

# Crisis intervention from a biblical perspective



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A crisis is a situation which is unstable and of extreme difficulty or danger. According to mental health, a crisis is the reaction of a person towards an event. Different people react differently to events. One person can be affected deeply by a certain event while another may have little or no ill effects towards the same event.

This is dependent on people's behavior or skills, levels of maturity, personalities and the ability to cope. For some people, reaction to crisis may be coupled with behavior change such as over eating or insomnia. For other people reactions such as disbelief, inability to cope or denial may be evident. Others still may experience physiological changes such that they may start to sweat, faint or their heart rate may increase.

Many people perceive crisis to be an unexpected sudden calamity such as a natural disaster or a car accident. However, crises range in how severe it is and also in type. Sometimes, crisis can be a predictable part of our lives, For instance, the mid life crisis. Some crises are situational and are abrupt and unexpected such as accidents. Other crises are existential which are conflicts within and are related to things as spirituality, direction and life purpose.

It is very crucial to give victims of a crisis some counseling. This is to help the person experiencing it be able to confront the reality of the current happenings. Chronic crises can lead to trauma or stress which leads to mental illness. It is therefore, crucial that the counselors dealing with the crisis be very skilled and knowledgeable on how to handle these victims. Crisis counseling is an intervention on short term basis which is intended to offer assistance to the victims, give them support and resources and to make

them stable and go beyond emotional trauma and pain towards opportunities for change and growth and to be strong.

In this research paper we look at the Biblical perspective of crisis intervention. This is a very unique but effective way of dealing with crisis aftermath and especially when we compare it to the secular approaches. In order for the counselors to understand the spiritual needs of their clients, they have to understand and differentiate the characteristics that define the bible based therapy. When the Bible is relied upon for counseling and a crisis intervention, a client is likely to be returned to functioning safely and into coping levels, at the same time the client reestablishes a relationship with God.

Crisis intervention and counseling in a Biblical manner should be accustomed by all who follow God. There is need to remind those suffering of the ever guidance and love of Jesus. Numerous crises occur every day and especially in the secular world that we are living in today and with the rise in technology hence Bible based guidance is much more needed.

It is important to understand the benefits emanating from biblical crisis intervention. The crisis intervention and counseling through Bible helps an individual to go through a difficult state by relying on the bible and God.

According to Phil Monroe, counseling from the Bible focuses on how to live in a faithful manner, to love mercy, to act in justly, and to walk in a humble manner in circumstances that we find ourselves in (MCP, 2007).

There are two main needs in most of the clients: first, for one to be able to open up and speak of the unresolved pain. Second, for one to be given a surety that they are children of God's love. These are apparent needs and which a counselor must attend to. For a client who believes in God, it is paramount to be reminded of God's love.

It is very important for the faith of the client to be reestablished. If the client is not a believer, or no longer has faith in God, it would be a good opportunity to bring back the client to God when the crisis has been resolved. At the same time, it is important for the counselors not to take advantage of the individual's sufferings.

The intervention and counseling for a crisis can as well be hectic and sporadic. As much as one has to understand the ground rules, it is always important to understand that when a situation heats up, it is a priority for the situation to be stabilized. The person doing the intervention must always be armed with scriptures or any spiritual and pastoral gifts in order to help the individual through the crisis (Read & Mallet, 2003).

The view of mankind as a sinner is also very important to consider in the biblical crisis counseling and intervention. We were all created in the likeness of God but we have fallen short of His glory hence making us all sinners in God's eyes. This puts all clients and their counselors on the same ground in that none are righteous in the eyes of God since we have all sinned (Read & Mallet, 2003).

In giving out the counseling Biblically, it is important to note that one cannot minimize the crisis but can cope with the crisis. Many people experience the

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reality of suffering. According to Biblical counseling, suffering is an opportunity to explore our response to suffering and sickness and also gives us an opportunity to faithfully suffer. It is an honour to suffer in the name of Jesus. In second Corinthians chapter four, Apostle Paul speaks of suffering but he reminds believers not ever lose faith for our suffering has a purpose (Crisis Intervention 2008).

### Why Biblical Crisis Intervention

The Biblical crisis intervention is much needed in our world. We are a world of sin, which have fallen from the paradise and plan of God. Sin is rampant in the world but the Holy Spirit brings under control the full effects of sin. This is a reality that ensures that all people, those who believe and those who do not, suffer so as to experience the need for biblical crisis intervention (Crisis Intervention 2008).

Even if suffering is a reality, believers have hope of an eternity that is perfect after this life. The biblical counselor must know how to guide others as people live in a world of crisis. The counselor must know how to guide individuals in such a way that they return them to their original coping position before the crisis. The counselor then needs to guide the individual to a state of renewal or first conversion to Christianity.

