

Change Pathways

Pre-Counseling & Data-Gathering Packet

A Scripture-Shaped Preparation for Wise, Phase-Specific Care

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INTRODUCTION

This Pre-Counseling & Data-Gathering Packet is to be completed and consulted prior to the first formal counseling session and revisited as needed throughout the early stages of care, serving as the primary tool for establishing biblical expectations, discerning whether the presenting struggle is chiefly a matter of sin or suffering, and identifying the appropriate Pathway and initial Phase of response.

It provides the counselor with a biblical understanding of the counselee's circumstances, heart posture, functional beliefs, and spiritual history, so that the Word of God may be applied with accuracy, wisdom, and pastoral care from the very beginning.

The packet is not a substitute for shepherding or conversation, but a means of preparing both counselor and counselee to enter the counseling process with clarity, humility, and readiness to engage God's truth according to the right category, right objective, and right phase of change.

SECTION 1 — ORIENTATION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

What Biblical Counseling Is

A Christ-Centered, Scripture-Governed Way of Care

Purpose

Biblical counseling is a form of Christian discipleship that guides people to respond to life in a way that honors Christ and reflects trust in God's Word. It is not merely about feeling better, coping better, or understanding yourself better. It is about **knowing God rightly, trusting Him more fully, and learning to live in a way that pleases Him**—whether in seasons of suffering, seasons of temptation, or both (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:28).

1. Biblical Counseling Is Grounded in the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture

Biblical counseling begins with the conviction that God has spoken clearly and sufficiently in His Word for all matters of life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Scripture does not merely offer spiritual encouragement; it provides divine wisdom for understanding the human heart, interpreting suffering, confronting sin, and learning how to live in faith and obedience.

This means that in counseling, the Bible is not one resource among many. It is the final and decisive authority for truth, hope, correction, and change (Ps. 19:7–11; John 17:17).

2. Biblical Counseling Aims at Christlikeness, Not Mere Relief

While God is compassionate toward our pain and attentive to our cries (Ps. 34:18), His ultimate purpose in our lives is not simply that we would be comfortable, but that we would be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28–29).

Therefore, biblical counseling seeks more than symptom relief. It seeks:

- Growth in faith (Heb. 11:6)
- Growth in holiness (1 Thess. 4:3)
- Growth in love for God and others (Matt. 22:37–39)
- Growth in obedience from the heart (Rom. 6:17)

True help is defined by alignment with God's purposes, not merely by changes in circumstances or emotions.

3. Biblical Counseling Distinguishes Between Suffering and Sin

Scripture teaches that human struggles generally fall into two broad categories:

- **Suffering:** hardships we experience because we live in a fallen world (John 16:33; 1 Pet. 4:12–13)
- **Sin:** wrong desires, thoughts, and actions that flow from our own hearts (James 1:14–15; Matt. 15:18–19)

These two realities often overlap, but they are not the same and must not be treated the same.

- Those who are suffering need compassion, comfort, hope, and endurance (Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 1:3–7).
- Those who are ensnared in sin need loving confrontation, repentance, forgiveness, and renewal (Gal. 6:1; Prov. 28:13).

Wise counseling begins by discerning which is most central, so that Scripture is applied with accuracy and care.

4. Biblical Counseling Is Shepherding, Not Therapy

In the Bible, God describes His care for His people using the language of shepherding (Ps. 23; John 10:11–15; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). Counselors are not neutral technicians, and counselees are not merely clients. The relationship is one of spiritual care under the authority of Christ, the Chief Shepherd (Heb. 13:20).

This means counseling is:

- Personal, not detached (1 Thess. 2:7–12)
 - Truthful, not merely affirming (Eph. 4:15)
 - Loving, yet willing to correct (Prov. 27:5–6)
 - Directed toward obedience and faith, not self-definition (Luke 9:23)
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5. Biblical Counseling Requires Active, Humble Participation

Those who seek biblical counseling come not merely to be listened to, but to be helped by God's Word. This requires humility, honesty, and a willingness to learn and change (Prov. 12:1; James 1:21–25).

Biblical counseling involves:

- Careful self-examination (Ps. 139:23–24)
- Openness to instruction and correction (Prov. 9:8–9)
- Prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit (John 14:26)
- Active obedience, not passive insight (Matt. 7:24–27)

6. Biblical Counseling Is a Process of Wise, Targeted Care

Change doesn't happen all at once. God works through progressive understanding, repentance, trust, and obedience (Phil. 1:6; 2 Cor. 3:18). For this reason, biblical counseling follows a purposeful process that:

- Discerns the nature of the problem
- Identifies the heart issues beneath behavior
- Applies Scripture according to God's purposes
- Encourages specific steps of faith and obedience
- Provides ongoing shepherding and accountability

In Change Pathways, this process is organized around clear biblical phases of response to **sin** and to **suffering**, so that counsel is always aligned with what God is calling a person to understand, believe, repent of, trust, or obey in a given moment.

Summary

Biblical counseling is:

- **Rooted in God's Word** (2 Tim. 3:16–17)
- **Aimed at Christlikeness** (Rom. 8:29)
- **Careful to distinguish suffering from sin** (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:1)
- **Shepherding in nature** (1 Pet. 5:2)
- **Dependent on God's grace and Spirit** (John 15:5)
- **Committed to wise, process-driven change** (Prov. 20:5)

It is a ministry of truth, hope, repentance, comfort, and renewal—so that God's people may learn to walk faithfully with Him in every season of life.

What Biblical Counseling Is Not

Clarifying Expectations So God's Word Is Applied Wisely

Purpose

To receive biblical counsel rightly, it is important to understand not only what biblical counseling **is**, but also what it **is not**. Many people come with assumptions shaped by modern therapeutic models, self-help approaches, or past counseling experiences. If these expectations are left unexamined, they can lead to confusion, disappointment, or resistance to the kind of help God actually offers in His Word (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8–9).

This brief orientation seeks to clear away common misunderstandings so that the care you provide and/or receive can be understood as the Lord intends: wise, loving, truth-filled shepherding aimed at faith and obedience (Eph. 4:11–16).

1. Biblical Counseling Is Not Emotional Venting

Biblical counseling values honest expression of sorrow, fear, and struggle (Ps. 62:8; Lam. 2:19). However, it does not stop at simply “getting things off your chest.” God invites His people to bring their burdens to Him not only to be heard, but to be instructed, comforted, corrected, and transformed (Ps. 119:67; Matt. 11:28–30; James 1:21).

The goal is not merely expression, but understanding and response shaped by truth (Ps. 42; 73).

2. Biblical Counseling Is Not Neutral Listening Without Direction

Scripture calls shepherds to watch over souls and give an account for them (Heb. 13:17). Therefore, biblical counseling is not value-neutral or non-directive. It does not simply mirror feelings or validate every interpretation. It seeks to lovingly bring God's perspective to bear on our thoughts, desires, and choices (Prov. 3:5–6; Rom. 12:2; Col. 1:28).

Love requires truth, and truth requires guidance (Eph. 4:15; Prov. 27:5–6).

