

# A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling- Mack, Wayne

## Introduction to the 8 I's

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### Who Can Benefit?

- Anyone involved in counseling people.
  - *This will include: using the Scriptures to help ourselves and others with various problems and situations*
- Anyone who strives to disciple others for Christ.
  - *This will hopefully enlarge compassion and ability to help others make biblical changes AND help us all become more mature disciples of Jesus*
- Every parent who wants to promote effective communication and faith-building conversations with their children.
  - *This may challenge us spiritually- but the investment is worth it!*
- Any Christian committed to serving others through the Word of God.
  - *This will hopefully help us with a procedure to deal with counseling or life situations*
- Anyone who wants to live a life pleasing to the Lord, utilizing the principles set forth in Scripture.

“This book is meant to be a guide for biblical counselors on how to effectively help counselees overcome their struggles, practical and spiritual, and become true, faithful disciples of Jesus. My approach to biblical counseling can be broken down into eight essential steps, each rooted in biblical disciple-making principles. I will clearly describe each step, how and where it is taught in Scripture, and why it is vital to strengthening discipleship.” Mack, Wayne. A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling (pp. 26-27)

### The Goal of Counseling

“The goal of biblical counseling is to help people become a consistently positive influence in the church, giving rather than merely receiving..... **What is biblical counseling?** Simply stated, it's helping people solve their problems. It's about discovering the cause, then applying biblical principles to help them overcome their problems, and

giving them the necessary tools for them to move forward in their spiritual maturity.” (p. 27)

“Ultimately, all counselors are theologians, aren’t they? Some are sound and some are not. If your foundational presuppositions are based upon anything other than the holy Word of God, then you will fall into the latter group”. (p. 30)

**Important to note:**

“**Biblical counseling is based upon a biblical understanding of the doctrine of God: Theology.** These doctrinal truths about God have tremendous implications for us as we seek to counsel people. **a. God is Triune** (three Persons). 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:1–3; Romans 9:5; **and is one God.** Deuteronomy 6:4–5; 1 Timothy 2:5. **b. God is Creator**—Jeremiah 32:17; Genesis 1:1 **c. God is Holy**—Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:16. **d. God is loving, gracious and merciful** —1 John 4:8; Ephesians 2:4; Galatians 2:20. **e. God is unchangeable or immutable**—Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17. **f. God is all-knowing and all-wise; omniscient** —Romans 11:33; Psalm 139; 1 John 3:20; Hebrews 4:13. **g. God is omnipresent**—Psalm 139; Matthew 28:20. **h. God is truthful. He cannot lie**—Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2; Isaiah 65:16; 1 John 5:20. **i. God is faithful, trustworthy**—1 Corinthians 10:13; 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 John 1:9.”(pp. 30-31)

“Biblical counseling is inherently practical. If it’s not practical, what possible good is it? The goal of biblical counseling is to help people, after all. It does this by putting the principles of Scripture into practice in their lives. **Biblical change is possible in every area of life—in thoughts, desires, words, and actions.**” (p. 41)

Mack says that it is impossible to counsel someone biblically if they do not believe in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 2:14 tells us the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**

So we must find out the spiritual standing of the person who comes for help. Are they a believer? Are they prepared to come under Christ’s authority? (the authority of Scripture) If they are a believer then we can take a step, **if not, evangelism is priority.**

Mack, Wayne. A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling. Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

Without the Holy Spirit biblical change is impossible (behavior modification is dangerous and not lasting)

## Ways to use the 8 I's

Mack argues that the 8 I's model of counseling can be used in two ways- a guideline and a checklist.

- Used as a guideline we have direction to help in the process of change.
- Used as a checklist we can evaluate the success of our attempts to help people change.

“Many passages tell us what we are to do in counseling others—like Matthew 28:19–20, Colossians 1:28, Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14, Galatians 6:1, to name a few. Some even give general directions about how to do it—by teaching, preaching and counseling. However, they don't really give specific directions in helping people change. As a result, many people want to help but don't know how. They sometimes feel inadequate and don't know where to start. The desire is there, but the know-how is not. Because of this, counselors need guidelines if they are to increase in effectiveness. That's what this book provides—a model for how to do this important work in the lives of others. Checklist: A checklist evaluates the success of our attempts to help people overcome their struggles with biblical change. Without a checklist, how can we determine if we're doing the right thing? What criteria do we use to determine the worth of our efforts in discipling?” (pp. 42-43)

**We often determine success if it is immediate and visible. This can be misleading. Mack points out that the best way to measure effectiveness is:**

**Have I been true to the Word of God?** (2 Tim. 2:24–25, 1 Cor. 4:1–2, Luke 12:42-43, Matt. 25:14–23, 2 Cor. 5:9)

“We face two real dangers in our attempts to help people change. One is the danger of taking our responsibility too lightly—being flippant, sloppy, and/or unprepared. The other is being excessively concerned with our own responsibility and beginning to perceive that the result of our counseling depends on us! If the one we're counseling doesn't have

