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The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers: Relating the Basic Teachings of
Scripture to People's Problems (Pilgrimage Growth Guide)

15. The Church and Counseling

This chapter argues that Christian counseling should not happen in isolation from the Church. It defines what the Church is, describes what it does, and shows why the counselor cannot ignore such a powerful, healing (though imperfect) institution.

Key takeaways

- The Church (ekklesia) is the community of believers who unite for worship and service — both the universal Body and the local congregation. Scripture treats the Christian life as communal, not solo.
- Three images capture its nature: the people of God (where we belong), the Body of Christ (interconnected members), and the temple of the Holy Spirit (built of people, not stone).
- The Church has three ministries: worship (praise God), edification/community (build people), and outreach (make a difference through evangelism and social action). Healthy churches keep all three in balance.
- Edification happens through teaching/preaching, sharing and Spirit-led love, burden-bearing and confession, mutual submission, discipline, and Communion.

- Churches can harm as well as heal — producing guilt, toxic faith, busywork, or hypocrisy — but that misuse doesn't cancel God's design for the Body.
- Colson and Vaughn set therapy against the gospel; the author rejects that false split. Counseling partnered with the Church, guided by the Spirit and Scripture, changes both behavior and character.
- Counseling that bypasses the Church may help, but its value is limited — like working 'in the crazy business' without God.

Passages worth keeping

"We who are individual believers must be involved in a local church — even when that church is like Noah's ark 'where the stench inside would be unbearable if it weren't for the storm outside.'"

Captures the call to commit to an imperfect community anyway.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

The author names this as the core of Christian counseling — people-helping plus personal holiness.

How it connects

The chapter ties the counselor's work back to the Body of Christ: real transformation is meant to happen inside a worshiping, edifying, outreaching community, not in the counseling room alone.

Scripture referenced

- **Hebrews 10:25** -- Command not to give up meeting together — basis for church involvement.
- **1 Corinthians 12:12-30** -- The Church as one interconnected Body of Christ.
- **Ephesians 2:20-22** -- The Church as a temple built of people, God's dwelling by the Spirit.
- **Romans 12:1-2** -- Presenting body and mind to God as spiritual worship.
- **Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8** -- The command to make disciples, empowered by the Spirit.
- **James 1:27** -- Pure religion as caring for the needy and staying unpolluted — the chapter's summary of Christian counseling.