3. Biblical Counseling Is Not About Self-Esteem or Self-Discovery

Scripture does not present the self as the center or solution. While it acknowledges the reality of human weakness and dignity as image-bearers (Gen. 1:26–27; Ps. 8), it directs our gaze toward God's glory, God's will, and God's grace (Isa. 43:7; 2 Cor. 5:15; Col. 3:1–4).

True understanding of ourselves comes as we understand God, His holiness, His mercy, and our need for His redeeming work (Isa. 6:1–5; Rom. 3:23–24).

4. Biblical Counseling Is Not About Symptom Relief

God is compassionate and near to the brokenhearted (Ps. 34:18), and He often grants real emotional and circumstantial relief. Yet Scripture teaches that His deepest work is aimed at the heart—at faith, repentance, endurance, and obedience (Luke 3:8; Heb. 12:11; James 1:2–4).

Biblical counseling does not measure success only by how quickly distress lessens, but by whether trust in God, submission to His will, and likeness to Christ are growing (Rom. 5:3–5; 2 Cor. 4:16–18).

5. Biblical Counseling Is Not Detached From the Local Church

God has designed His people to grow within the life of the body of Christ, under spiritual care and mutual encouragement (Heb. 3:12–13; 10:24–25; Eph. 4:15–16). Counseling is not meant to replace the church, but to serve the church by strengthening faith, repentance, and perseverance within it.

Isolation from Christ's body is not a pathway to lasting spiritual health (1 Cor. 12:12–27).

6. Biblical Counseling Is Not a Process Without Responsibility or Change

Scripture calls those who seek help to be doers of the Word, not hearers only (James 1:22). Biblical counseling therefore involves active participation, humility, and willingness to respond to God in faith and obedience (Prov. 28:13; Luke 9:23; Phil. 2:12–13). Grace does not remove responsibility; it empowers it (Titus 2:11–14).

Summary

Biblical counseling is not:

- Mere emotional release without direction (Ps. 42; Prov. 4:23)
- Neutral listening without truth or guidance (Heb. 13:17; Eph. 4:15)
- Self-centered exploration (Col. 3:1–4)
- Symptom-focused relief without heart transformation (Rom. 12:2)
- A replacement for the local church (Eph. 4:11–16)
- A passive process without repentance, faith, and obedience (James 1:22)

It is, instead, a ministry of God's Word applied with wisdom and love, so that people may learn to walk in truth, endure in hope, and grow in likeness to Christ (Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 2:11–12).

Counseling Covenant

A Commitment to Walk Together Under the Authority of God's Word

Purpose

Biblical counseling is a sacred and purposeful relationship, entered into before God and guided by His Word. This covenant clarifies the shared commitments of both counselor and counselee so that the counseling process may be marked by honesty, humility, love, and submission to Christ (Prov. 20:5; Eph. 4:15; Heb. 13:17).

This is not a legal contract, but a spiritual agreement that sets expectations and establishes a foundation for wise, fruitful care.

1. Commitment to the Authority of Scripture

I understand and affirm that:

- God's Word is the final authority for truth, wisdom, and guidance in this counseling relationship (2 Tim. 3:16–17; Ps. 19:7–11).
- Scripture will be used to instruct, encourage, correct, and call for change where needed (Col. 1:28; Heb. 4:12).
- I am coming not merely for advice, but to hear and respond to what God says (James 1:21–25).

2. Commitment to Honesty and Openness

I commit, by God's grace, to:

- Speak truthfully about my circumstances, struggles, thoughts, and desires (Eph. 4:25; Prov. 12:22).
 - Avoid hiding, minimizing, or justifying sin (Prov. 28:13; Ps. 32:3–5).
 - Welcome careful questions and loving inquiry into my heart and life (Prov. 20:5).
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3. Commitment to Humility and Teachability

I acknowledge that:

- I need God's wisdom and correction (Prov. 3:5–7; 12:1).
 - Growth requires a willingness to receive instruction, even when it is uncomfortable (Prov. 9:8–9; Heb. 12:11).
 - I desire to respond to counsel with a humble and willing spirit (Ps. 25:4–5; Isa. 66:2).
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4. Commitment to Repentance, Faith, and Obedience

I understand that biblical counseling will call me to:

- Turn from sinful patterns and beliefs (Acts 3:19; Col. 3:5–10).
- Trust God's promises and purposes, especially in suffering (Rom. 8:28; Prov. 3:5–6).
- Take practical steps of obedience in response to Scripture (Matt. 7:24–27; Phil. 2:12–13).

I commit to pursue change not merely in understanding, but in heart and life.

5. Commitment to Participation and Diligence

I agree to:

- Attend sessions faithfully and on time (Prov. 18:13; Heb. 10:24–25).
 - Complete Scripture-based assignments thoughtfully and prayerfully (Ps. 119:18; Col. 3:16).
 - Come prepared to discuss what I am learning and where I am struggling (Prov. 27:17).
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6. Commitment to Life in the Local Church

I affirm that:

- God intends His people to grow within the care and accountability of the local church (Heb. 10:24–25; Eph. 4:11–16).
- Counseling is not a replacement for the church, but a support to faithful involvement in it.
- Where appropriate, pastoral care and church leadership may be involved for my spiritual good (Heb. 13:17; Gal. 6:1–2).

7. Commitment to Biblical Confidentiality

I understand that:

- What is shared in counseling will be treated with care and discretion (Prov. 11:13).
 - There are biblical limits to confidentiality, especially when there is danger to self or others, unrepentant serious sin, or a need for appropriate church involvement (Prov. 27:5–6; Matt. 18:15–17; Gal. 6:1).
 - Any sharing beyond the counseling relationship will be guided by love, wisdom, and the aim of spiritual restoration (Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:6).
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Closing Commitment

By God's grace, I enter this counseling relationship with a desire to:

- Be honest before the Lord (Ps. 139:23–24)
- Be humble under His Word (Isa. 66:2)
- Be willing to repent and believe (Mark 1:15)
- Be ready to follow Christ in obedience (Luke 9:23)
- Trust that God is at work for my good and His glory (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:29)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Counselor: _____ Date: _____

SECTION 2 — PRESENTING PROBLEM & PROVIDENTIAL CONTEXT

Presenting Concern Narrative (Guided)

Understanding Your Situation in Light of God's Purposes

Purpose

This guided narrative is designed to help you describe what has brought you to counseling in a way that is honest, thoughtful, and shaped by biblical categories. God calls His people to speak truthfully about their lives and to seek wisdom, not merely relief (Prov. 18:13; Ps. 62:8; James 1:5).

Your answers will help your counselor understand:

- What you are facing
- How you are interpreting what is happening
- What you are hoping for
- Where Scripture may need to bring comfort, correction, or clarity

Please answer carefully and prayerfully, remembering that the Lord already knows your heart and circumstances (Ps. 139:1–4).

1. What Brings You to Counseling Now?

1. What specific concerns, struggles, or situations led you to seek counseling at this time? (Prov. 20:5)
 2. Was there a particular event, conversation, loss, conflict, or realization that made you recognize a need for help? (Ps. 77:1–9)
 3. Why now, rather than earlier? What has changed or become more difficult? (Eccl. 3:1; Ps. 31:15)
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2. How Did This Begin?

