



*A real counseling session*

# The Supremacy of Christ in Counseling

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A counseling session in a totally Christian setting should be radically different from its counterpart in the secular world. The following description of an actual counseling situation demonstrates the difference that Christ makes when His supremacy is acknowledged in every aspect of life.

**Colossians 1:17-18**, He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

John Piper stated, “The point is this: We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God’s glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attractive place at the center.” (John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, p. 15)

A few years ago a troubled wife came to me for counseling. She was a former church member who had moved to another town when her husband found his “career” job. Apparently he loved the job too much because this wife became broken over his neglect of her and their family.

I was a little surprised. They seemed to be a model of a God-centered family when they were with us. But through many tears she described how the once devoted husband gradually became more concerned about his new job than her. She told me of missed meals and overlooked family times. When she confronted him with her concerns, he defended his actions by claiming that the job demanded that kind of commitment. Then she told me that she came back to me for counsel because she knew I would tell her the truth. I told her I would do that.

So, after listening to a long list of what seemed to be legitimate concerns, I began. I didn’t explore her childhood to see if the pain of a neglectful father was stirring up present pain from a neglectful husband. I didn’t show her how to build up her self-esteem so she could be all she could be. I didn’t give her advice on how she could manipulate her husband into giving her more attention. I didn’t present the possibility of medication to possibly correct a chemical imbalance. And, I didn’t even take her side.

I did, however, ask her one question. I asked her, “What do you want me to help you with?” Through her tears she responded, “Pastor, I want my husband to love me.” Then, I looked her straight in the eyes and said, “Isn’t there anything in this whole wide world that you want more than that?” She looked at me and quietly thought for a moment. Then, it seemed like a light came on in her head. Through her tears, a slight smile came upon her face and she said to me, “Yes Pastor, I want to please the Lord with my life.” She remembered! She got it!

Do you see it? Christ not only deserves and demands our trust and obedience, He *delights* in it. It pleases the Lord when we obey Him when we could go our way instead. This young bride was not forced to obey Christ out of fear. She said, “I want to please the Lord.” The supremacy of Christ not only points to His supreme *authority* but His supreme *beauty*. When God opens our eyes so that we see the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), He softens our hearts so that we *want* that glory for ourselves. So, this young lady doesn’t *have to* obey Christ with her life. She *gets to*.

**2 Corinthians 4:6**, For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

I could not change her husband nor could I counsel someone who was not present. But, I could show her how *she* could please the Lord in the midst of her pain. I could show her from God’s Word how Christ would be honored by her Christ-like thoughts, words, and actions. I explained that her response to her husband was not determined by his actions. Jesus Christ was present to give her grace to love her husband and serve her husband even though he was sinning against her. Most importantly, she could love her husband and serve him with joy.

She left with hope. Discarding self-pitying ways, she left with a plan to honor her husband by loving him as Jesus would. The supremacy of Christ in her life freed her from being swallowed up by the deceitfulness of sin. Through time,

God used her obedience to touch the heart of her husband. My last contact with them found them enjoying a God-blessed, God-honoring marriage.

In Colossians 1:15-19, Paul reveals a Christ who is supreme over all things and all powers. All things come *from* Christ and are *for* Christ. He is the origin and goal of creation and redemption. He is the Creator and the Sustainer of all things. He is the Head of the Church, and He is Ruler over death. Then, Paul makes the crucial point that all that Christ has done and is doing in creation and redemption has one over-arching purpose . . . To declare the supremacy of Christ over all things.

**Colossians 1:15-19**, The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.

How should the supremacy of Christ affect our counsel? If He is supreme over all things then all things are subject to His will and His purposes. To focus on whether a counselee comes from a dysfunctional family or has a poor self-image or is co-dependent misses the point. If we are believers, Christ reigns over our lives. He allows problems to come to reveal His supremacy over all things, including our most painful circumstances. That is what the psalmist meant when he penned Psalm 50:15, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will *honor* me.”

How do we come to experience the supremacy of Christ in the midst of our problems? We trust and obey the words of God recorded in Scripture. We declare the *sufficiency of the Word* because we are sure of the *supremacy of Christ*. Christ is speaking to us by the Spirit through His written word. When we hold fast to the words of Jesus we are really His disciples. Then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free (John 8:31-32). We are set free from the self-centered cul-de-sac of sin and unbelief. We are set free to enjoy the Christ-honoring joy of pleasing Him with our lives.

The great weakness of Christian counseling today is that it has lost a sense of the greatness and goodness of God. The supremacy of God is lost in the supremacy of man. We think God exists to make us happy by giving us the things we want. But God exists to give us something far greater and satisfying than our puny desires. He wants to give us Himself. That truth is the secret to life-transforming counseling.

This wife’s heart was transformed by her desire to live a life worthy of the Lord in the midst of pain. She saw Christ not only as the Supreme Lord over all things, she saw Him as the Supreme Splendor over all other attractions.

There is something about the beauty of Jesus that touches us in the deepest part of our souls. We are motivated to please Him in every way (Colossians 1:9-12). The result of such knowledge birthed in this young lady a Christ-honoring faith that yielded great endurance and patience and joyful obedience.

**Colossians 1:9-12**, For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, <sup>10</sup>so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup>being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup>and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

When Christian counseling makes the supremacy of Christ the focus of all its efforts, Jesus Christ will be greatly glorified and counselees will be joyfully satisfied. The proclamation of that truth should be the driving passion and mission of every authentic disciple of Christ.

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