasures. Surely, our relationships are more worthy of restoration than mere pieces of art. J. Stuart Holden tells of an old Scottish mansion, close to where he had his little summer home. The walls of one room were filled with sketches, made by distinguished artists. The practice began after a pitcher of soda water was accidentally spilled on a freshly decorated wall and left an unsightly stain. At the time, a noted artist, Lord Landseer, was a guest in the house. One day, when the family went out to the moors, he stayed behind. With a few masterful strokes of a piece of charcoal, that ugly spot became the outline of a beautiful waterfall, bordered by trees and wildlife. He turned that disfigured wall into one of his most successful depictions of

life in the Scottish Highlands. (Swindoll, *The Quest for Character*, Multnomah, p. 49). No relationship is beyond the restoring power of our God, if we will only cooperate by practicing these five steps.

3.7.5 Prayer

Benediction

Verse sixteen of our text, tells us that Pharaoh was pleased to learn that Joseph and his brothers had restored their relationship. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” As you restore relationships, may a watching world learn of God’s love. Amen.