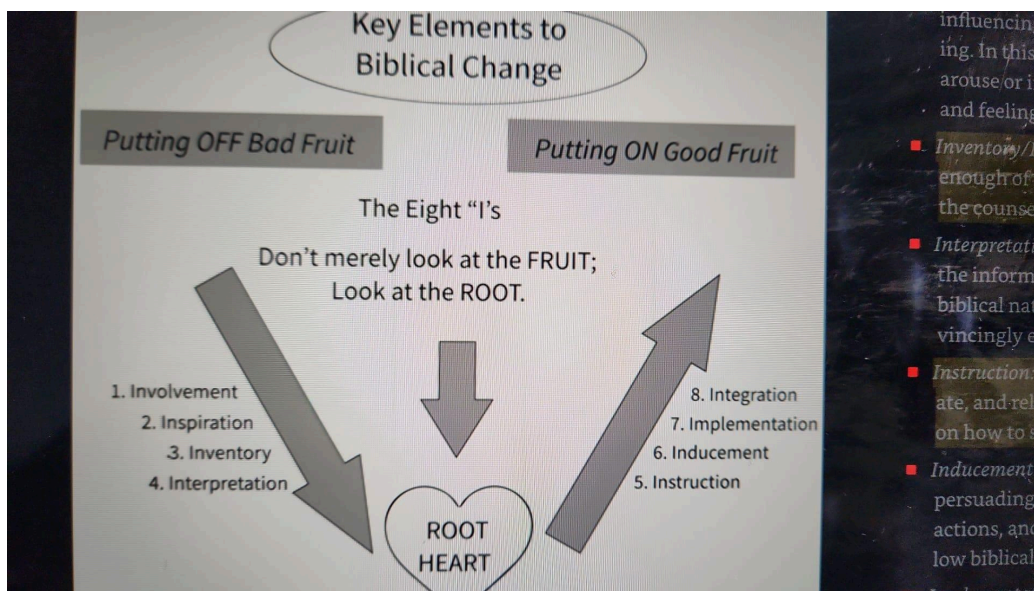
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a good result, we feel the weight of guilt, that we must not have said enough or done enough. We feel that it must be our fault. We end up discouraged and afraid to try again.”

If we are faithful, we don't have to be discouraged- because we have attempted to do what is pleasing and honoring to Him. (One of the best prayers we can all pray is that we would be a faithful people)

**“The biblical process of making disciples and accomplishing biblical change involves two primary aspects—putting off bad fruit and putting on good fruit.”**

Ephesians 4:20–24 [20] But that is not the way you learned Christ!—[21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.



**Note** The first four “I”s focus primarily on the “putting off” aspect of biblical change. The last four focus mainly on the “putting on” aspect of biblical change. (pp. 45-46). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

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## The 8 I's - Promoting Biblical Change

1. **Involvement:** Promotes biblical change by establishing a change-facilitating relationship.
2. **Inspiration:** In promoting biblical change, we want to inspire, or influence the counselee to develop and sustain an attitude and feeling of hope that will promote biblical change.
3. **Inventory/Investigation:** Promotes biblical change by securing enough of the right kinds of information to accurately understand the counselee and any problems.
4. **Interpretation:** Promotes biblical change by analyzing and organizing the information we have gathered so we can accurately identify the biblical nature and cause(s) of the counselee's problems, then convincingly explain them.
5. **Instruction:** Promotes biblical change by giving accurate, appropriate, and relevant biblical instruction that provides God's perspective on how to solve the problem(s).
6. **Inducement:** Promotes biblical change by encouraging the counselee to repent of sinful attitudes, words, and actions, and make a decisive commitment to obey the Lord and follow biblical directives.
7. **Implementation:** Promotes biblical change by helping the counselee to plan how to make the biblical directives a reality in their life.
8. **Integration:** Promotes biblical change by coaching and mentoring the counselee until the necessary changes are integrated into his or her life, encouraging integration into the life of the church.

Mack, Wayne. A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling (p. 47). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

### Involvement

**Involvement:** Promotes biblical change by establishing a change-facilitating relationship.

**Counseling requires much thought, insight, and prayer.**

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“Some people develop a problem-centered approach to counseling. Once they discover the problem, they want to quickly deal with it, expecting the counselee to take their sage advice and run with it. Problem solved. It’s not as simple as that. **Effective biblical counselors take a people-centered approach.** It’s more about the person than about the problem.(p. 52)

Mack points out that while some problems seem to have an obvious solution, sometimes people aren’t ready to hear (or handle) what is required. There are a number of reasons for this: hurt, angry, sin, sinned against etc.

**A great starting point(s) with anyone we are counseling/discipling is:**

The need for a deeper relationship with Christ. And the need to develop that closer relationship through the counsel of a godly person they view as a friend, not a foe—an ally and not an adversary.

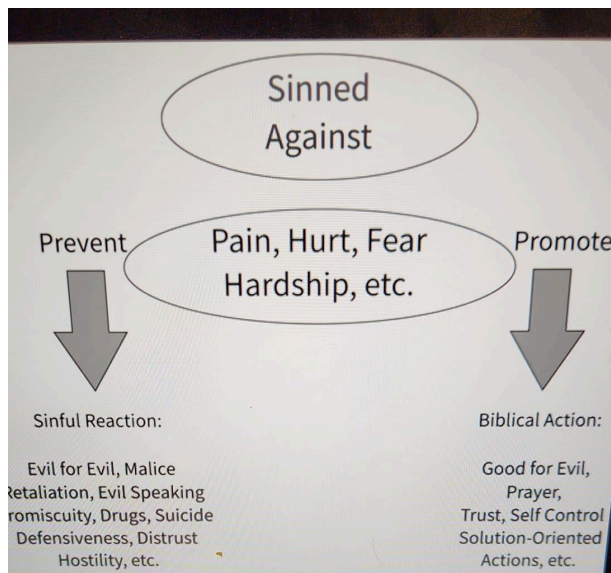
“This is true of any good, effective counseling relationship. We must keep in mind the truths of Proverbs 27:6, 9. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.... Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.” (p. 53). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

Mack suggests that we build involvement through compassion and respect. Reminds me of *Titus 2:7–8 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned...*

## Compassion

“When someone is sinned against, he commonly feels pain, hurt, fear, and hardship. As effective counselors, we must try to promote biblical actions rather than sinful reactions. And we do that through involvement in their lives and their thinking. Too many times, offering advice without first developing a caring relationship means that advice will fall upon deaf ears. Hurting people may not care what you have to say if they do not see genuine compassion and involvement.(p. 54).

