

Equipped to Counsel

Shepherds' Wives Conference 2026 - Martha Peace

Introduction

My name is Martha Peace and I have been a certified Biblical counselor since 1989 when I was the 113th person certified and the 13th woman. But you don't have to be a certified counselor to help the women in your church but, most likely, you will have church women and their friends ask you for advice. So, you need to be prepared. Often, it will catch you off-guard and you don't know what to say. Say this, "I'm not sure what to say but I will think about it and get back with you." Then, do get back with them.

What this lecture is about

- Don't be shocked at what someone says to you.
 - Be extra careful of who you tell.
 - Search the background of "the professionals" you refer them to. Consider the red flags.
 - Be prepared to give hope to the person asking your advice.
 - You might have to set limits especially with your time and resources. That's OK.
 - How to respond if people are asking about or taking sides in a church discipline issue.
- I. Don't be shocked or surprised at what someone might tell you or ask you.
 - A. Jay Adams (who started the NANC/ACBC teaching and certifying organization) used to say, "I dread it when someone comes up to me in the parking lot of the church and tells me of a counseling problem they have and would like an answer to right then."
 - B. I have the same reaction when I am answering questions in a Q and A at the end of the conference where I have spoken. Many times, the questions center around someone they know who has "issues". More often than not, I need more information. Proverbs 18:13
 - C. Keep in mind that you are only hearing one side of the story and it may be the person's side who asked you and if you heard the other side, you might have given very different advice.
 - II. Be extra careful of who you tell. Don't be a gossip. Don't get on your phone to call or text your friends and say, "Guess what I just heard?" Plus don't automatically go to your husband and tell him.
 - A. If the matter seems especially serious then tell the person giving you the information, "This matter needs to be taken to the elders. I am glad to go with you but I cannot be the witness of what happened. You will need to be the witness." If the matter is something illegal, offer to go to the police with her and/or the elders. Don't try to be the witness to the police or the elders because if you are not a first-hand witness, it will probably backfire on you when those that were there come forward.
 - B. Most of the time, you should not tell anyone what they told you. As a general rule, I don't even tell my husband unless it is something he would need to know.
 - C. Sometimes people will tell you something and then not follow up on it. You can ask them about it later and suggest they follow up but you cannot make them, but keep their secrets to yourself. You want to be absolutely trustworthy and not loose lipped!
 - D. If the person keeps coming to you and telling you bad things about someone else but they are not willing to biblically handle the situation, say, "I cannot continue to hear bad reports about this person (usually it is their husband) unless you are willing to try to bring him into the conversation or go to the elders with the information. Otherwise, we are simply gossiping about

him. I believe you but you have to try and get him involved to help him and hear his side of the story.

- III. Search the background of someone you refer them to. Be knowledgeable about the red flags.
 - A. A red flag would be if you refer them to a counselor who says or advertises they are a Christian but does not give biblical counsel. If the counselor is licensed to practice in their state, normally they cannot witness to their client. Only if the client wants to talk about the Lord, then the counselor can let them.
 - B. If the person comes to you for counseling and says, "I have been going to counseling with someone who is a Christian." Ask the person, "Do they pray with you, do they use their Bible to give you advice?" 99 times out of 100, the answer is "No, they have never done that." THAT IS A HUGE RED FLAG!
 - C. Be knowledgeable about the difference between biblical counseling, integrationist counseling, and purely secular counseling. Of course, I only recommend truly biblical counseling because the **"Word of God is alive and powerful, able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart..." Hebrews 4:12**
 - D. So red flags would be state licensed psychologists and integrationist Christian counselors who integrate secular theory and the Bible (or at least try to).
 - E. I have two recommendations: ACBC (biblicalcounseling.com; and my book, *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart*, chapter 3 "Psychologized Man Most High.")
- IV. Be prepared to give hope to the person asking your advice and as a result, it will give you hope even if you cannot solve the problem right then.
 - A. Have a "cheat sheet" of Scriptures with you just in case you need to refer to it.
 - B. Write out the Scriptures unless you have them all memorized and don't need it.
 - C. Examples of hope verses:
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 10:13:
 - 2. Hebrews 4:15-16:
 - 3. Romans 8:18:
 - 4. Romans 8:38-39
 - 5. The Gospel – the greatest hope you could ever give anyone.
- V. As much as you want to help someone, you might have to set limits especially with your time and resources. It's Ok, you have freedom in the Lord to set limits. I typically give my cell number to my counselees just in case they really need to talk to me. I have found that hardly any of them take advantage of having that tid-bit of information. I do ask them not to put it on Facebook.
 - A. When someone calls or talks to you at church and they start telling you a long, sometimes drawn-out tale, nicely stop them and say something like, "My time is somewhat limited right now, *how did it end?* Then if I need more information, I will ask you some questions. Sometimes the ending is: "Even though we had a big verbal disagreement, we kissed and made up." Or it may have ended like, "I called the Police and they hauled him off to jail."
 - B. Keep in mind when someone starts telling you something, they don't know how much you need to know and they are hurting and wanting to tell you what happened.
 - C. Proverbs 17:17, **"A friend loves at all times."** Remember that love is patient and kind and not selfish. At the least you can give hope and say to them, "I am sorry that this has happened."
- VI. How to respond if people are asking about or taking sides in a church discipline issue.

- A. This is when you wish the Lord would just open heaven and *take you up with Him* especially when you have more insider information than the person asking does and they have heard incorrect information.
- B. Keep in mind that if the person being disciplined is not yet repentant, they usually blame-shift that the “elders didn’t do it right.” And **that** becomes the issue for anyone who listens to them or takes up an offense for them.
- C. Ask the Lord for wisdom for what to say. You might nicely say something like, “In the issue of church discipline, the bottom-line issue is *what is the sin that the elders think is unrepentant?* Or you might just refer them to speak with the elders and let the elders decide how much information they should tell.

Keep in mind that **“A gentle answer turns away wrath”** and **“... the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”** Proverbs 15:1, James 1:20

- VII. If you are one of the women in the church that someone might come up to you with their problems or concerns and you want to get more training on how to respond, then I would highly suggest taking the ACBC training classes and considering pursuing certification. Even if you do not go all the way with the certification, it will be worth your time and effort.
- A. Biblicalcounseling.com
 - B. One of the best training courses that is around is Logan Williams’ classes. Logan is my pastor over our counseling training center (faithbiblechurch.us). His classes give you an opportunity to ask questions live or via zoom and then he has subsequent classes called “Baby Steps” or “Next Steps.”
 - C. We have an ACBC certified training at my church with about ten certified counselors and several more being trained. Our church provides free biblical counseling to the church family and for others outside of the church. It is an amazing ministry of our church. If you want more information, you can sign up through our church website which is faithbiblechurch.us.

Conclusion:

Don’t be like I was thirty-seven years ago when I clearly did not know what I was doing. Get some biblical counseling training and be ready to help when someone comes to you asking for help. Prepare a “hope verses” cheat sheet and either memorize it by practicing aloud or keeping the list with you in your purse or your Bible. Our church’s counseling ministry has helped hundreds of people and many have been saved. It is the church’s responsibility to help people and glorify God.

“... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...” 1 Peter 3:15