4. When did this situation or pattern first start? (Job 3:1–26; Ps. 90:12)
 5. How has it developed or intensified over time? (Heb. 3:12–13)
 6. Were there warning signs or earlier struggles that you now see more clearly? (Prov. 14:15)
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3. What Has Been Most Difficult?

7. What aspects of this situation have been most painful, confusing, or discouraging? (Ps. 13; Lam. 3:19–24)
8. How has this affected your emotions, relationships, work, church life, or spiritual vitality? (Prov. 4:23; Heb. 12:15)
9. Where do you feel most overwhelmed or weary? (Matt. 11:28–30)

4. What Have You Already Tried?

- 10. What steps have you taken to address this problem or cope with it? (Prov. 21:5)
 - 11. What counsel, Scripture, prayer, or support have you already sought? (Ps. 119:59; Prov. 15:22)
 - 12. What has seemed helpful? What has not? (Prov. 14:12)
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5. How Are You Interpreting What Is Happening?

- 13. How do you currently understand what God is doing in this season of your life? (Rom. 8:28–29; Gen. 50:20)
 - 14. What questions or confusions do you have about His purposes or ways? (Isa. 55:8–9; Ps. 73)
 - 15. In what ways do you feel tempted to doubt His goodness, wisdom, or nearness? (Ps. 10:1; Heb. 3:12)
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6. What Are You Hoping Will Change?

- 16. What do you most want to be different as a result of counseling? (Ps. 37:4; Phil. 1:9–11)
- 17. What would you consider a “good outcome” in the next few months? (Prov. 16:3; Rom. 12:2)
- 18. How do you hope your relationship with God, and with others, will grow or be restored? (Ps. 51:10–12; Col. 1:9–12)

7. Initial Spiritual Self-Assessment

19. In what ways do you feel most weak, needy, or dependent on the Lord right now?

(2 Cor. 12:9–10)

20. In what ways do you sense He may be calling you to trust, repent, endure, or obey? (Mark 1:15; Heb. 12:11; James 1:2–4)

Closing Prayer

Before submitting your answers, take a moment to pray, asking the Lord to help you speak truthfully and to prepare your heart to receive His wise and loving care (Ps. 25:4–5; Ps. 139:23–24).

Providence & Life Circumstances

Overview

Tracing God's Hand in the Setting of Your Life

Purpose

God never deals with His children in the abstract. He works within real histories, real relationships, real losses, real responsibilities, and real pressures. Scripture teaches that the Lord sovereignly orders the circumstances of our lives for wise and holy purposes (Ps. 139:16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 8:28–29).

This overview is not meant to reduce your life to data, but to help your counselor understand the **context** in which your struggles are unfolding, so that Scripture may be applied with accuracy, compassion, and wisdom (Prov. 20:5; Eccl. 3:1).

1. Major Life Seasons and Turning Points

1. List significant seasons or transitions in your life (moves, job changes, marriage, divorce, illness, ministry changes, etc.). (Ps. 31:15; Eccl. 3:1–8)
2. Which of these seasons were especially joyful? Which were especially painful? (Ps. 66:10–12; Lam. 3:31–33)
3. How do you believe these experiences have shaped your view of God, yourself, and others? (Ps. 77; Rom. 5:3–5)

2. Significant Losses and Sufferings

4. Have you experienced major losses (death, miscarriage, infertility, betrayal, abuse, injustice, chronic illness, disability, financial collapse, etc.)? (Job 1–2; Ps. 34:19; John 16:33)
 5. Which of these still feel unresolved, heavy, or tender? (Ps. 13; Ps. 88)
 6. How did you respond spiritually during those seasons? (Ps. 42; Heb. 12:5–11)
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3. Relational Context

7. Describe your current family situation and key relationships. (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5–6)
 8. Where do you experience the greatest encouragement and support? (Prov. 17:17; Eccl. 4:9–12)
 9. Where do you experience the greatest tension, conflict, or loneliness? (Prov. 18:24; Rom. 12:18)
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4. Church Life and Spiritual Community

10. Are you currently connected to a local church? In what ways are you involved? (Heb. 10:24–25; Eph. 4:11–16)
11. Do you have regular spiritual oversight and accountability? (Heb. 13:17; Prov. 27:17)
12. How has your church experience been a source of help or hurt? (Ps. 55:12–14; 1 Cor. 12:12–27)

5. Work, Ministry, and Daily Pressures

13. Describe your current work or vocational responsibilities. (Col. 3:23–24; Prov. 16:3)
14. What pressures or stresses feel most constant or heavy? (Matt. 6:25–34; Ps. 127:1–2)
15. How do these responsibilities affect your time, rest, and spiritual focus? (Mark 1:35; Ps. 90:12)
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6. Physical and Bodily Factors

16. Are there ongoing health issues, fatigue, pain, or limitations that affect your daily life? (Ps. 103:14; 2 Cor. 4:16)
17. Are you currently taking medications that influence mood, sleep, or concentration? (1 Cor. 6:19–20)
18. How do physical weakness or limitations shape your temptations, fears, or discouragements? (2 Cor. 12:7–10)
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7. Current Pressures and Looming Concerns

19. What future events or uncertainties are weighing most heavily on your mind? (Matt. 6:34; James 4:13–15)
20. What do you feel least prepared to face right now? (Ps. 46; Isa. 41:10)

Closing Reflection

21. Looking over your circumstances, where do you most need to grow in trust, endurance, humility, or hope? (Prov. 3:5–6; Rom. 15:13; James 1:2–4)

22. Where do you most need the comfort of God's promises and the clarity of His wisdom? (2 Cor. 1:3–7; Ps. 119:105)

Closing Prayer

Ask the Lord to help you see your life not as random or meaningless, but as ordered by His wise and loving hand, and to prepare your heart to receive His counsel with faith and submission (Ps. 25:4–5; Ps. 139:23–24).

SECTION 3 — SIN / SUFFERING DISCERNMENT

Sin–Suffering Discernment Questionnaire

A Biblical Tool for Wise, Targeted Care

Purpose:

This questionnaire is designed to help both counselor and counselee discern the primary nature of the presenting struggle—whether it is *chiefly* a matter of **suffering that calls for comfort and endurance** or **sin that calls for repentance and renewal**. Scripture distinguishes these categories and prescribes different pastoral responses (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:1–2; 1 Thess. 5:14). Wise counseling begins with discernment.

Please answer prayerfully and honestly. There are no “right” answers—only truthful ones before the Lord (Ps. 139:23–24).

I. What Has Happened / Is Happening to You?

(Providence & Suffering – Ps. 34:19; John 16:33; 1 Pet. 1:6–7)

1. Describe the circumstances that have brought you to seek counseling at this time.
2. When did this situation or struggle begin?
3. What losses, disappointments, conflicts, or hardships are you currently facing?
4. How have these events affected you emotionally, spiritually, and relationally?

II. How Are You Responding?

(Behavior & Patterns – Matt. 15:18–19; Gal. 5:19–23; Prov. 4:23)

5. How are you typically responding when this issue becomes most difficult?
 6. What patterns of thought, speech, or behavior have become more frequent?
 7. Are there any responses you sense Scripture may call sinful or foolish?
 8. How are your relationships being affected by your responses?
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III. What Do You Believe God Is Doing?