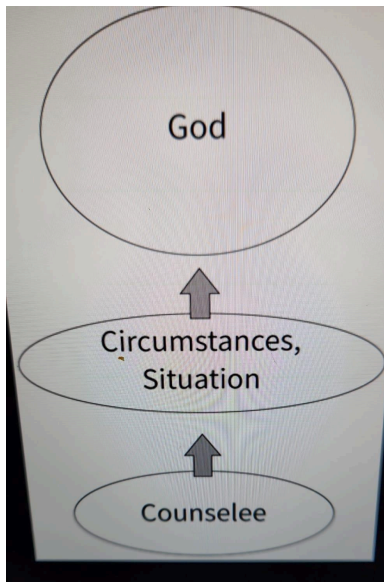
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Offering advice without establishing a caring relationship can oftentimes fall on deaf ears. Can you think of a situation where it seemed like the person who told you something meant well, but you didn't receive it as well as you could have? Or how about times when you doubted someone's intentions, or were left frustrated at how it was handled?

“True compassion desires to see a closer relationship to the Lord as a result of counseling. Only then will the counselee have the tools available to sustain him through all the trials and tribulations of life. Such a counselee leaves the counseling setting prepared for any situation. It rarely starts out that way, though. When a hurting person first comes to a counselor, all he can see is his painful circumstance or situation. God’s involvement in that is far outside his thinking, in most cases.” (p. 55)

The hope is to enter stage 2 of counseling where the hurting person begins to see through the situation or circumstance to the promises and lovingkindness of God. Seeing the situation through the lens of scripture rather than emotion.



“What is involved in building this deep involvement that facilitates biblical change? What disposes people to listen to us and receive the counsel we bring? As I search the Scriptures, I see several factors in building this change-facilitating relationship with people. The first one is compassion. It plays a vital role in the effectiveness of discipleship. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Col. 3:12). (Also see Eph. 4:32, Phil. 2:1–2, and 1 Peter 3:8.)” (pp. 57-58). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

The author gives us two great counselors from Scripture: **Jesus and Paul**. Let’s observe these truths.

“Jesus, called by Isaiah “Wonderful Counselor” (Isa. 9:6), is the greatest example. We can’t read the Bible without being impressed with the fact that His life was characterized by compassion. I’ll mention a few passages here, but there are many, many more I could have chosen.

- Matthew 9:36—“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them ...”
- Matthew 14:14—“When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.”
- Matthew 15:32—“Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I have compassion on the crowd ...’”

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■ Luke 7:13—“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’”

■ Hebrews 4:15—“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

#### **Paul was full of compassion as well:**

■ Acts 20:31—“Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.”

■ Acts 20:19—“...serving the Lord with all humility and with tears ...”

■ Philippians 1:7— “It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace ...”

■ Galatians 4:19— “...my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!”

■ Romans 9:1–3— “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers ....”(p. 59). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

#### **Mack adds some ways we can acquire a deeper compassion.**

1. **Reminds ourselves of our own need.** Why are we in the family of God? (Christ’s mercy) Who loved us when we were unlovable? Who gave His life for us? Who had ultimate compassion for us?
2. Putting ourselves in their shoes. Try and figure out what this person is going through. How must they feel, what must they be thinking. What would it be like to feel helpless, and hopeless? **Consider their perspective, and above all, listen to them!**
3. It’s helpful to **spend time with compassionate people.** Who might you be able to learn from? What questions might you ask about how they approach relationships etc?
4. This one is very important when considering compassion: view them as brethren, **as part of your family.**

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How is compassion manifested in the life of a Christian? Let's consider these examples.

- “Through words ([1 Thess. 2:12–13](#))
- Through prayer ([Phil. 1:9](#), [Eph. 1:15–16](#))
- Through genuine grief in connection with their pain ([Mark 3:1–5](#), [John 11:32–35](#))
- Through gentleness and tenderness ([Matt. 12:20](#), [1 Thess. 5:14](#))
- Through concern for physical and spiritual needs and doing what you can to meet those needs ([Mark 8:1–3](#))

Compassion is shown in so many other ways, like offering encouragement, by not pushing people too fast, by speaking in a gracious manner, by maintaining self-control in the face of insults, by defending people who are being mistreated or falsely accused, and by sacrificing time and money to help others. One thing is certain—a hurting person.” (p. 61). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

## What Not To Do

### Verbal and non verbal communication are both important in involvement

1. Don't smirk at them or what they have to say
2. Don't interrupt them (be a good listener! Listen for information, not to reply)
3. Don't yawn or seem distracted or disinterested
4. Don't use Bible verses as a hammer
5. Don't accuse of impure motives (unless proof)
6. Don't speak to them in a belittling or disrespectful way
7. Don't Make a joke out of their concerns
8. Don't Be late for a meeting or spend time looking at your phone

Mack has a helpful acronym to communicate interest that he labels **SOLVER**

**S**—Squared shoulders

**O**—Open stance

**L**—Leaning slightly forward

**V**—Vocal quality

**E**—Eye contact

**R**—Relaxed posture

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## Involvement is established through genuineness and honesty

