

# “Elders and Counseling”

By Prof. B. Gritters

Sponsored by Hudsonville PRC Consistory

Sunday, 2PM, October 7, 14, 21, November 4

**Class Overview: *The Lord willing, we will treat the following topics, subject to the will of those who attend:***

Week #1 (Oct 7): *The Need for and the Ability of Others (elders especially) to Help Pastors in Counseling*

1. Pastors are not able to handle all the counseling needs in a church. Statistics in the PRC.
2. Elders are called to do this work, but are qualified for it, too. The congregation must learn this.
3. Scripture teaches that all the members have a “competency to counsel.” If so, elders certainly do.
4. How, specifically, can the elders take on this work in their office?
  - a. Elderly, shut-ins, etc.
  - b. Counseling with the minister
  - c. Supervising the counseling done by professionals

Week #2 (Oct 14): *The Elements of a Good Counseling Session/Visit*

1. **How to schedule meetings; how often to meet.**
2. **An outline of any visit should include.... How to make an agenda.**
3. **The absolute necessity of using Scripture. And how to use it.**
4. **Developing the skill to listen in order to make judgments. Taking notes....**
5. **Giving assignments to the members we counsel.**
6. **Footnote: May an elder counsel a woman? Alone?**

Week #3 (Oct 21): *Change in Counseling: The Primary (and Hopeful!) Doctrine of Conversion*

1. Most of counseling involves dealing with problems that require *change*...
2. The doctrinal foundation of our approach to change.
3. Six essential elements from LD 33.
4. How to require change. How much pressure may be exerted.
5. When to bring to the body of the elders for discipline?
6. How to instill hope in the struggling people of God.

Week #4: (Nov 4): *Marriages: Problems and Prevention* (**week #2 note:** we may emphasize “preventative” counseling more broadly than only marriage; keep in mind and give your input, via e-mail also if you want)

(notice the “off-week.” I will be in Redlands on October 28, DV. Thus, the last meeting is November 4).

Please invite others who may be interested in this class. It is not limited to elders or prospective elders.

# ***“Elders and Counseling” (Week #2)***

(Outline Notes)

Prof. B. Gritters

## **Week #2: What Makes a “Good” Counseling Session?**

### **Introduction:**

- A. Review of last week.
- B. Assuming we have determined to take on a case, and acknowledging all are different, how to proceed?

### **I. A Good Counseling Session is Well-Prepared for**

- A. First, where and when to meet
  - 1. A private place without distractions
  - 2. At a table where Bible is open and notes can be taken
  - 3. At regularly scheduled times, normally once/week
- B. Second, prepare a written agenda
  - 1. Do not “wing” any visits.
  - 2. See 2 separate handouts—a normal blank agenda and an “annotated” agenda
- C. Third, proper preparation includes fervent prayer

### **II. A Good Counseling Session Centers on Scripture**

- A. *The need to use Scripture* cannot be emphasized strongly enough
  - 1. The word is the great power of God to the people’s salvation!
  - 2. And strangely, we may be tempted not to use it—either blatantly fail, or (worse) pretend to use it
  - 3. The Scripture’s own testimony to its usefulness is amazing! We should memorize and keep note of:  
Ephesians 6:17  
  
Romans 10:17  
  
John 17:17  
  
Psalm 119:50  
  
II Tim 3:16,17
- B. *How to use the Scripture* in Counseling:
  - 1. First, use it to make clear you own “M.O.” Don’t be apologetic in this use, either.
  - 2. Second, use it to “diagnose” and “heal” (here, we proceed slowly)

- a. Diagnosis of problems is crucial. Listening and learning come before teaching and.... James 1:19; Proverbs 18:17 (I consider this one *most* important); and the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment. Thus, *listen* “biblically.”
  
- b. *Only* then, application of the word can be done appropriately
  
- c. General guidelines for applying Scripture:
  - 1) First:
  
  - 2) Second:
  
  - 3) Third:
  
  - 4) Fourth:
  
- 3. Third, use Scripture for assigning “homework” (see handout: “Annotated Agenda”)
  - a.
  
  - b.
  
  - c.

### III. A Good Counseling Session Exhibits Godly Wisdom

- A. **DO: “Warn (the) unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak”** (I Thessalonians 5:14)
  - 1. No two cases are alike; may not take a “cookie-cutter” approach to counseling.
  
  - 2. Obtain John Kruis, *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling* or something similar.
  
- B. **REMEMBER: “The servant of the Lord must not strive”** (II Timothy 2:24-26)
  - 1. Every elder ought to memorize this passage.
  
  - 2. Elements to remember:
    - a. Approach and attitude are crucial
    - b. Instruction lies at the heart of visits
    - c. The devil’s place in our troubles may not be overlooked
  
- C. **BELIEVE: “(My word) shall not return unto me void”** (Isaiah 55:11)
  - 1. First, God’s word does not “work automatically.” There is one thing we cannot do.
  - 2. Second, we trust God is pleased to use His word. Testimony of an elder.

*“Annotated agenda” (for the “blank” to copy, see next handout)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Session # \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Agenda:** (to self: always! II Tim 2:24-26)

1. Scripture reading/prayer (timing & length of both depend on situation; when “normal,” begin this way)
2. Review/reminders: (I Cor 3:21; II Cor 4:15; Eph 5:20; I Thess 5:18; Phil 4:6 “with thks!”)
  - a. What *new* do you thank God for?
  - b. Homework report?
  - c. Other:
3. This week:
  - a. Scripture: (Here, begin to explain/apply Scripture; also *regularly* remind them *why* you use Scripture. Try to choose Scripture specific to the needs; but *believe* that God often uses unexpected/surprising words to address needs you were not aware of)
  - b. Items to discuss: (to prepare, review notes from previous visits—all the way back; don’t drop/forget imppt items; see patterns; check yourself if progress is being made)

Notes(listen!): (remember the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, James 1:19, and Prov. 18:17)

Next Time, Deal with: (items you need to think about more)

Homework: (give them 3x5 card with all the ff info on it)

- a. Memorize: (prepare this in advance)
- b. Do: (prepare this also, but be flexible depending on the meeting today)

Next Visit (date and time):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Session # \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Agenda:** (remember II Tim 2:24-26)

1. Scripture Reading/prayer:
  
2. Review/reminders:
  - a. What new to thank God for?
  - b. Homework report?
  - c. Other:
  
3. This week:
  - a. Explain/apply Scripture:

b. Items to discuss:

**Notes (listen!):**

*Next Time, Deal with:*

*Homework:*

- a. Memorize:
  
- b. Do:

*Next Visit:*