(Interpretation of Providence – Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28–29; Isa. 55:8–9)

9. How would you describe God's role in what you are experiencing?
10. What do you believe God is teaching you, testing in you, or calling you to trust?
11. Are there ways you find yourself questioning God's wisdom, goodness, or nearness?

Complete the sentence:

12. "In this situation, I believe God is _____."
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IV. What Do You Most Want Right Now?

(Desires – Ps. 73:25–26; James 4:1–3; Matt. 6:33)

13. What outcome are you hoping for most?
14. What do you believe must change in order for you to have peace or relief?

15. What feels most precious or necessary to you in this season?

Complete the sentence:

16. "If this situation does not change, then _____."

V. What Are You Most Afraid of Losing?

(Fears & Control – Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4–7; Prov. 29:25)

17. What do you fear might happen if things remain as they are?

18. What feels most threatened—your security, reputation, relationships, future, or sense of control?

19. How do these fears shape your reactions and decisions?

VI. Where Do You Feel Most Tension With God?

(Faith Struggles – Ps. 13; Ps. 77; Hab. 1:2–4)

20. Are there questions, frustrations, or disappointments you are carrying toward the Lord?

21. Are there Scriptures that currently comfort you? Scriptures you find hard to embrace?

22. Where do you feel most tempted to withdraw, doubt, or grow weary in trusting Him?

VII. Initial Heart & Category Reflection

(For Discernment, Not Self-Diagnosis)

23. Do you sense your greatest need right now is:

- Comfort and hope in the midst of suffering
- Conviction and help in turning from sinful patterns
- Both, in different ways

24. Why do you answer as you do?

Closing Prayer

Take time to pray in your own words, or use the following as a guide:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

Initial Pathway Indicators

Discerning Whether the Primary Need Is Comfort for Suffering or Repentance for Sin

Purpose

Scripture teaches that God calls His people to respond differently to **suffering** than to **sin**. Those who are hurting are to be comforted, strengthened, and helped to endure in faith (Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 1:3–7). Those who are wandering in sin are to be lovingly confronted, called to repentance, and restored to obedience (Gal. 6:1; Prov. 28:13).

Because these responses are not interchangeable, wise counseling must first discern which category is most central at the present moment (Eccl. 3:1; Prov. 18:13). This tool is not for self-diagnosis, but to assist in careful pastoral discernment so that Scripture is applied with accuracy and care.

1. Indicators of Suffering-Dominant Struggles

(Primary pathway: GRACE – comfort, endurance, hope)

These patterns often point to a situation where the person is primarily **enduring hardship** rather than willfully persisting in sin:

- The main experience is loss, pain, injustice, weakness, or grief (Ps. 34:19; John 16:33).
- The suffering experienced is not the direct result of personal sin, such as suffering divorce as the result of adultery (Matt. 19:9)
- The person desires to honor God but feels overwhelmed, confused, or weary (Ps. 42; Isa. 40:29–31).

- Emotions of sorrow or discouragement dominate, not rebellion or defiance (Ps. 13; Ps. 77).
- The heart wrestles with God's purposes but still longs to trust Him (Job 1–2; Hab. 3:16–19).
- The person is asking, “How do I endure?” more than, “How do I justify myself?” (James 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 5:10).

Such cases call first for:

- Compassion and presence (Rom. 12:15)
- Gentle strengthening of faith (Isa. 35:3–4)
- Help in lament, hope, and trust (Ps. 66:10–12; 1 Thess. 5:14)

2. Indicators of Sin-Dominant Struggles

(Primary pathway: GOSPEL – repentance, renewal, obedience)

These patterns often point to a situation where the person is primarily **entangled in sinful desires, beliefs, or behaviors**:

- Repeated patterns of anger, bitterness, lust, fear, despair, control, pride, or unbelief (James 1:14–15; Gal. 5:19–21).
- Justifying, minimizing, or defending sinful responses (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 5:20).
- Ongoing relational conflict rooted in self-centered desires (James 4:1–3).
- Resistance to correction or reluctance to submit to God's commands (Prov. 12:1; Heb. 3:12–13).
- A pattern of knowing what Scripture says but struggling to obey it (Rom. 7:15–25; John 14:15).

Such cases call first for:

- Loving confrontation (Prov. 27:5–6)
 - Call to repentance and faith (Acts 3:19; Mark 1:15)
 - Instruction in putting off and putting on (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:5–10)
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3. Indicators of Mixed or Interwoven Cases

Many situations involve both real suffering and real sin. Scripture recognizes this complexity and calls for wisdom in distinguishing what must be addressed first (Prov. 20:5; Eccl. 7:14).

Common mixed patterns include:

- Sinful responses to genuine mistreatment or loss (Gen. 4:6–7; Heb. 12:15).
- Fear, control, or bitterness growing out of prolonged hardship (Ps. 73; Eph. 4:31).
- Weak faith under trial that leads to grumbling, withdrawal, or unbelief (Num. 11; 1 Cor. 10:6–12).

In such cases, counselors must discern:

- When comfort should come before correction (Isa. 42:3; Rom. 2:4).
- What must be repented of even while grief is acknowledged (Ps. 51; Lam. 3:40).

The key question to ask:

- Is this person suffering as a direct result of personal sin or not?
 - If so, begin with the most fitting GOSPEL Pathway, lovingly confronting sin.
 - When it's clear they have turned from sin to trust and obey Christ, then you may walk them through the most fitting GRACE Pathway.
 - If not, begin with the most fitting GRACE Pathway, inviting honest lament while calling for faithful endurance.
 - If the person is responding to suffering in sinful ways, move to the appropriate GOSPEL pathway but only after working through the first 4-phases of the GRACE Pathway.
-

4. Reflection Questions

1. When you consider your struggle, do you feel more like:
 - A sufferer needing strength and comfort, or
 - A striver needing conviction and change, or
 - Both in different ways? (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:1–2)
2. Where do you most sense God calling you right now:
 - To trust Him more deeply in hardship? (Prov. 3:5–6)
 - To turn from sinful patterns in repentance? (Acts 26:20)
 - To do both, in the proper order and measure? (Mic. 6:8)

Counselor Discernment (For Counselor Use)

Primary Pathway Indicated:

- ☐ GRACE (Suffering / Endurance / Comfort)
- ☐ GOSPEL (Sin / Repentance / Renewal)
- ☐ Mixed – Determine initial priority

Initial Objective to Clarify in Session 1:

This resource prepares the way for precise **Pathway placement** and for beginning in the right **phase of care**, so that Scripture is neither softened where repentance is required nor sharpened where tenderness is needed (Prov. 25:11; Isa. 50:4).

SECTION 4 — HEART & FUNCTIONAL THEOLOGY

Belief & Interpretation Audit

Uncovering the Thoughts and Conclusions of the Heart

Purpose

Scripture teaches that our responses to life are caused, not by what happens to us, but by how we **interpret** what happens and what we **believe** about God, ourselves, and our situation (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 4:12). Two people can walk through the same trial and respond very differently because they are telling themselves different stories about God and reality (Ps. 73; John 11:21–27).

