

Seven Goals of God

A draft discussion paper on the central goals and purposes of Christian counseling

André H. Roosma

First version (limited circulation): September 2008
draft web version: 2011-05-13; last update: 2011-05-14

Introduction

Throughout the last decades – in fact: since the rise of psychotherapy, a lot of Christian counselors and other scholars have struggled with the question:

What *is* Christian counseling?

They have come up with a variety of answers. Some have adapted some existing – secular – form of psychotherapy; others have opposed all secular psychotherapy. Some have started in theology, others in their practice of helping people cope with trauma. Etcetera.

The result is that there now exists a wide and colorful variety of approaches and views on Christian or pastoral counseling.

Not always clear in these approaches is the answer to the underlying question:

What *is, or should be, the aim of* Christian counseling?

In this brief paper I will address this question. And I will address it by looking at the main goals God has in mind for us. *What are the goals God has for us, what are we here for?* is probably the most pertinent question to ask in this context. Via Jesus' note that He did what He saw the Father do, it is related to the question: *What do we see the Father do with people?* Or: *What Has He prepared for us* (cf. Ephesians 2:10)?

A clear answer to these questions can help us to focus on the right thing in counseling. At the same time, it helps us in a most natural way to stay balanced and avoid many pitfalls that I have encountered in several approaches and methods in Christian counseling and in recovery programs.

So much for an introduction. This is a living document. If you think I left out something that deserves to be included here, please write to me and I will investigate it seriously.

Christian counseling and the work of God

Christian counseling is, or should be, a derived ministry, not a work in its own. The wholeness of people is first and foremost God's 'ministry'.

Christian counseling is subject to this work of God, and that is not just a theoretical statement. We cannot simply say: "we do our best and ask God to do the rest". Like Jesus, Who looked at what He saw His Father do, only to join Him in that work, we have to look what we see our great heavenly Father do. Humbly we may offer our bodies in service to Him (Romans 12:1) and make Him the centerpiece of our counseling work. We help people benefit from what God has already given (the seven points I will present) and from what He is daily giving (idem). God is the Source we draw from, the One who sustains everything – including all liberation, healing, recovery, renewal, exhortation, community and encouragement – and our greatest Goal.

That makes Christian counseling quite distinct from secular counseling, where man is the center of attention. We have to humbly align ourselves with God in order to work alongside Him instead of independent from Him. For me, this is the most vital element in all Christian counseling.

What do we see the Father do? There are so many things! Diligent observation of the Bible as well as practice of many colleagues in the field has led me to believe that what we see God do can be summarized in seven main goals that God has with each of us. In Christ God has taken the initiative to:

- ✠ *reconcile us to Himself in grace, redeeming us from our sins through Jesus' substitute suffering in our place at Calvary,*
- ✚ *free us from the sarx (our old nature, alienated from God) and give us a new, clean and surrendered heart to really live from (our re-birth), from Jesus' resurrection,*
- ⚡ *guide us daily through His Word, the Bible, and let us grow in maturity,*
- ⚡ *let us function in and from a new, loving and joyful community (His family),*
- ⚡ *heal the wounds we have acquired in this broken world,*
- ⚡ *guide and encourage us daily by His Holy Spirit to make us fruitful, and*
- ⚡ *prepare us for The Great Wedding – when Jesus will return to be unified fully to His Bride.*

In the sequel I will refer to the above list as **the seven goals of God**.

In my understanding of life according to the Bible and from what I have seen in practice, I conclude that when those seven goals are being reached in someone's life, the person will flourish and bear fruit through the Holy Spirit, working in him or her.

What is needed in Christian counseling to contribute to the seven goals?

We can now ask the question: what is needed in Christian counseling, if it is to contribute to these seven goals? Not every approach will by nature contribute equally to all seven goals. Let us therefore look at each of the seven goals in more detail:

- ✠ *Reconcile us to Himself in grace, redeeming us from our sins through Jesus' substitute suffering in our place at Calvary.*

The first goal needs a clear view on the nature of sin as well as being stimulating to open oneself up to conviction about particular sins as well as one's sinfulness in general. A very understanding, secular approach may score high on the second aspect (stimulating to be open), but low on the first (clear view on sin), while a highly 'exhortational' and confronting approach with a strong emphasis on the law or on 'living a Biblical life' may include the first but lack the second aspect. The secular approach may have a small contribution if it lowers our defenses against trusting God the Father and Jesus. It definitely needs to be complemented by sound Bible teaching, though.

- ✠ *Free us from the sarx (our old nature, alienated from God) and give us a new, clean and surrendered heart and really live from (our re-birth), from Jesus' resurrection.*

The second goal needs a clear view on the sarx and a clear way of helping and stimulating someone to accept and live from the new heart that Jesus wants to give us. The natural heart cannot please God. We need a complete new heart that is receptive to the things of God. Then we can live a worthy life, full of dignity. Again, secular or legalistic approaches will in general not be very helpful in this, though a secular approach may have a small contribution if it lowers our natural defenses against trusting God.

- ✠ *Guide us daily through His Word, the Bible, and let us grow in maturity.*

Any approach that will lower our defenses against trusting God, and/or stimulate our curiosity to find out more of what God says in His Word, may contribute to the third goal. An approach that frees our spirit, or one that helps our mind to better grasp what we read may contribute to this as well. Besides this, we have to be trained to grow in the maturity of our faith and leave the childish things behind.

- ✠ *Let us function in and from a new, loving and joyful community (His family).*

The fourth goal needs an element of preparing the counselee for community, and stimulating him or her to accept or be forgiving towards the aspects of brokenness that characterizes every community in this broken world. A sound teaching on grace and forgiveness may be of great help here.

- ✠ *Heal the wounds we have acquired in this broken world.*

Though human fellowship can soften the pain, there is only One Who can heal our wounds: God Himself. An approach that confesses that, and any approach that helps a person connect with God at the point where the woundedness is felt most intensely, will be in the advantage on the fifth goal.

- ✠ *Guide and encourage us daily by His Holy Spirit to make us fruitful.*

Reliance on the leading by the Holy Spirit is vital in learning to live the life as God intended us to live, in worship to Him, and bearing good fruit. On our own we don't make it. It helps a lot when a counseling approach somehow stimulates this listening to God's guidance.

- ✠ *Prepare us for The Great Wedding – when Jesus will return to be unified fully to His Bride.*

From the Bible, we know this world will come to an end, one day when Jesus will return and His Bride will be fully united to Him in the Great Wedding. This places all that we do in a larger perspective. For Jesus, this perspective of ultimate joy was what made Him go that hard way to this world and finally to the cross. Not many approaches really focus on or contribute to this larger perspective, though in the years to come (with secularization and pressure on Christians rising) it will prove to be vital. From God's viewpoint it is vital already.

Epilogue


I believe that when, as pastoral workers or Christian counselors, we keep these seven goals of God in our mind when looking at Christian / pastoral counseling, we will come up with better solutions for the people who seek our help. A Church will do well to embrace these seven goals in their teaching and pastoral aims and activities.

In a subsequent brief article I will look in more detail at the problems people may present in counseling. Finally, it is my aim to confront some 22 of the most used or recommended approaches (as presented briefly in my 2001 article: 'Pluriformous and Multi-Colored Christian Counseling' – www.12accede.org/pluriform-cc.pdf) with the seven goals of God and the full list of common problems, to see how well they do on providing adequate help in all of these cases.

More information or suggestions

For more information, questions or suggestions you can contact me via e-mail: andre.roosma@12accede.nl



[Accede! home](#)  or [back to the articles index](#)

Thanks for your interest!