“These two traits, genuineness and honesty, should characterize the whole of our lives. However, in a counseling setting, they are imperative. A primary verse that exemplifies this statement is 2 Corinthians 4:2. “But we have renounced disgraceful, under-handed ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.” As a counselor, be honest about your credentials and qualifications, who and what you are. Don’t pretend to be something you’re not. Be honest about the kind of counseling you offer, and about what you expect of your counselee. Let him know what he can expect of you. (See 1 Corinthians 4:1.) If in the course of counseling you misunderstand, make a mistake, are confused, or make a misstatement, be honest about those things as well. Admit them. Ask the counselee to forgive you. That goes for your children, too. Admitting your mistakes will cause them to think more highly of you, not less.” (p. 63). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

## More Practical Ways to Show Compassion and Respect.

“1. Remain alert and attentive. 2. Practice active listening. Don’t allow your mind to wander. 3. Express interest with your face, eyes, and body posture. 4. Smile appropriately. 5. Weep appropriately. 6. Be on time. Don’t make your counselee wait. 7. Be sensitive to your counselee’s time frame. 8. Cancel appointments only when absolutely necessary. 9. Display gentleness when opposed. 10. Let your counselee talk before you share.. 11. Don’t give up on your counselee quickly. 12. Express appropriate optimism and a positive attitude about God’s ability to help your counselee. 13. Speak in a warm, gentle tone of voice. 14. Express appreciation for your counselee’s strengths, insights, efforts, changes, and any evidence of God’s working in his life. 15. Take your counselee’s problems seriously—never make light of his concerns. 16. Be available to your counselee. Send an encouraging note. Give your counselee a call when you think he is experiencing difficult times. 17. Offer your support in a non-judgmental manner. 18. Pray for your counselee within your sessions and assure him of your prayers during the week. 19. Encourage your counselee to call you if he is having an especially difficult time.”Mack, Wayne. A Practical Guide for Effective Biblical Counseling (pp. 67-69). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

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**Involvement is closely related to all the other I's we will explore. Here is a brief summary.**

“involvement is developed through inspiration. It happens as you encourage a biblically based attitude of hope in the mind of your counselee. It is developed as you take a thorough inventory and secure enough information to accurately understand the counselee and his problems. Involvement is developed as you make an accurate interpretation of what your counselee is saying. It promotes biblical change by allowing you to analyze and organize that information so you can accurately and biblically identify the biblical nature and causes of the problem(s). Involvement is encouraged as you promote biblical change by giving accurate, appropriate, and relevant biblical instruction that provides God’s perspective on what to do to solve your counselee’s problems. It is developed as you induce (motivate, persuade) your counselee to repent of sinful attitudes, words, and actions, and to make a decisive commitment to obey the Lord and follow biblical directives. Involvement is developed as you help your counselee to actually integrate the biblical directives and perspectives into the whole of his life. So you see, involvement is “involved” in every aspect of counseling.” (pp. 69-70). Shepherd Press. Kindle Edition.

## Inspiration

**In promoting biblical change, we want to inspire, or influence the counselee to develop and sustain an attitude and feeling of hope that will promote biblical change.**

“If a counselor is going to be able to effectively help her, he must not only establish involvement, but must also inspire her to have biblical hope. People will not change—they will not respond to the difficult trials of life in a biblical way—unless they can be inspired to have an attitude of hopefulness. **Hope motivates change.**”

**Mack says that a person with strong hope will likely have a lively faith and be a loving person-but a person who lacks hope may also lack faith and love. That person tends to struggle- only able to look inside at their own pain and grief. Depression and self pity have a way of turning people inward, causing them to withdraw-and lose hope.**

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## Scripture describes hope and what it can do

- Hebrews 6: 19–20—an anchor that keeps the soul
- 1 Thessalonians 4: 13—keeps us from inordinate and excessive sorrow
- Proverbs 10: 28—produces gladness
- Romans 5: 2—helps us handle trials in a productive way
- Galatians 5: 5—produces patience
- Hebrews 11: 24–26—produces obedience
- 1 John 3: 2—produces holiness, an aversion to sin
- 1 Thessalonians 1: 3—produces perseverance and steadfastness
- Romans 15: 4—produces peace
- Romans 12: 12—produces joy
- Lamentations 3: 18—produces physical and spiritual strength

Mack says “Conversely, we can learn from these passages something about what happens when a person lacks hope. For instance, we deduce that a person lacks hope if he is

■ Unstable ■ Unmotivated ■ Unhappy and discouraged; filled with self-pity; insecure ■ Fearful ■ Impatient ■ Resistant to change ■ Wishy-washy, easily swayed, tossed to and fro ■ Despondent and despairing ■ A blame shifter—highly critical; angry ■ Disobedient ■ Selfish ■ Living in sin ■ Spiritually weak ■ A quitter, giving up on activities, people, and principles he once valued”

“[In 2 Peter 1: 3–8](#), Peter makes some astounding statements. “***His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing,***

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**they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”**

God's word above, and in many other places encourage us to expect good because God has given great and precious promises. He Himself is Holy!

Mack points out that “biblically based hope must be based upon, and motivated by, the promises of God. However, before we can rely upon those promises, we must know them. Many of the people who come to us for counsel are weak in biblical knowledge. It is our privilege to help them discover these promises. They must read them, learn them, and meditate upon them. They must keep their minds filled with them. I like to say that our minds should be marinated in the Word of God.”

## More about Biblical Hope

**True biblical hope is only for believers** (Ephesians 2, 1 Peter 1:3)

“All people suffer—even believers, or perhaps especially believers. Suffering characterizes the lives of believers. Yet we can demonstrate to an unbelieving world that we are more blessed (even in suffering) than unbelievers are at the best of times.”

