

Center for Biblical Counseling Newsletter

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The Goal of Counseling: Do our circumstances matter to God?

By Chuck Roberts, MA L.P.C.

When people come to counseling they're often there due to a crisis. Their marriage vows have been broken or their child is getting into trouble. A man suddenly finds himself struggling with panic attacks, or a young mother whose life was peaceful begins to recall painful memories of abuse. At times like that we find ourselves crying out, "Just give me some relief!" That makes sense.

Last September I awoke early one Saturday morning with a full day of work planned, but instead, I found myself facing intense, physical pain. Eventually, after several hours of pain and

no improvement, my wife, who is an experienced RN, informed me we were going to the emergency room. She was suspecting that I had a kidney stone. She was right, and my favorite part of that morning was when the ER nurse came walking my way with pain medication. I just wanted something or someone to take away the pain.

I was grateful for that pain medication, and yet it doesn't seem like God is always about the immediate removal of our painful circumstances. Why is that? Just like that kidney stone there've been plenty of times in my life when I wished God would change some things for me. Just miraculously make my bank account balance go up, or change that bad report my friend got from her doctor. In my thinking, all would be well then, and I could go about the business of serving Him more effectively. But God wants to give us something far better: Himself. We want relief; he wants relationship. I want happiness; he knows I need holiness. As a counselor, I am on shaky ground if I get in the way of something God is doing. My goal, then, for every client I see, is a deepened relationship with God whereby they will be better able to give and receive love in relationship with God and others, and where circumstances take their place as second things, always behind the first thing that matters most: a deep relationship with God.

Does that mean our circumstances don't matter to God? Far from it. When the widow and her young son in 1 Kings 17 were near death from starvation God provided for them through the prophet Elijah. And when the woman's son died God healed him. Your circumstances do matter to God, and they'll matter to a counselor who wants to be aligned with God's heart. If you're having panic attacks and medicine can help provide some relief, you're wise to take it. Yet our desire for God to change our circumstances should never get in the way of what will sustain us most in a fallen world replete with the heights of joy and the pain of loss, and that is a deep relationship with the Lord of the Universe.

Parenting Tip of the Month

Limit Setting

Consistent limits provide a predictable, safe environment and a sense of security.

A—C—T model of limit setting.

1. **Acknowledge** your child's feeling or desire (your voice must convey empathy and understanding). The child learns that his feelings, desires and wishes are valued

and accepted by his parent (but NOT all behaviors). By empathically reflecting your child's feeling you will often defuse the intensity of the feeling or need.

2. **Communicate** the limit (be specific, clear and brief)
3. **Target** acceptable alternatives; provide one or more choices (depending on the age of the child)

Example

Your child doesn't want to eat their vegetables at dinner. Using the A-C-T model, what would you say to your child?

When To Seek Help For Your Child

Parents are usually the first to recognize that their child has a problem with emotions or behavior. Still, the decision to seek professional help can be difficult and painful for a parent. The first step is to gently try to talk to the child. An honest open talk about feelings can often help. Parents may choose to consult with the child's physicians, teachers, members of the clergy, or other adults who know the child well. These steps may resolve the problems for the child and family. Following are a few signs which may indicate that a child and adolescent psychiatric evaluation will be useful.

YOUNGER CHILDREN

- Marked fall in school performance.
- Poor grades in school despite trying very hard.
- Severe worry or anxiety, as shown by regular refusal to go to school, go to sleep or take part in activities that are normal for the child's age.
- Hyperactivity; fidgeting; constant movement

beyond regular playing.

- Persistent nightmares.
- Persistent disobedience or aggression (longer than 6 months) and provocative opposition to authority figures.
- Frequent, unexplainable temper tantrums.

PRE-ADOLESCENTS AND ADOLESCENTS

- Marked change in school performance.
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities.
- Marked changes in sleeping and/or eating habits.
- Frequent physical complaints.
- Sexual acting out.
- Depression shown by sustained, prolonged negative mood and attitude, often accompanied by poor appetite, difficulty sleeping or thoughts of death.
- Abuse of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Intense fear of becoming obese with no relationship to actual body

weight, purging food or restricting eating.

- Persistent nightmares.
- Threats of self-harm or harm to others.
- Self-injury or self destructive behavior.
- Frequent outbursts of anger, aggression.
- Threats to run away.
- Aggressive or non-aggressive consistent violation of rights of others; opposition to authority, truancy, thefts, or vandalism.
- Strange thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or unusual behaviors.

If problems persist over an extended period of time and especially if others involved in the child's life are concerned, consultation with a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other clinician specifically trained to work with children may be helpful.

To schedule a consultation with one of our trained counselors call 214.585.4859 or email us at info@cbcmckinney.com.

True (and a bit strange) Facts!

- Recycling one glass jar, saves enough energy to watch T.V for 3 hours!
- The average American/Canadian drinks about 600 sodas a year!
- There wasn't a single pony in the Pony Express, just horses!
- Honeybees have a type of hair on their eyes!

Psalm 143:6 I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