This audit is designed to help bring those inner conclusions into the light, so that they may be examined and reshaped by truth (2 Cor. 10:3–5; Ps. 119:105).

1. Your View of God in This Situation

Complete the following statements as honestly as you can:

1. In this situation, I believe God is _____. (Ps. 77; Ps. 139; Isa. 55:8–9)
2. I am most tempted to think God is _____. (Ps. 10:1; Ps. 13; Job 30:24–26)
3. Right now, God's character feels most like _____. (Exod. 34:6–7; Ps. 103; Nah. 1:7)

4. I struggle most to trust God's:

- Wisdom (Rom. 11:33; Prov. 3:5–6)
- Goodness (Ps. 34:8; Rom. 8:32)
- Power (Jer. 32:17; Eph. 1:19)
- Nearness (Ps. 34:18; Matt. 28:20)
- Faithfulness (Lam. 3:22–23; Heb. 10:23)

Explain: _____

2. Your Interpretation of What Is Happening

5. I believe this is happening because _____. (Gen. 50:20; John 9:1–3)

6. I believe this will ultimately lead to _____. (Rom. 8:28–29; Ps. 66:10–12)

7. I am afraid this means _____. (Ps. 56:3–4; Matt. 6:30)

8. The conclusion I keep returning to in my mind is:

“This situation proves that _____.” (Ps. 73; Jer. 17:9)

3. Your View of Yourself

9. In this season, I most often see myself as:

- A victim (Ps. 69)
- A failure (Ps. 51; Rom. 7)
- A burden (2 Cor. 1:8–9)
- Alone (Ps. 22; Heb. 13:5)
- Unlovable (Isa. 49:14–16; Rom. 5:8)
- Other: _____

10. I am most tempted to believe, “I am _____.” (Gen. 3:1–10; Eph. 1:3–14)

4. Your View of What You Need in Order to Be Okay

11. I believe I need _____ in order to have peace. (Ps. 62:1–2; John 14:27)

12. I believe I need _____ in order to feel secure. (Ps. 46; Heb. 13:5–6)

13. I believe I need _____ in order to feel valued. (Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:9)

Complete the sentence:

14. “If I could just have _____, then I would be at rest.”
(Ps. 16:11; Luke 12:15)

5. Your View of God's Commands and Promises

15. God's commands in this area feel:

- Heavy (1 John 5:3)
- Confusing (Ps. 119:105)
- Restrictive (Gen. 3:1–5)
- Wise (Prov. 3:21–26)
- Good (Rom. 12:2)

Explain: _____

16. God's promises in this area feel:

- Distant (Ps. 13:1–2)
- Hard to believe (Rom. 4:18–21)
- Comforting (Ps. 119:50)
- Strengthening (Isa. 41:10)
- Unclear (Luke 24:25)

Explain: _____

6. Core Functional Beliefs

Complete these statements:

17. "God is really _____." (Exod. 34:6–7; Ps. 145)

18. "I must have _____ to be okay." (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:11–13)

19. "This situation means that _____." (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16–18)

20. "I am most afraid that _____." (Isa. 41:10; Luke 12:32)

Closing Reflection

Ask the Lord to help you see where your thinking may be shaped more by fear, desire, or past wounds than by His truth, and to begin renewing your mind according to His Word (Ps. 139:23–24; Rom. 12:2; John 17:17).

This audit will help your counselor discern:

- Where your thinking needs comfort with truth
- Where it needs correction by truth
- Where it needs strengthening through promise
- And which **phase of change** Scripture calls for first

Desire, Fear, and Control Inventory

Tracing the Loves That Shape Your Responses

Purpose

Scripture teaches that our actions and emotions flow from what we love, desire, fear, and seek to protect (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 6:21; James 4:1–2). Beneath every pattern of anger, anxiety, withdrawal, control, or despair are deeper questions: *What do I want? What am I afraid of losing? What am I trying to secure or protect?* (Luke 12:15; Prov. 29:25).

This inventory is designed to help bring those heart-level motivations into the light so that they may be examined and reordered under the lordship of Christ (Ps. 37:4; Col. 3:1–3).

1. What You Most Want

1. What do you find yourself longing for most in this season of life? (Ps. 73:25–26)
2. What do you believe would make you truly happy or at peace if you had it? (Ps. 16:11; John 6:35)
3. When you are most discouraged or frustrated, what do you feel you are being deprived of? (Num. 11; Ps. 106:13–15)

Complete the sentence:

4. “I would be satisfied if only _____.” (Ps. 62:1–2; Luke 12:15)

2. What You Fear Losing

5. What do you most fear might be taken from you or never given to you? (Matt. 10:28; Isa. 41:10)
6. What future outcome worries you the most? (Matt. 6:34; Phil. 4:6)
7. What thoughts most often awaken anxiety in you at night or during quiet moments? (Ps. 4:8; Ps. 127:2)

Complete the sentence:

8. "I am most afraid that _____." (Prov. 29:25; Luke 12:32)
-

3. What You Feel You Must Protect or Control

9. What areas of your life do you feel you must keep firmly under your control? (Prov. 3:5–6; James 4:13–15)
10. What situations or people make you feel threatened, defensive, or driven to manage outcomes? (Gen. 16; 1 Sam. 13)
11. How do you tend to respond when your plans are interrupted or your expectations are not met? (Jonah 4; Prov. 19:21)

Complete the sentence:

12. "I feel I must control _____ in order to be okay." (Ps. 127:1; Matt. 6:33)

4. How Desires and Fears Shape Your Reactions

13. When your desires are blocked, how do you usually respond? (anger, withdrawal, despair, manipulation, self-pity, anxiety, etc.) (James 4:1–3; Prov. 14:29)
14. When your fears are prompted, how do you tend to seek safety? (control, avoidance, people-pleasing, isolation, distraction, etc.) (Prov. 29:25; Ps. 56:3–4)
15. Which of these patterns do you recognize most clearly in yourself? (Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 4:31)
-

5. Competing Loves

16. What do you most love, cherish, or treasure? (Matt. 6:21; Col. 3:2)
17. What would it cost you the most to lose? (Luke 14:26–33)
18. Where do you sense a tension between loving Christ and loving something else? (John 21:15–17; 1 John 2:15–17)

Complete the sentence:

19. “My heart is most attached to _____.” (Ps. 119:36; Ezek. 36:26)
-

6. Reordering the Heart

20. Where do you most need to grow in loving and trusting God above all else? (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37)
21. Where do you most need to learn contentment and surrender? (Phil. 4:11–13; 1 Tim. 6:6–8)

22. Where do you most need to rest in God's care rather than striving to secure your own peace? (Ps. 23; 1 Pet. 5:6–7)

Closing Reflection

Ask the Lord to reveal where your heart has become attached to created things more than to Him, and to teach you to desire what He desires, fear what He warns against, and trust Him with what you cannot control (Ps. 37:4; Prov. 16:3; Rom. 8:32).