**True biblical hope is based on an understanding that any good we experience is a gift of God's pure grace**

“God is not obligated to bestow His grace or mercy upon anyone. If He never did any other good thing for us after our salvation, it would still be much more than we deserve.”

“Charles H. Spurgeon wrote a book called *All of Grace*. Spurgeon was right. Our relationship with God, from beginning to end and throughout eternity, is all of grace.”

“What's the point of all this talk about grace? There are several: ■ In spite of my own sinfulness, how often I blow it, how often I fail Him, I can still have an expectation of God's help and faithfulness to me because He is full of grace. ■ In spite of how undeserving I am, I can know that God will be faithful in forgiving my sins when I confess them. I know that because He is the God of all grace. ■ In spite of my unworthiness, I can come to Him knowing that He hears my prayers because of His grace. ■ In spite of my own faithlessness, I can know that God will never leave me or forsake me because of His grace. ■ In spite of my failings and sinfulness, I can know that God will never give me

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more than I can bear, but will with every trial provide a way of escape. He is the God of all grace who loves to forgive and save and help

### **True biblical hope comes from God implanting and sustaining that hope through the instrumentality of His Word**

“This truth is brought home repeatedly in Psalm 119: 49, which says, “Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.” Verse 74 says, “Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word.” Verse 81 says, “My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.” Verse 114 says, “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.” Verse 147 says, “I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.”

### **True biblical hope is generated by biblical thinking**

“To develop and sustain true biblical hope, you must think biblically about God, about your situation, about God’s purposes for bringing difficulties, about the resources He has given you, about the nature and causes of your problems, about your own personal responsibilities for your actions and responses, about the past and future, and about the biblical solutions to problems. (See Eph. 1: 11, Ps. 115: 1–8, Rom. 5: 2, 2 Tim. 1: 7, Gal. 5: 19–21, 1 Cor. 10: 1–14, Phil. 3: 10–14, Ps. 19: 7–11.)”

### **True biblical hope is connected to prayer**

“I cannot stress how important prayer is to the process of counseling and discipleship. We cannot do anything apart from Christ. We must turn to Him and ask Him to cause us to work in the lives of others by His grace. Prayer is not a formula for getting whatever you want. Many of those who come for counseling think it is. They lose hope when God doesn’t respond to their prayers in the way they think He should. God is not a genie in a bottle. He does not change His will for us because we desire something else.”

**Psalm 127: 1–2 says,** *“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”*

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**We must (in all of our relationships) continue to point others to the God of Hope; back to Christ, back to the Bible!**

### **True biblical hope is increased and sustained by the fellowship of other hope-filled believers**

This is proven by passages in the Bible. Here's a few:

- “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6: 2).
- “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thess. 5: 11).
- “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains” (2 Tim. 1: 16).”

### **True biblical hope is always Christ centered**

“Why is this? Because Christ is the source of biblical hope. He is our Intercessor and Advocate. According to 1 Timothy 1: 1, He is our hope. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope ...”

### **Summary of what we might do to help Inspire and encourage hope**

- Help them to develop and strengthen a vital relationship with God.
- Suggest good, sound books to read about their specific problem( s).
- Gently correct their erroneous concepts of God.
- Expose them to the attributes of God that are most relevant to the issues at hand.
- Impress upon them the potential possibilities for good that may result from working on their issues.
- Make them aware of the many resources available to them as believers for handling their problem( s).
- Provide information and testimonials from people who have encountered some of the same difficulties, applied godly principles, and survived their circumstances by the grace of God.
- Encourage them to pray fervently to the One who is sovereign over all things. Pray with and for them, that God will produce and sustain an attitude of hopefulness.
- Encourage them to identify their specific problem and implement a specific biblical procedure to help resolve it.

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**Inventory:** Promotes biblical change by securing enough of the right kinds of information to accurately understand the counselee and any problems.

Why is this important? Mack suggests there are several reasons.

Consider the counselee's benefit. We want to be **thorough for their good**. If we get a good understanding of the whole situation, we can **better guide them through the process**.

Helping others **understand nature and cause of problems** will help them. If we as counselors understand the problems then we can "frame them in biblical language" and **bring in Scriptures that are there to overcome those problems/issues**. This will lead to those seeking help see how relevant and helpful God's word is to their life and difficulties.

"Data gathering encourages counselees to be cooperative. It adds to the counselor's credibility which, in turn, allows the counselee to hold back on sharing their story. They become more willing participants of the counseling sessions. Additionally, this back and forth cluster of questions and answers builds the kind of involvement so necessary to effective counseling. It adds to the counselor's credibility which, in turn, allows the counselee to have more confidence and inspiration (hope) as he approaches his problem(s)."

**Asking right questions will:**

- Help us comprehend the true nature and causes of the problem( s). Just as a doctor needs to gather the right data to make a diagnosis, so also we need data to correctly "diagnose" the counselee's problem;
- Allow us to figure out the best way to relate to our counselee; ■ Show us, more specifically, the kind of help that is needed in each case; ■ Prevent us from offering the wrong kind of counsel (like the counsel Job's friends gave, for example); ■ Enable us to teach without lecturing or preaching"

### **Open and Closed Questions**

"The first thing we need to understand is how to ask proper questions. Proper questions are asked in a thoughtful, considerate, and gracious manner. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." (See also Eph. 4:29, Prov. 16:21, 24, Prov. 15:1, 4.) The next thing to consider is the importance of asking open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions have yes or no answers,

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which do not lend themselves to any extrapolation. Using questions beginning with what, when, where, how, or why allows the counselee to open up more.”

