

The Connection between Everyday Ministry and Counseling



by TODD STRYD

Have you ever had a moment where everything just clicks? You've been trying to figure out something for a long time, and suddenly, the lights go on. Everything falls into place. The problem you were trying to solve, the idea you were trying to understand—you finally make the connection.

This very thing happens to counselors when we make the connection between what we do in the counseling room and what we do in everyday Christian life. It is both comforting and empowering to recognize that what you are doing in counseling is not fundamentally different from what you're doing in your home, in your church, or anywhere you are caring for people. Once a counselor recognizes the continuity between doing Christian ministry and doing counseling ministry, it no longer feels like counseling is a specialized, alien, intimidating endeavor. What once felt like a wholly other world where the Christian life doesn't naturally and easily apply begins to feel organic and intuitive.

I remember making this connection as a counselor, and as an instructor I've seen how valuable it is for students to connect these same dots.

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This article fleshes out what this connection entails. It shows how the broad categories of love and humility that govern our everyday Christian life get applied to the narrower needs of the counseling ministry context. We'll start by briefly considering an illustration using an inverted pyramid that captures this relationship. Next, we'll ponder the nature and scope of the biblical categories of love and humility by exploring several scriptural passages. We'll observe how these passages and their expressions of love and humility inform our everyday interactions but also naturally filter down into the specialization of counseling ministry. To illustrate this, we'll look at vignettes from the everyday life and counseling ministry of Anna, a woman who works at a Christian counseling center.

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The Inverted Pyramid of Helping

The best way to picture this continuity between everyday Christian life and counseling ministry is with an inverted pyramid (see figure 1). This diagram shows how our counseling ministry strategies and how-tos are directly informed by Scripture and connected to the rest of the Christian life and ministry.

The widest part of the inverted pyramid represents the foundational categories of *love* and *humility*. These are the two controlling categories of Christian helping, as they are foundational and comprehensive. Any occasion of care is ultimately built on them and flows from them.¹ As our starting point, the wide, foundational portion of the pyramid representing love and humility has relevance for every day and every person. This application of love and humility has the special distinction of being explicitly prescribed for us in Scripture.

The narrowest part of the pyramid represents how that same love and humility get specifically applied to the uniqueness of counseling

1. The foundation of love and humility as a biblical counseling methodology is a primary theme of Ed Welch's Helping Relationships course. It has come to represent a foundational way that CCEF understands the basic nature of the helping skills.

ministry. The work of practical theology is to flesh out what love and humility look like in action as they are applied to different contexts and different needs. Counseling ministry is distinctive in that it operates within an intensive, intentional, and discipling relationship, with the clear goal of helping others walk faithfully through their trouble. Because not everyone experiences the same type of suffering or affliction, we want to reserve the right to have specific nuances of love and humility for those who encounter particular types of problems.



Figure 1. The Inverted Pyramid of Helping

Thus, as we move down this pyramid, the controlling categories of love and humility are always at work governing, infusing, and structuring all aspects of our living and ministry.²

2. While this article champions the conversational nature of all interpersonal ministry, the intended audience is trained counselors who are struggling to make this connection and see the bigger picture—those who work at the tip of the inverted pyramid. Identifying the fundamental connection between everyday ministry and counseling ministry does not intend to communicate that everyone can do formal counseling.

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