SECTION 5 — SPIRITUAL HISTORY & PATTERNS

Spiritual History & Patterns of Response

Tracing God's Work and Your Patterns of Trust Over Time

Purpose

Scripture teaches that our present struggles are shaped not only by current circumstances, but by long-standing patterns of belief, response, and spiritual formation (Ps. 78; Heb. 3:7–19). God works in our lives through seasons, trials, sins, deliverances, and disciplines to reveal what we trust and how we relate to Him (Deut. 8:2; Prov. 20:5).

This history is not gathered for diagnosis, but for **pastoral discernment**—to understand how you have typically responded to God in times of blessing, suffering, temptation, and correction, so that counsel may be wisely and lovingly applied (Eccl. 7:14; Rom. 15:4).

1. Conversion and Assurance

1. How did you first come to understand the gospel and place your faith in Christ? (John 3:1–21; Rom. 10:9–17)
2. What evidence of God's grace and change have you seen in your life since then? (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20)
3. Do you currently struggle with assurance of salvation? If so, in what ways? (1 John 5:11–13; Rom. 8:1)

2. Seasons of Growth and Decline

4. Describe seasons when your walk with the Lord felt especially vibrant or fruitful. What contributed to that growth? (Ps. 1; John 15:1–11)
 5. Describe seasons when your walk with the Lord felt distant, dry, or marked by compromise. What patterns do you now recognize? (Ps. 32; Rev. 2:1–7)
 6. How do you typically respond when you sense spiritual drift or conviction? (Ps. 51; Heb. 12:5–11)
-

3. Patterns in Suffering

7. What have been the most significant trials or sufferings in your life? (Job 1–2; Ps. 66:10–12)
8. In those seasons, were you more inclined to:
 - Cry out to the Lord (Ps. 13; Ps. 77)
 - Withdraw or grow silent before Him (Ps. 88; Isa. 40:27)
 - Question His purposes (Hab. 1; John 11:21)
 - Trust and wait (Ps. 27; Lam. 3:31–33)
9. What have you learned about God's character through suffering? (Exod. 34:6–7; Rom. 8:18–39)

4. Patterns in Temptation and Sin

10. What sins or spiritual struggles have tended to recur across different seasons of life? (Ps. 19:12–13; Heb. 12:1)

11. How have you typically responded to conviction of sin?

- Confession and repentance (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:7–9)
- Minimizing or delay (Jer. 2:35; Heb. 3:12–13)
- Shame and withdrawal (Gen. 3:8–10)
- Seeking help and accountability (Prov. 27:17; Gal. 6:1–2)

12. What means of grace has God used most to bring change in your life? (Ps. 119; Heb. 4:12; Eph. 4:11–16)

5. Relationship to the Local Church

13. Describe your history of involvement in the local church. (Acts 2:42–47; Heb. 10:24–25)

14. Have you experienced spiritual care, discipline, encouragement, or restoration through church leadership? (Matt. 18:15–20; Heb. 13:17)

15. Are there wounds, disappointments, or unresolved conflicts connected to church life? (Ps. 55:12–14; 2 Cor. 2:5–11)

6. Patterns of Scripture and Prayer

16. How would you describe your habits of Scripture reading and meditation? (Ps. 1; Ps. 119; Josh. 1:8)

17. How would you describe your habits of prayer? (Ps. 62:8; Luke 11:1–13)

18. In what ways have God's Word and prayer been sources of comfort, conviction, or confusion? (Ps. 119:50; John 17:17; Luke 24:25–27)

7. Repeating Themes

19. Looking across your life, what themes seem to repeat?

- Fear and security
- Control and surrender
- Approval and rejection
- Trust and doubt
- Obedience and resistance
(Prov. 4:23; Ps. 139:23–24)

20. Where do you most sense God calling you to deeper faith, repentance, endurance, or obedience in this season? (Mic. 6:8; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:11)

Closing Reflection

Ask the Lord to help you see your life as a story under His wise and sovereign care, and to reveal both His faithfulness and your patterns of response, so that you may grow in trust, humility, and obedience (Ps. 77; Rom. 15:4; Prov. 3:5–6).

SECTION 6 — READINESS & POSTURE

Readiness, Teachability, and Hope

Assessment

Discerning Your Posture Toward God's Word and God's Work of Change

Purpose

Scripture teaches that God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud (Prov. 3:34; James 4:6). The effectiveness of counseling is not determined only by the clarity of Scripture, but also by the posture of the heart receiving it (Isa. 66:2; Mark 4:20; James 1:21).

This assessment is designed to help discern:

- Your readiness to receive God's Word
- Your openness to correction and instruction
- Your willingness to repent and trust
- Your present level of hope in God and His promises

So that counseling may proceed with wisdom, patience, and clarity about what the Lord is calling you to first (Prov. 20:5; Eccl. 7:14).

1. Posture Toward Correction and Instruction

1. How do you typically respond when someone lovingly points out sin, blind spots, or unwise patterns in your life? (Prov. 12:1; Prov. 15:31–32)
2. Do you tend to become defensive, discouraged, grateful, or reflective when corrected? (Prov. 9:8–9; Heb. 12:5–11)
3. How do you usually respond when Scripture confronts your thinking or behavior? (Ps. 119:67; John 14:15; James 1:22)

Complete the sentence:

4. “When I am corrected, my first reaction is usually _____.”
(Prov. 19:20; Gal. 6:1)
-

2. Willingness to Repent and Change

5. Are there areas where you already sense God calling you to turn from sin, adjust your thinking, or change your behavior? (Acts 26:20; Rom. 12:2)
6. What makes obedience feel hardest in your current situation? (Luke 9:23; Heb. 3:12–13)
7. Are there changes you hope counseling will *not* ask you to make? (Jonah 1–4; Mark 10:17–22)

Complete the sentence:

8. “I am most reluctant to let go of _____.” (Matt. 6:24; Phil. 3:7–8)

3. Expectations About Change

9. What do you believe needs to change most: your circumstances, your relationships, your emotions, or your heart? (Rom. 8:28–29; Ps. 51:10)
 10. What would you consider evidence that counseling is helping? (Prov. 4:18; Col. 1:9–12)
 11. How patient are you prepared to be with a process of growth rather than immediate resolution? (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 10:36)
-

4. Present Level of Hope

12. How hopeful do you feel that God is at work for your good in this situation? (Rom. 15:13; Jer. 29:11)
13. What most threatens your hope right now? (Ps. 42; Lam. 3:18–24)
14. What promises of God feel most comforting? Which feel hardest to believe? (2 Cor. 1:20; Rom. 4:18–21)

Complete the sentence:

15. “Right now, my hope is anchored most in _____.” (Ps. 62:5–6; Heb. 6:19)
-

5. View of God’s Character

16. In this season, which aspects of God’s character are easiest for you to trust? (Exod. 34:6–7; Ps. 103)
17. Which are hardest? (Ps. 10; Ps. 73; Isa. 55:8–9)

18. Do you currently view God more as:

- Near or distant (Ps. 34:18; Isa. 57:15)
- Gentle or severe (Rom. 11:22; Isa. 40:11)
- Patient or disappointed (Ps. 103:8; Zeph. 3:17)
- Faithful or unpredictable (Lam. 3:22–23; Heb. 10:23)

Explain: _____

6. Willingness to Trust God's Wisdom

19. Where are you most tempted to rely on your own understanding rather than God's? (Prov. 3:5–6; Jer. 17:5–8)

20. Where do you most need to learn to wait, submit, and entrust outcomes to the Lord? (Ps. 27:14; 1 Pet. 5:6–7)

21. Where do you most need to grow in resting in God's care rather than striving to secure your own peace? (Ps. 46; Matt. 6:25–34)

Closing Reflection

Ask the Lord to grant you a humble, teachable, and hopeful heart—one that trembles at His Word, trusts His purposes, and is willing to follow wherever He leads (Isa. 66:2; Ps. 25:4–5; Rom. 12:1–2).