*An Open question- opens a person up whereas a Closed question can shut them down.*

Closed: Do you love your husband?

Open: How would you describe your relationship with your husband?

**Mack uses an acronym (PREACH+D) to help with data gathering (Inventory) In each section we will also consider some practical, open questions you might ask.**

**Physical:** “What is happening in the physical realm may be the circumstantial cause of his non-physical problems. What is happening in the physical realm may provide helpful clues in identifying what is happening in the non-physical realm.”

ie) Some areas we could consider are: sleep patterns, diet, activity level, illnesses, work patterns, drug use, facial expressions, body posture, and general appearance.

*Open ended questions: “Generally speaking, how would you describe your present and past physical health? ■ What is it you like or dislike about yourself physically? ■ How would you describe your eating habits? ■ Tell me about your daily intake of beverages containing caffeine. ■ What kind of physical activities do you do on a regular basis?”*

**Resources** “we must explore the resources our counselee has access to. These resources may be financial, intellectual, educational, spiritual, theological, social, familial, and/ or circumstantial.” Why? “...he primary reason is for **support of the counselee**. (See also Gal. 6: 2–3, 1 Thess. 5: 11, Prov. 18: 24.) We must understand the strengths and weaknesses he is drawing upon. Having a **firm support system can be a terrific advantage for someone going through trials.**”

**At times we may introduce them to helpful resources.**

“What are the particular areas we need to investigate in this **Resource** category? We need to find out the following: ■ Whether or not he is a genuine Christian; ■ The depth of his relationship with God; ■ His devotional practices ■ How much or how little he knows about the Word; ■ What resources his family provides; ■ What his social resources (friendships) are; ■ What kind of financial resources are available; ■ What his past experiences have been; ■ What his educational resources are; ■ What theological resources he has access to.”

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The point of this is to find out how much support the counselee has. Are they surrounded by family, or helpful friends, or a church body. Can anything be introduced to help and reinforce what they hear from us?

Open ended questions: “Tell me about the most important persons in your life and why he or she is so important to you. ■ Share with me the relationship that gives you the greatest joy and the ones that give you the most sadness or heartache. ■ What do you usually do when you have a problem? ■ Tell me who you feel most comfortable sharing your private thoughts and feelings with. ■ Tell me about your relationship with God—how it began, how it has developed, how important it is, where God fits into the total picture of your life, and what you are doing to strengthen your relationship with Him?”

Emotional We are not looking to focus completely on emotions, but they also cannot be ignored.

“The Bible has much to say about emotions. In Proverbs 10 alone, we find gladness, sorrow, hatred, love, pleasure, desire, and joy. And that’s just one chapter in the Bible. God’s Word is replete with all kinds of emotions. If a person can feel it, it will be somewhere in Scripture.

In the Bible, **emotions are usually, but not always, paired with descriptions of sinfulness.** Several biblical passages have lists of sins and many of our emotions have made those lists. For instance, *Galatians 5: 19–21* states: “*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.*” There is lots of emotion in that list. (See also Rom. 1: 28–31, Eph. 4: 31–32, Col. 3: 8.)

In addition to these lists, the Bible also teaches us about people who sin. And **their sins usually began with their emotions.** Some biblical examples are **Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), Cain (Gen. 4), Esau (Gen. 27), King Saul (1 Sam. 18), and King David (2 Sam. 11).** I could go on and on with biblical examples of men and women sinning as a result of allowing their emotions to guide their thoughts and actions.”

“Emotions are God-given. They are wonderful as long as you control them, and they don’t control you.” Remember, we are helping people use the Scriptures to promote biblical change... **applying God’s principles and not ‘going by feelings/their gut’**

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Open Ended Questions: What emotions do you most frequently experience? ■ If you were able to change anything about yourself emotionally, what would you want to change? ■ Give me a few examples of times when you were really.... ■ When do you feel the happiest? And about what? ■ How do you feel about what is happening in your life right now?

Actions “In most cases, someone’s actions are the catalyst bringing a hurting person to a counselor—either his own actions or the actions of others.” Actions can reveal what is going on ‘in their heart’ and since we can’t see that, we need to take some Inventory.

What actions should we Investigate?

“■ What a person is doing that he should not be doing; ■ What a person is doing that he should be doing; ■ What a person is doing in the area of his speech and how that impacts his problem(s); ■ How a person is behaving in his family relationships that may violate God’s Word; ■ What a person is doing in the area of sex that may impact the issues he brings to us; ■ What a person does in the area of his work; ■ How a person responds in his relationships with other people; ■ What he does in the area of finances and material things; ■ What about his actions in reference to the stewardship of his body (sleep, exercise, eating, overwork, carelessness, not taking necessary medications, illegal drug use, physical abuse, food abuse, alcohol abuse, etc.); ■ What the counselee does in the area of recreational activities (reading materials, television, sports, movies, Internet activities, pornography, music); ■ What actions he makes in regard to the area of worship and devotions; ■ How he uses his time or abilities.”

Open Ended Questions: “As you look back over your life, what are some of the things you have done that you think are really worthwhile? ■ What are some of the things you wish you could undo? ■ As you look at your life right now, what are some of the things you think you are doing that are right? And the ones that are wrong? ■ Tell me about some of the ways you see yourself growing as a Christian. ■ Tell me about some of the ways you have helped other people, or ways you’ve been a hindrance to them.”

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**Cognitive** “This area pertains to thoughts, attitudes, perspectives, and interpretations. The Bible gives us many reasons to explore this important area.”

