

Guidelines for Salvation Counseling

by Edie Cunningham, Former BVI Associate Director

Counseling is a helping relationship during which you lead the pupil by asking a series of questions: "I'm so glad you remained behind to talk to me. What is on your mind?" Do not presuppose why a student has come to talk to you. Ask: "How can I help you? Read John 3:16 and tell me Who loves you." Wait patiently for the student to sincerely respond. Ask: "Who is Jesus? What did Jesus do because He loved you?"

Counseling is an interactive relationship—two people talking together about one issue. Read Romans 3:23 and 6:23. Ask the student: "Why should God let you into His Heaven? What is sin? Have you sinned? What is the payment for sin?" God has never reduced the wages of sin (death).

Read 1 Peter 2:24 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-3. Ask the student: "Who gave that payment for sin? God is holy and demanded payment for sin. Why was Jesus able to give that payment? What do you think of Jesus dying in your place? What happened to Jesus three days later? Jesus is alive forever and He can be your Saviour. Do you need to talk to Jesus about that?" Offer to help the student to pray to Jesus right now. To prevent making wrong assumptions, do not rush ahead of the student but wait for him/her to respond.

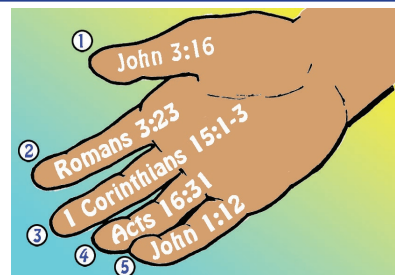
To assure proper comprehension, as a counselor you need to give and clarify information, then seek to clear up obvious misconceptions. Because a

student seeking to know Jesus must have the solid foundation of Gospel truths on which to make an eventual decision, you must counsel from an open Bible. Let the student finger the verses and read the words. You may paraphrase a verse (e.g., "God so loved the world" = "God loves you"). Give illustrations to broaden the student's understanding of salvation. Use a paper and pen to draw diagrams which amplify the meaning of salvation (e.g., a cross representing Jesus; a dark heart representing a person's sinful heart; a white/clean heart with "God" printed inside to show that a student has invited Jesus in).

As the counseling session continues, observe the student's reactions. Has he/she demonstrated conviction of sin and his/her need for the Saviour? Or is the student giving "yes" or "no" answers just to please you? Is the student ready to respond in a simple prayer of faith to ask Jesus to be his/her Saviour? In my estimation, it is poor judgment to let a student parrot a prayer to receive Jesus as Saviour if there is an apparent lack of comprehension and spiritual conviction. On the contrary, however, God is the ultimate judge of the heart.

If a student hesitates to pray to God, reassure him/her that you understand because it is an awesome thing to talk to the Creator God who is powerful and holy. Yet explain that God loves the student and wants to hear his/her voice. Use the student's hand (see illustration below) to guide him/her in forming a simple prayer.

1. Thumb: "Thank You, God, for loving me."
2. Index finger: "I am sorry for my sin."
3. Middle finger: "Thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross as punishment for my sin."
4. Fourth finger: "I believe You, Jesus. Please forgive my sin and come live in me."
5. Baby finger: "Thank You for forgiving me and making me part of Your family."



The outcome of each counseling session may vary. Some students may genuinely pray to receive Jesus as Saviour. Other students may walk away and decide to wait. Others may utterly reject the truth even after their need has been exposed and the way is made clear. Pray for and with each child whom you have counseled. And if a child does pray to know Jesus, explain the promises of John 3:16; Hebrews 13:5; and 1 John 1:9.