SECTION 7 — PATHWAY & PHASE PLACEMENT (COUNSELOR USE)

Preliminary Pathway Assignment

Counselor Discernment for GOSPEL vs. GRACE and Initial Phase

(For Counselor Use)

Purpose

Scripture calls shepherds to apply God's Word with wisdom, accuracy, and care, giving "a word in season" according to the true need of the soul (Prov. 25:11; Isa. 50:4; 2 Tim. 2:15). Before moving into targeted instruction, comfort, or correction, the counselor must discern:

- Whether the presenting struggle is primarily a matter of **suffering** or **sin**
- Which biblical **pathway** best fits the person's current spiritual need
- Which **phase of response** Scripture calls for first

This tool synthesizes the intake data in order to make an initial, provisional placement within:

- **GRACE Pathways** (for suffering, sorrow, endurance)
- **GOSPEL Pathways** (for sin, repentance, renewal)

Recognizing that placement may be refined as counseling unfolds (Prov. 18:13; Prov. 20:5).

1. Primary Category Discernment

Based on intake materials, interviews, and prayerful evaluation, the presenting issue is primarily:

- ☐ Suffering-dominant (Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 1:3–7; 1 Pet. 5:10)
- ☐ Sin-dominant (Prov. 28:13; Gal. 6:1; Col. 3:5–10)

Brief justification:

2. Pathway Assignment

Primary Pathway:

- ☐ **GRACE Pathways** – responding biblically to suffering

Phases: Grieve, Receive, Accept, Commit, Entrust

- ☐ **GOSPEL Pathways** – responding biblically to sin

Phases: Grapple, Own, Sever, Pivot, Embed, Live

Rationale for pathway selection:

3. Initial Phase Discernment

Based on heart posture, dominant needs, and spiritual condition, the counselee appears to be most in need of beginning with:

If GRACE:

- ☐ Grieve – honest lament and acknowledgment of loss (Ps. 13; Lam. 3; Matt. 5:4)
- ☐ Receive – comfort and nearness of God (2 Cor. 1:3–7; Ps. 34:18)
- ☐ Accept – humble submission to God’s purposes (Job 2:10; Rom. 8:28–29)
- ☐ Commit – active trust and obedience under trial (Prov. 3:5–6; Heb. 11)
- ☐ Entrust – resting in God’s wise sovereignty (1 Pet. 4:19; Ps. 37:5)

If GOSPEL:

- ☐ Grapple – clarity about sin and God’s standard (Rom. 3:20; James 1:14–15)
- ☐ Own – godly sorrow and heart brokenness (Ps. 51; 2 Cor. 7:9–10)
- ☐ Sever – confession and hatred of sin (Prov. 28:13; Eph. 5:11)
- ☐ Pivot – turning from sin to God (Acts 3:19; Isa. 55:6–7)
- ☐ Embed – reshaping beliefs by truth (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)
- ☐ Live – putting on obedience (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:12–17)

Initial phase selected: _____

Reason for phase placement:

4. Primary Counseling Objective

At this stage, Scripture most clearly calls this person to:

- ☐ Be comforted
- ☐ Be confronted
- ☐ Be instructed
- ☐ Be strengthened
- ☐ Be called to repentance
- ☐ Be helped to endure
- ☐ Be anchored in hope

- ☐ Be renewed in mind
- ☐ Be trained in obedience

Primary objective statement:

“In this season, God is calling this person primarily to _____.”

(Isa. 55:11; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:14)

5. Initial Resource Targeting

First phase-specific resource(s) to assign:

1. _____
2. _____

Scriptural aim of first assignment:

Closing Prayer for Discernment (Counselor)

Ask the Lord for wisdom, clarity, gentleness, and courage to apply His Word accurately—neither softening what He means to confront nor sharpening what He means to heal (James 1:5; Prov. 3:5–6; Isa. 42:3; 2 Tim. 4:2).

Primary Counseling Objective

Clarifying What God Is Calling This Person to First

(For Counselor Use)

Purpose

Scripture teaches that God works purposefully and progressively in the lives of His people, addressing the heart according to what is most needed in each season (Eccl. 3:1; Prov. 25:11; Isa. 55:11). Effective shepherding requires clarity about what the Lord is calling a person to **understand, feel, turn from, trust, or obey first**, so that counseling is not scattered or reactive, but aligned with God's present work (Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:14).

This objective guides:

- The tone of the session
- The Scriptures emphasized
- The phase selected
- The first assignment given

1. Core Spiritual Need

Based on all intake data, the person's most pressing biblical need at this time is:

- ☐ Comfort in suffering (2 Cor. 1:3–7; Rom. 12:15)
- ☐ Conviction of sin (Rom. 3:20; John 16:8)
- ☐ Godly sorrow (Ps. 51; 2 Cor. 7:9–10)
- ☐ Repentance and turning (Acts 3:19; Prov. 28:13)
- ☐ Renewal of mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)
- ☐ Training in obedience (Matt. 7:24–27; Col. 3:12–17)
- ☐ Strength to endure (James 1:2–4; Heb. 12:11)
- ☐ Growth in trust and hope (Prov. 3:5–6; Rom. 15:13)

Primary selection: _____

2. Objective Statement

Complete:

“At this stage, God is calling this person primarily to

so that

(Key references shaping this objective: _____)

(Col. 1:28; Phil. 1:6; Isa. 42:3; Isa. 50:4)

3. Implications for Care

This objective will determine:

- Which pathway governs the work (GOSPEL or GRACE)
- Which phase begins the process
- Which truths must be emphasized
- Which responses must be cultivated
- Which assignments will be given first

(Prov. 4:23; Prov. 16:3; John 15:5)

SECTION 8 — COUNSELING PROCESS ORIENTATION

How Change Pathways Works

A Scripture-Governed Process for Wise, Targeted Care

Purpose

God does not work in our lives randomly or vaguely. Scripture shows that He brings change through a wise and purposeful process—addressing the heart in the right order, with the right truths, and with the right kind of care for each season (Eccl. 3:1; Prov. 25:11; Isa. 55:10–11; Phil. 1:6).

Change Pathways is a counseling framework designed to help apply Scripture with that same wisdom and order. Rather than treating every struggle the same way or giving scattered advice, it organizes biblical care around:

- The **kind of problem** a person is facing (sin or suffering)
- The **biblical objective** God is pursuing in that season
- The **phase of response** Scripture calls for first
- The **specific truths and practices** that best serve that objective

This allows counseling to be clear, focused, and faithful to how God Himself works with His people (Ps. 119:105; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:14).

