

Resolve Ministries E-Newsletter

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Welcome to our first Electronic Newsletter! We hope the articles will provide inspiration and hope and you will have a better glimpse of who we are at Resolve Ministries, and what we are up to in East Tennessee.

Kathy Bailey, Biblical Counselor

CYBER-COUNSELING

It has come to my attention that some counselors are offering free on-line counseling. While this certainly seems attractive in our “cyber-age,” and a way to reach those who otherwise might not come to counseling, I wonder what Scripture has to say about the subject? Certainly, the Bible does not address the concept of computers, which were not invented when it was written, but might there be biblical principles that relate?

The first that comes to mind is the concept of good, old-fashioned person-to-person fellowship. Hebrews 10:23-25 reminds us: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” While we can certainly communicate to some extent by the written word (as we are doing in this article), even exhorting one another to walk with Christ and obey the Word, in on-line counseling we neglect the assembling together in worship, prayer, and mutual exhortation of one another in the presence of the Lord. Using technology such as Skype, this might be possible in a limited sense, but is some crucial element of fellowship missing?

Another key phrase in the above Scripture is “**consider one another.**” Yes, we can consider another’s written words and respond biblically to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct in righteousness, as 2 Timothy 3:16 states Scripture is profitable to do, but are we able to adequately “consider” our counselee? A key element of accountability is lost if we are unable to hear the other’s tone of voice; observe facial expressions or body language to catch nuances of language that might reveal underlying issues of the heart, such as anxiety, anger, etc. Jay Adams calls such observations “halo data,” stating that it “may be derived not only from visual and auditory cues, but also from tactile (e.g., a clammy handshake indicates anxiety or fear) or olfactory (e.g., the odor of alcohol) cues” and in some circumstances may even be more important than “core data” gathered through regular conversation (*The Christian Counselors Manual*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973, p.257). Again, using video capabilities may help in some visual data gathering; even such technologies are not fool proof, and feed interruptions and distortions may occur that cloud such data.

Another key element of biblical counseling that is lost through cyber-counseling is the ability to effectively model the Christian life to our counsees. Titus 2:1-8 outlines appropriate techniques for godly mentoring/discipling/counseling, culminating in verse 7 which states, “In all things **showing** yourself to be a pattern of good works....” While we can admonish, exhort, and direct our counsees in how to live the Christian life through teaching scriptural principles, only in face-to-face conversation can biblical attitudes and actions be “caught” as well as taught.

In conclusion, while every avenue must be sought to share the gospel and disciple believers to grow in Christ-likeness, Scripture seems to suggest that such methods should not be to the exclusion of face-to-face contact of brothers and sisters in the faith. Even though the Apostle Paul was forced at times to disciple his converts through epistles when in prison, he also sent faithful men such as Timothy, Onesimus, and Tychicus to personally teach and oversee them (Phil. 2:19, Col. 4:7-9, 1Thess. 3:2-3). Moreover, in Col. 4:8 he exhorted the Philippians that he was sending Tychicus “for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your heart.” Paul surely knew some of their circumstances through letters and word of mouth, but he felt it important to learn their hearts and comfort them through direct interaction. By all means, use the Internet to maintain contact with one another when apart: encourage, exhort, challenge and correct one another in Christ through all means available, but let us be careful not to lose sight of the importance of on-going biblical counseling through face-to-face interaction so that we might more fully engage our hearts through the communion of the saints and fellowship of the Holy Spirit at work in the community of believers. For as Jesus Himself taught us when describing the role of the Church in disciplining one another in Matthew 18:15-20, “**For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them.**”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, August 22, 2009--Resolve Ministries Concert Extravaganza and Fundraiser

We are hosting an all day concert event from 11 am to 5 pm at Belmont Heights Baptist Church with local Christian artists such as Heart to Heart, Kathy Cross, Rick Liles, etc. performing throughout the day. Some of Resolve Ministries own will also be performing, such as Kathy Bailey and Leslie and Audrey Wall! 96.3's own Shane King will be Master of Ceremonies for this incredible event! If you live in East Tennessee, come join us for food, fun, door prizes, and fabulous Christian music at Belmont Heights Baptist Church, 2510 Belmont Heights Avenue Knoxville, TN 37921 (865) 523-9701.

Don't forget to check out our ministry at www.resolveministries.com.