To save a person's soul should never be an afterthought, it is an important aspect in the biblical crisis intervention. When a person is reoriented back to Jesus, his or her faith is saved as well as attending to the worldly crisis (Crisis Intervention 2008).

## Recent developments and defining characteristics

The biblical crisis intervention is not static. Secular movements such as scientific psychology and postmodernism have been a big influence hence it would not make sense to ignore their influences. New techniques are continuously being developed thus the counselors add their perspectives which are unique hence it is important for counselors to be up to date with the discipline's recent developments (Crisis Intervention 2008).

Methodologies and sub disciplines for the biblical counseling intervention are being developed. It is likely that a pastoral counselor will have to render help to the non believers in a post modern view point. It will often require the counselors to combine the science psychology with the postmodern view of the world (Schwartz & Nicholas, 2007).

Also therapy that is community based has grown significantly. This is a good realization that people do not cope or grow in vacuum instead they involve helpful interested parties. Since therapists in postmodern have given up their expert status, they have an interest to expand participants in therapy. They want to involve anyone undergoing therapy that has coalesced around a problem. Although this is a postmodern technique, it has as well been embraced by biblical counseling (Springerlink, 2005).

Although these recent developments seem to merge the views of the postmodern, the secular science and the biblical therapy, it is still very obvious of the distinctive characters that will set apart biblical crisis intervention. One of the distinctive features of biblical intervention from the rest is that the counselors must relate with their clients as equal. This is

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because the counselor understands that the person whom he or she is relating with is created in God's image hence worthy of respect and likable.

At the same time, the client must also understand that mutual respect exists as well as a relationship between him or her and the counselor. Another distinctive feature in biblical counseling is that God is involved in every conversation or session. The pastoral counselors must help their clients enter into a conversation with God. With this unity the client's spiritual aspects are nurtured as well as addressed. Also when a client returns to God, he or she is in a better position to comprehend the meaning behind the suffering and to cope with it well.

#### Benefits of pastoral therapy in comparison with secular therapy

To a believer, biblical counseling has more benefits to him or her than the secular counseling. This is because of the spiritual experience. There is a high possibility of therapy succeeding when the counselor considers the client's cultural background. It is also important to evaluate the impact of the client's religion on the crisis at hand. This will facilitate total counseling of the client.

This is a concept that is in contrast with the secular counseling. It had been assumed that there existed a universal scientific psychiatry that could address effectively all of the people's emotional illnesses regardless of their cultural or social backgrounds. In the recent research, ethnic and cultural groups conceptualize mental illnesses variously based on their unique conceptualizations of both the cures and causes. Biblical counseling is better

placed in helping out the client in many situations as it focuses on these unique cultural viewpoints.

There is a high possibility that many people would not seek psychological help because of their personal religious views. Consequently, attitudes towards psychological disorders among religious groups will impact on a person's admission of a problem, and behavior to seek help.

The writer of Hebrews explains that, we “ may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4: 13) when we approach God with our problems. Thus, these individuals must be made to understand that the pastoral counselors could be the vessels that God uses to help them approach Him.

The pastoral counselors need to understand that human beings are either in a relationship or out of fellowship with God. If the client is out of fellowship it is up to the counselor to bring them back to and if the client is in a relationship with God, then it is the counselor's responsibility to help the client understand on how to seek guidance and strength from God (Crisis Intervention, 2008).

As much as the biblical crisis interventions have more benefits than those of secular, it does not mean that they should be mutually exclusive. Human beings have many dimensions and since there is a connection between emotional and spiritual dysfunction and health, both psychological and pastoral resources must be integrated in order for a holistic healing to be achieved.



Human beings have been provided by God the understanding ability of the external natural world and the psychological world which is internal.

Counseling is more likely to succeed when there is a combination of the counseling lessons with those of the biblical teachings. Secular theologians find this concept very difficult. They have acknowledged the religious aspect of man just recently although it has been the cornerstone of biblical crisis intervention from the beginning (Crisis Intervention 2008).

In most cases, early childhood occurrences can have a lasting effect which can easily distort our perception of love of God. These misconceptions of the love of God may have lasting effects on the coping capabilities of a person. The childhood events can imprison us in beliefs which are distorted and which may misshape our perception of self, others and God.

The foundation of cognitive counseling is that the dysfunction in psychology emanates from false beliefs and to be healed emotionally, one requires replacing lies with the truth. However, thoughts which are faulty cannot occur at the cognitive level of logical knowledge. We may have the precise information about ourselves and God in our heads. Instead, the faulty beliefs that misshape us normally transpire at the effective level of knowledge experience.