1. Two Pathways: Sin and Suffering

Scripture distinguishes between:

- **Suffering to be endured with faith and comfort** (Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 1:3–7; 1 Pet. 5:10)
- **Sin to be confronted with repentance and renewal** (Gal. 6:1; Prov. 28:13; Col. 3:5–10)

Change Pathways reflects this distinction by using two primary frameworks:

- **GRACE Pathways** – for those primarily facing sorrow, loss, weakness, injustice, or affliction
- **GOSPEL Pathways** – for those primarily entangled in sinful desires, patterns, or beliefs

These pathways ensure that:

- Comfort is not offered where repentance is needed
 - Confrontation is not pressed where compassion is required
 - Scripture is applied according to its purpose and tone (Isa. 42:3; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:11)
-

2. Phases: God's Work in Right Order

Within each pathway, Scripture reveals a sequence of spiritual responses. God does not call every person to the same step at the same time. He meets people where they are and leads them forward in wisdom (Ps. 25:4–5; John 16:12–13).

Each pathway is therefore organized into **phases**, such as:

- Lament before comfort
- Clarity before conviction
- Conviction before repentance

These phases help ensure that your counseling addresses the need of the moment rather than being reactive and presumptuous.

(Prov. 20:5; Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:1–17)

3. Objective-Driven, Not Session-Driven

Change Pathways is not built around a fixed number of sessions or a rigid program. It is built around **biblical objectives**.

Each phase has a clear spiritual aim, such as:

- Seeing sin as God sees it
- Grieving loss honestly before the Lord
- Receiving God's comfort
- Turning in repentance
- Learning to trust God's promises
- Replacing old patterns with obedience

Counseling focuses on fulfilling that objective before moving on, rather than rushing ahead or covering topics prematurely (Heb. 5:12–14; Prov. 4:18).

4. Targeted Assignments, Not General Homework

Rather than assigning large amounts of material or many activities at once, Change Pathways uses **small, focused, Scripture-centered assignments**, usually one or two at a time.

Each assignment is designed to:

- Anchor the heart in a specific passage of Scripture
- Ask a clear reflection question
- Call for a concrete step of faith or obedience
- Shape prayer in light of God's truth

This keeps counseling:

- Manageable (Matt. 11:28–30)
 - Purposeful (Col. 1:9–12)
 - Directly tied to God's Word (Ps. 119:11; James 1:22)
-

5. Counseling as Shepherding and Discipleship

Change Pathways views counseling as an expression of Christ-centered shepherding, not a clinical technique or self-help process (John 10:11; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2–4).

The aim is that through Scripture, prayer, and wise guidance, you would:

- Grow in understanding of God and His ways
- Learn to respond to sin with repentance
- Learn to respond to suffering with faith and hope

- Be trained in obedience and endurance
- Become more like Christ in heart and life

(Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:28; Titus 2:11–14)

Summary

Change Pathways is:

- **Biblically categorized** (sin and suffering distinguished)
- **Phase-specific** (right truth, right time, right purpose)
- **Objective-driven** (what God is calling you to now)
- **Scripture-centered** (truth shapes thought, desire, and action)
- **Pastorally guided** (shepherding toward faith and obedience)

It is a Scripture-governed map for change, designed to help you walk wisely, honestly, and faithfully with the Lord in whatever season you are in (Ps. 23; Prov. 3:5–6; Phil. 1:6).

First Assignment Preview

Preparing to Engage God's Word in a Focused and Faithful Way

Purpose

Biblical counseling does not consist merely of talking in sessions. God brings lasting change as His people hear His Word, believe His promises, respond in repentance and faith, and walk in obedience day by day (Matt. 7:24–27; James 1:22–25; Col. 3:16).

For this reason, Change Pathways counseling includes **phase-specific assignments**. These are not busywork, worksheets for their own sake, or generic devotional tasks. They are carefully chosen, Scripture-anchored tools designed to help you engage personally with what God is calling you to understand, trust, repent of, or practice in this season.

This preview explains what to expect and how to approach these assignments with faith and diligence.

1. Why Assignments Are Given

Assignments are intended to help you:

- Listen carefully to God's Word (Ps. 119:18; Rom. 10:17)
- Examine your heart in light of truth (Ps. 139:23–24; Heb. 4:12)
- Respond in faith, repentance, and obedience (Acts 26:20; James 1:21–22)
- Practice what you are learning between sessions (Luke 11:28; Col. 1:9–10)

Counseling is most fruitful when the Word of God is not only discussed, but **received, believed, and lived out.**

2. Why Assignments Are Phase-Specific

Because God calls for different responses in different seasons (Eccl. 3:1; Prov. 25:11), your assignments will be chosen according to:

- Whether your primary need is comfort in suffering or repentance from sin (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:1)
- Which biblical phase of response you are currently in
- What spiritual objective God is pursuing in you right now

This means:

- When working through suffering, you will be asked to lament before you are asked to act (Ps. 13; Lam. 3).
- When working through sin, you will be called to understand and embrace what God says before you are called to change habits (Ps. 51; Rom. 12:2).

The goal is that God's Word would meet you at the point of greatest need with the right kind of help.

3. What a Typical Assignment Includes

Most Change Pathways assignments will include:

1. **A Key Scripture Passage**

To be read, considered, and prayed over (Ps. 1; Josh. 1:8; Col. 3:16).

2. **A Reflection Question**

To help you think carefully about how God's truth applies to your heart and situation (Prov. 20:5; Ps. 119:59).

3. **A Practical Step of Faith or Obedience**

Something specific to believe, confess, pursue, or practice in response to God's Word (Matt. 7:24; Phil. 2:12–13).

4. **A Prayer Focus**

To help you bring God's truth before Him in humble dependence (Ps. 62:8; Heb. 4:16).

4. How to Approach Your Assignments

You are encouraged to approach each assignment:

- **Prayerfully** – asking the Lord for understanding and help (James 1:5; Ps. 25:4–5)
- **Honestly** – not hiding, performing, or giving answers you think are expected (Prov. 28:13; Ps. 51:6)

- **Humbly** – willing to be taught, corrected, and encouraged by God’s Word (Isa. 66:2; Prov. 12:1)
 - **Diligently** – giving thoughtful time and attention, not rushing or postponing (Prov. 21:5; Heb. 6:12)
 - **Dependently** – trusting that real change comes from God, not from effort alone (John 15:5; Phil. 1:6)
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5. How Assignments Will Shape Your Sessions

Your assignments will become the foundation of your next counseling session. Together, we will:

- Discuss what you learned from Scripture
- Talk about where you were encouraged, challenged, or confused
- Revisit areas of repentance, trust, or obedience
- Pray in light of what God is teaching you
- Determine the next phase-appropriate step forward

In this way, counseling becomes a steady process of **hearing God’s Word, responding in faith, and growing in Christlikeness** (Col. 1:28; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Closing Encouragement

The Lord is gentle and faithful in His work of change. He does not rush, abandon, or confuse His children. He leads them with wisdom, patience, and truth (Ps. 23; Isa. 40:11; Phil. 1:6).

As you begin this process, come with a heart that is ready to listen, trust, repent, and follow—confident that God uses His Word to bring real and lasting transformation (Isa. 55:11; John 17:17).