- “For he is like one who is inwardly calculating” (Prov. 23: 7).
- “As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man” (Prov. 27: 19).
- “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4: 12).
- “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6: 5).
- “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Ps. 139: 23–24).

In this area of investigation Mack says it is important to identify how they think change occurs as well as what they believe about their personal responsibility as well as how they view their past, present, and future.

“One important piece of information, which is often overlooked, is for us to find out what they expect or want from counseling. What are their expectations for what we can provide for them?”

**“An effective counselor is not satisfied with helping overcome one problem. If the core problems are not addressed, the counselee will find himself in this problem repeatedly. We must help him overcome the core problem.”**

Open Ended Questions “What do you see as your most pressing problem? ■ What do you think about the way you have handled the problem? ■ Describe how you think a person or a couple should make decisions. ■ Where do you think God fits into all that is happening right now? ■ What do you think God’s solution to this problem would be?”

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Historical “Again, the Bible supports delving into this important area of inventory. For instance, Proverbs 22: 24–25 says, “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.” A person’s history is vital to understanding his problems.”

### What are some general areas that could use investigation?

“Parental example/ instruction/ discipline; ■ Previous trauma, difficulties, and how those things were dealt with and resolved; ■ What are some of the most pleasant, enjoyable, satisfying, and rewarding experiences the person has had? ■ Who are the main players in his current conflict? ■ What has happened that led to the problem? ■ What is the timeline for these actions? ■ How did the person respond to these circumstances? ■ Has the counselee ever been through similar problems in the past? ■ Identify patterns or themes that may occur; ■ Discover what your counselee looks for in his friends; ■ Identify unfinished business from the past (things that still need to be done to clear up past sinful actions or reactions); ■ Continue to promote involvement and inspiration through this interview process.”

Open Ended Questions: When did you first begin to experience this problem? ■ What was happening in your life when.... ■ Tell me about your relationship with the Lord over the years—its high points and low points. ■ What situations in life do you find most difficult to handle? ■ What past experiences in life are hardest for you to let go of?

**Desires** “The **desires of their hearts reveal much about their behaviors and expectations** in many areas. And yes, the Bible provides reasons why it is important to delve into this personal area. It gives example after example of events where actions or sins take place as a result of the desires of the heart. Here are a few:

- “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers” (James 1: 14–16).

- “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, division, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (Gal. 5: 19–21a).
- “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3: 6).
- “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel” (James 4: 1–2).
- “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world” (1 John 2: 16).”

**Sinful desires lead to sin. But the positive is also true. Godly desires lead to godly behaviors and attitudes.**

Open Ended Questions When did you first begin to experience this problem? ■ What was happening in your life when.... ■ Tell me about your relationship with the Lord over the years—its high points and low points. ■ What situations in life do you find most difficult to handle? ■ What past experiences in life are hardest for you to let go of?

“Anyone can listen,” you might say. “Why do I need instruction on listening? That’s a no-brainer.” The truth of the matter is that most people are not good listeners. Here are some tips I’d like to leave you with in the area of positive listening techniques. When I say listening techniques, I’m talking about both verbal and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal cues can sometimes give more information than words. So, watch your counselee’s expressions and his body language. Observe his clothing, gestures, posture, where he sits, any signs of nervousness, indifference, or hopelessness. Listen to the tone of his voice and to volume changes in it. Note the eye contact (both with you and with his spouse if the other party is present). Listen to what he’s telling you. As well as listening for what he does say, listen for what he doesn’t say. Listen for any anger, defensiveness, self-pity, discouragement, hopelessness, blame-shifting, evasiveness, annoyance, victim mentality, exaggerations, and generalities. Note repeated words, phrases, or

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experiences. Listen carefully for the person’s working theology—his view of God—as well as for unbiblical thinking, especially about the nature and causes of his problems.”

**Interpretation** involves promoting true biblical change by analyzing and organizing the information we have gleaned in the inventory process so we can accurately identify in biblical terms the nature and causes of the person’s problem. Only then can we convincingly explain this to the one turning to us for counsel.

**Support for this step:**

[Luke 10: 38–42](#). Martha and Mary

- a. Facts/ circumstances (vv. 38–39)
- b. Martha’s response/ interpretation (v. 40)
- c. Our Lord’s interpretation (vv. 41–42)

[Luke 24: 13–26](#). This is the famous discourse between Jesus and the disciples along the road to Emmaus.

- a. Facts/ circumstances (vv. 13–18)
- b. Disciples’ response (vv. 19–21)
- c. Our Lord’s interpretation (vv. 25–26)

**Case Study Gus**

Gus comes to you stating that he needs help because, as he puts it, “Feelings of inferiority have made me physically ill and generally impotent as a person. I’ve tried to live the way I hear you saying a Christian should live, but I just can’t because I feel so inferior. I’m a failure in so many areas of life. It makes me tense around people and I just don’t think it’s fair that God made other people who are so much more gifted and successful and confident than I am. When I’m around people, I find myself freezing up and getting very nervous. I’m not doing well in school and I’m afraid I will flunk out. I’m not a quitter or anything, but I just can’t live and function the way the Bible says a Christian should function. I want to, but I just can’t. If I just had more ego strength and a better self-image, I might be able to do so. Please help me find some self-esteem so I can develop a better self-image.”

