



Basic 101 Fundamentals of All Counseling As Pastor's Wives

I. Reality of the Need of Counseling

A. Biblically Required:

- i. We know that all believers have a responsibility to “instruct” one another or to “admonish” one another (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16). These are informal coffees and foyer conversations.
- ii. You are required to be in community (Eph. 4:15-16).
- iii. You are required to have a person who actually knows and supports you (i.e., “accountability” in James 5:16).
- iv. You are *required* to biblically counsel your husband (Prov. 9:8b).

v. Not Required:

1. Available to everyone in church. This is too high of an expectation and is unrealistic. “Hello, Burnout!”
2. I don’t need to co-counsel with my husband. Many times, there are situations where it’s not wise for me to be the lady there, although another lady should be present.
3. I don’t enjoy in-depth, on-going counseling. Your gifts are part of the equation here and ongoing involvement in counseling isn’t required.

B. Biblically Recommended:

- i. Often, the pastor’s wife will set a culture for women’s ministry and discipleship in a medium to small church.
- ii. It’d be nice if she took seriously the call of Titus 2:3-4 to disciple other ladies even if she can’t be at every women’s ministry event.
- iii. If she cannot be the “one” to counsel, she can help set a team in a trajectory to support and herself join that team if possible.

II. The Priority of the Home and Your Seasons of Life

- A. Your husbands must value, cherish, and prioritize you to be in ministry for any length of time (cf. 1 Tim. 3:4).
- B. Second, your priority is to him and then to your kids (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 6:4).
- C. Then, to your local church as you have time in addition to your prior responsibilities.
 - i. **Season of Life:** Ages of our Kids: 1-5, 6-12, 13-18. Pre-5 it’s a war zone and we are in battle to stay alive. 6-12 it settles and we have helpful participants (ish). 13-18 it’s taxing, but more emotionally and financially 😊
 - ii. I would not recommend going elbows deep in counseling ministry in this time of kids being under-12 at home. But once your kids start to have school, sports, work, and a few ministry responsibilities themselves, you’re freer.

III. Triage Counseling—Get Some Skills Here 100%

- A. **Listening:** Learn to listen and discern the biblical nature of what is happening (Prov. 18:2, 13). This is a skill you grow in as a believer, but you're asking the "right" questions. Listening for the root vs. fruit issues.
- B. **Gain Trust (Involvement):** Any person wants to know they can trust their pastor's wife. Trust is the rapport that you have with them and the reason they are willing to come to you for the delicate issues of life.
- C. **Offering Biblical Hope:** Learn to offer hope grounded in the Attributes and Promises of God (Ex: Eph. 3:20-21). Find promises that are relevant to this friend and point them to these texts.
- D. **Pointing to the Next Steps:**
 - i. Biblical Instruction? Does a phone call provide some initial direction and help from God's Word?
 - ii. Counseling Team? Should they reach out to the counseling team?
 - iii. Link them up with a lady who *does* have time for discipleship/counseling?
 - iv. Follow up?

IV. Formal, Ongoing Counseling

- A. **On-Ramp:** Differentiate between "coffee" and formal, ongoing counseling. The easiest way to do this for your relational sanity and your husband's ministry is a counseling team. This team has a formal structure and a formal way to begin counseling.
- B. **Join the Team (When Possible!):** Get ACBC Certified! Woot woot. Learn how to counsel and manage everything from smaller discipleship issues to significant relational and emotional problems. There is a skill to learn and doing so greatly serves you, your family, and your church.

V. Serving from a Place of Refreshment (1 Pet. 4:8-11)

- A. "God is self-sufficient ... I'm not." God doesn't need me, He chooses to use me. I don't want to be *ragged* in ministry, but *refreshed* in ministry.
- B. "You cannot create personal problems trying to help others with their problems" (Kevin Carson).

"I'm so sorry, but we already have plans that night."

Discussion Questions:

1. Are there ways I need to adjust my expectations in counseling, either being more open or ensuring I'm not running ragged?
2. What skills would be helpful for me to learn to better help people in counseling?
3. What are ways that you can sync up with your husband now in ministry, that will carry over to his pastorate?
4. What are areas I need to grow in understanding my giftedness? For instance, "I know I'm super compassionate, so I need to be careful." Or, "I know I'm not as patient, so I need to cultivate that for our church."
5. How can you be comfortable saying "No" or "I'm not available"? What is your equivalent of "we have plans that night"?