

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth.

Cross Check Your Counsel by Jeff Temple M.A.

Are you aware of how many times you are asked for spiritual guidance? Would it surprise you if no one ever asked for your advice? Does the Holy Spirit send people to you and you to them? Scripture makes a big deal about our encouraging and guiding one another (cf. Mt 18:15-20; 28:18-20; Jn 13:34-35; Eph 4:13-16; Col 1:28-29; Heb 10:22-25; Jas 3:17-18).



Since "one-anothering" is a major theme in Scripture we need to make sure we are involved in the lives of our brothers and sisters the way Jesus wants us to be. Galatians 5 and 6 is about learning how to fulfill Christ's command to love one another. However, our sin nature attempts to thwart all attempts to honor God and others (Gal 5:16-17). Paul warns against destroying unity through selfish goals and desires rather than living and working together as a unified community that glorifies our Lord.

Danger 1: Pride (If anyone thinks he is something ...he deceives himself...Gal 6:3)

Paul alerted us in chapter 5 that the flesh is still very much part of our lives and tempts us to compare ourselves with others who struggle in sin. Imagine discipling a brother who is sinning (Gal 6:1). Since we have been asked for help because of our reputation as being wise and mature we could easily begin to think of ourselves as superior to "that sinful person." We may act and speak condescendingly, explaining how quickly and easily we have dealt with those temptations in the past. This brother then begins to lose hope because he is unable to overcome his struggle with his flesh as quickly as we were. The conduct is self-glorifying. We must not forget that we all struggle with the flesh. Don't be deceived!

Danger 2: Hypocrisy (But let each one test his own work... Gal 6:4)

As Christians we are instructed to test or examine ourselves, namely when we are counseling or restoring others to Christ (Gal 6:4). Why this self-examination? We are searching our hearts to see if we are walking by the Spirit or gratifying the flesh. If we can confidently say we are walking by the Spirit we ought to rejoice in what God is doing in us. Paul says that not all boasting is wrong (cf. Acts 23:1; 2Cor 1:12). Proper and acceptable boasting glorifies the Lord for what He has accomplished through us and in the life of the others we help.

When a brother genuinely appreciates us for our wisdom and service to him, we are pleased that we have helped him because God was in it for both of us. All that we can ever hope to accomplish in helping our brother or sister is because the Spirit walks with us. We are only the instruments in God's hand to restore another as we are walking in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26).

Danger 3: Giving up on another too soon (Each one will have to bear his own load...Gal 6:5)

The Apostle reminds us that we must carry our own burdens, which at first glance seems to be contradictory to his instruction to help others (Gal 6:2). Actually they mesh together into a beautiful discipleship plan. As we restore another, he will become strong and able to carry his own load, just as we are to carry our own load. As he learns to walk by the Spirit, not relying on others to always be there, he then becomes strong enough to help others who may come into his life who need help for a season. The process is to make each of us strong enough to carry our own load.

This is possible in the context of his message to not return to a yoke of slavery since we've been set free (Gal 5:1, 13). In addition to carrying our own burdens, or remaining free, we are still called to care for others (Gal 5:14), just as those "others" will soon be strong enough to care for some others.

Paul's reminder is that we are going to be accountable before God for how we walk with the Spirit and with others so we need to pay attention to our own walk with Christ and to the community of brothers and sisters around us, all growing together in Christ-likeness.

Psalm 1 encourages us to know our counselors and to not walk in ungodly counsel. Godly counsel produces mature believers. Read the description of the person who has responded to godly counsel (:2,3) That person is strong, beautiful, and has a fruitful ministry with others. God gives us unique opportunities to help one another to escape the destruction of sin. Who has helped you in the past?

Who will you help today?

Biblical Counseling Center

[Main Office](#) • 3233 N Arlington Heights Rd, Suite 302 Arlington Heights, IL 60004

[Scherverville Office](#) • 833 W Lincoln Hwy, Suite 115W Scherverville, Indiana 46375

[Fox Lake Office](#) • Fox Lake Community Church, 25 W Big Hollow Road Fox lake, Illinois 60020

Email info@biblicalcounselingcenter.org • Telephone (847) 398-7193

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