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**Mack points out to effectively counsel Gus we will need to:**

**Establish involvement**

**Practice Inspiration**

**Gather Inventory**

“For instance, what data might you want to gather in terms of the physical area of his life, relationships, emotions, actions, concepts, history, and desires? **If you do not gather this additional information, you may be guilty of giving merely pharisaical or behavioristic counseling.** To counsel Gus effectively, we will have to do more than gather PREACHD data. We will also need to make an **accurate interpretation of the nature and cause of Gus’s problems.** We need to reveal his core problem and be able to discuss this with him or the counsel we give him will go nowhere. We must put the information we acquire from Gus under the microscope and do some accurate and biblical interpretation. We need to be able to answer the questions “Is Gus’s problem really a matter of his lacking ego strength? Is it really a matter of Gus failing because of the way God has made him? Is he really failing because of his low self-esteem and bad self-image?” Counseling him will involve identifying the various possibilities that may be involved in what is happening in his life, and then explaining them in a way that Gus understands. At that point, we can address his problems in a biblical way.”

**Mack offers these generic Interpretive guidelines**

- 1. As you engage in the inventory phase of counseling, you should prayerfully compare what you discover from the counselee with the standard of God’s Word.** As you gather data, you should be comparing: a. The person’s behavioral responses with the standard of God’s Word to see where and how they are unbiblical. b. The person’s emotional responses with the standard of God’s Word. c. The person’s thoughts, attitudes, and interpretations with the standard of God’s Word. d. The person’s desires, values, expectations, and motivations with the standard of God’s Word.
- 2. Carefully and prayerfully take the information you’ve gathered and look for existing themes or patterns you see emerging, rather than just focusing on one issue at a time.** This means you must be on the lookout for typical responses in the life of the person you’re counseling. a. As I attempt to determine whether a person has typical responses, I

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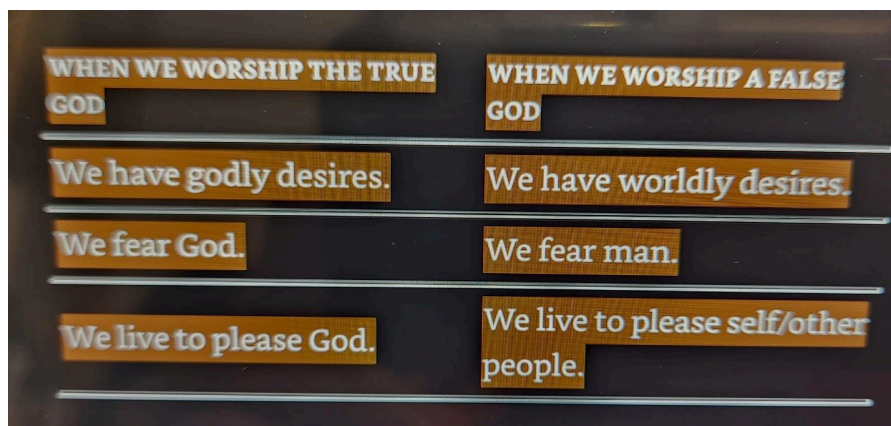
have found that asking myself and the counselee the following questions can be very revealing. i. Does the data indicate that there is a particular time of day or a place when or where the problem is most likely to occur? ii. Does the data indicate that there are typical emotional responses in certain situations or when certain things occur? iii. Does the data indicate that there are typical expectations, desires, longings, and demands the person has of certain people or situations? b. Another useful tool in this is having the person keep a daily journal in which he records information relevant to what has brought him for counseling. c. Another helpful way of discovering unbiblical patterns is through the use of a sentence completion form. The counselee is asked to complete the sentence. For example, “I get nervous when \_\_\_\_\_.” Or, “I would be happier if only \_\_\_\_\_.”

**3. Another important factor for making an accurate and biblically informed interpretation involves taking the information you’ve collected and making sure you label and describe the person’s problems in biblical terms.** a. This means you should use biblical words and categories instead of psychological ones. It is not useful and can actually be harmful to use psychological labels when doing biblical counseling. b. For example, instead of “weaknesses,” speak in terms of sin. Instead of “overeating,” speak in terms of gluttony. Instead of “having a bit of a drinking problem,” use the term drunkenness.

**4. To make an accurate biblical interpretation of the nature and cause of a person’s problems, we should take the information, put it on the witness stand, and make it answer some questions.** a. One question would be: What biblical categories could be used to describe the person I’m counseling? i. Is the person a believer or a nonbeliever? ii. Is the person mature or immature? iii. Where would this person fit in the 1 Thessalonians 5: 14 categories of unruly, fainthearted, discouraged, or weak? iv. Where would this person fit in the Proverbs 10: 1, 8 categories of foolish versus wise? b. What does the data indicate about this person’s understanding of biblical change? Does he desire biblical change? c. What does the data indicate about possible complicating or compounding factors? d. What does the data indicate about possible organic factors? (See below.) e. What does the data indicate about the best way to approach the counselee/ disciple/ child? f. What does the data indicate about the person’s greatest need at this point?

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5. **We must take the information we've accumulated and prayerfully study it to identify what is going on in the person's heart.** a. This important factor is one we emphasized earlier. b. As we seek to understand the nature and cause of a person's problems, it is important for us to identify what the data tells us about what is going on in the person's heart. We must study the data to identify what the person's ruling motives are. We need to analyze the data to discern who or what the person is worshipping. Biblically speaking, the heart is the mission control center of our lives—Proverbs 4: 23, Hebrews 4: 12, Mark 7: 21–23. The Bible teaches that our attitudes, feeling, and behavior are ruled and driven by our beliefs and desires.



Mack has an entire section here that deals with psychological and psychiatric diagnosis- if you would like to see what he has to say I can provide that for you in a note.