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Who needs Counselling?

“Who needs counselling?” Anybody’s impulsive response to this question would be, “Not for me!” Why do we answer this way? There could be many reasons. We often don’t see ourselves deep enough to locate areas that need change, growth and development. Blindspots remain in the dark and we are blind to them. The absence of light in the various corners of our inner and outer lives could be so dense that we often need to allow God and the tools trained by Him specifically for the cause to really look into us.

Indian culture, its related stigmas, the fed-in education, traditional traditions and long-term practices (in their own good or bad senses) could share the blame for our blindness. But it dare not be forgotten that we ourselves are majorly responsible for the darkness. It’s just that we are not willing to take a good, honest, real look at ourselves. An effort towards this regular lifetime exercise has a genuine fear lurking behind. It’s the fear of facing the ugliness and the unmoulded areas of us, because it mirrors

some hard real truths of humaneness and leaves us helpless in a very uncomfortable state. We also fear the consequences of the “discovery of ourselves” because we rarely know the principles and ways of pruning, stemming and weeding the vine (Jn 15). Pride feeds the fear. Ignorance could curtain, too.

We all need to walk in at some juncture of our lives into the school of realisation to recognise and acknowledge that we NEED help knowing its availability. Forgiveness, change, joy, peace, liberty, growth, maturity — all follow an acknowledgment of sinfulness and an earnest search for salvation in the right arenas.

It need not be assumed that Christian counselling is only for people who have problems. It is a ministry which stabilises people, prevents problems, prepares for future phases, encourages wholeness, warns stagnation, discovers potentials which can be used for the extension of God’s Kingdom, provides self-understanding, teaches to unlearn bad behaviour and to learn Biblical behavioural patterns, provides support in crises and serves as an eyeopener to the Church. Biblical counselling can be trusted because it has all its principles, mechanisms and philosophies drawn from the inerrant Word of God which stands for all times and all cultures.

The understanding of why people develop can uncover whole lot of closures. Man is made with casual, critical and crucial needs. To have his crucial needs of security, significance and self-worth met, he needs godly guidance, because these can be met only in God. When man tries to meet these needs in the wrong places he develops problems.

His self-built cisterns often have cracks in them and they leak (Jer 2:13). These cisterns could be addictions, achievements, marriage, job, etc. We are people made also with expectations. When these turn into demands, problems are caused. It needs also to be remembered that we live in a fallen world and there is a spiritual bondage which can be broken only by the Cross. Lack of understanding, maturity and adaptability in relationships causes problems. Who of us can say that we are not faced with any such issues during our lifetime?

As we cross the various bridges of our lives we often realise that we are faced with handicaps and disabilities to handle that particular phase. This is when the ministry of counselling comes in.

Children need to be educated on how to relate to the world; adolescents need an understanding and awareness of the changes they go through; virgin adults need to be prepared for the challenges of adulthood which include marriage; married couples need to be taught and encouraged to build a healthy marriage and parenting skills; middle-agers need to be taught to handle their own crises; and old people need to be adequately prepared to relate to their younger ones and for their own life's end which is crucial! Is there any of us who does not fit into this phase list? We all do need a compass and a voice to walk through the narrow highway.

Pulpit sermons and general talks don't cater to individuals. We are made different. General solutions apply to all. Biblical counselling gives individual care and attention where problems can be dealt with more

specifically and effectively. Moreover, culturally, all aspects of human problems cannot be dealt with in public.

Let us guard ourselves from convincing forms of justifications, excuses, and the “I’m-fine and Everybody-is-like-that” attitudes. Shall we encourage ourselves to see who we are, to acknowledge need for growth and change, and humbly tell the Gardener, “I need help?”

Conviction and awareness need to be followed by action. Bottling up the issues that surface and the need felt help takes us nowhere. The Indian Church though now in the pioneering stage of this ministry offers good relevant counselling seminars and courses which can educate, equip and minister to us. The availability of literature on counselling authored by experts in the field can be made use of. Though professionally trained counsellors are few in our country, thank God there are senior Christians and leaders who can counsel us by their experience and maturity.

In conclusion I would encourage that seeking counselling is not a sign of failure or weakness, rather it’s an acceptance of our humaneness before God. Who then is exempted?