Only biblical orientation can break free of these distortions hence the secular crisis intervention is unable to reinstate an individual's coping abilities since they are unable to restore a person's relationship with God. Another benefit that the biblical crisis intervention has over the secular is that biblical counseling acknowledges the significance of religious application to a rapid

event. This benefit helps the client to understand who they are and ways of functioning within their society (Crisis Intervention 2008).

Focus on the event and the solution

The Biblical crisis intervention uses two approaches. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and focus on two aspects that are different. The first approach focuses on the event and challenges to alter the views of the client on the original event. This approach is also called the traditional therapy. The other approach focuses on the solution and tries to use the client, God and the precipitating event as a change catalyst. It is also called the Brief therapy (ITHACA, 2010).

No matter the approach, identification of the crisis cause is very important and the main goal for the counseling is to make the client return to a coping level before the crisis. At the same time the pastoral therapist may attempt to return the client to his or her original comfort zone or may even stretch their zones of comfort to existing conditions (Crisis Intervention 2008).

The main reason for the biblical crisis intervention in counseling is the impact that the crisis can have on an individual. Our perception of reality or what is not real can be distorted by our worries. The worries that are often the source of the crisis or relate to a possible future crisis do not help the biblical counseling process. In fact, thoughts full of fear are normally exaggerated and can even make the problem to worsen (Popovich, S. 2010).

The most important thing is to restore the coping abilities of the individual because when they are not restored the results would be disastrous. When a

person is unable to cope with a certain crisis, the impending dangers would be depression, taking out anger on others in insults or violence, abuse of substance or even suicide.

This affects the person's future coping as he or she will be left with feelings of failure and guilt and this affects his or her future coping mechanisms. This renders the client to have a downward spiral which moves from one crisis to another which then accumulates future crises resulting to a degraded lifestyle of the client (MCP, 2007).

There are many factors that increase crisis effects. Some of the factors are expectations that are unrealistic, personality traits which are negative, a sense of identity which is faulty, a belief system which is faulty, and isolation. This could lead also to an advanced isolation and a loss of support from the loved ones. The main goal, therefore, of biblical crisis intervention and counseling is to try reduce the impact of the original crisis and hence to reestablish the mechanisms for coping (CCEF, 2010).

The first approach (the traditional therapy) for the pastoral counselor is to establish a rapport and a relationship with the client while determining the perceived impact of the precipitating event. Some of the precipitating events may be intensely dehumanizing hence it is important to first reestablish the individual's humanness. The interventionist will have the need to confront the realities of shame and sin when helping the client. It helps to remind the client that we are " all sinners and we all have fallen short of God's glory" (Roman 3: 23).

When the crisis intervention undertaking focuses on the solution, it becomes more complicated. This is because some individuals have a rough time overcoming the event even if they are well reestablished with God. The same way when Peter the Apostle denied Jesus the night of His arrest, even after the event, he lived with the shame and guilt of his sin (Mark 14: 66- 72).

On the other hand, some clients are able to confront the situation but still need to be reminded of God's love. They need to be reminded that according to the writer of Hebrews, God says " I will never leave you, never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13: 5). At the same time, believers are encouraged to say, " The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can human beings do to me?" (Hebrews 13: 16).

The second approach (the brief therapy) that the counselor will focus on is the possible solutions to the crisis. The main goal is to help the client in the least period of time as possible. This approach does not minimize the precipitating event rather it focuses on the future. The crisis may have been caused by many and complicated causes, hence the therapy focuses on what can be done in order to change the situation in the present and in future rather spending a lot of time focusing on an event that may or may not be able to be changed (ITHACA, 2010).

The distinguishing feature between the traditional therapy and the brief therapy is that they focus on a treatment that is specific, with measurable and short term goals. The client and the interventionist work hand in hand to set up measurable objectives that they record after every session. This use of smaller shorter objectives make the clients feel like they are

accomplishing something and also feel in control of their lives. The counselor is also there to help the client if they go astray (ITHACA, 2010).

There is a major difference between the roles played by both the traditional therapist and the brief therapist. In traditional therapy, the counselor is seen as an expert hence a bit distant with the client, whereas in brief therapy, the counselor works in collaboration with the client to understand and to solve the problem.

In brief therapy, the counselor is seen as a sister or a brother in Christ whereas in traditional therapy, the relationship is that of an expert and a subordinate. The relationship in the brief therapy allows for a position to evangelize when one is needed or desired (ITHACA, 2010).

#### Biblical counseling controversies

There are disagreements and movements that occur in Biblical counseling and crisis intervention. There are two known main movements within biblical counseling. The first movement is to discard all the secular techniques and counsel with only the Bible. The second movement is a movement that seeks to reduce the Bible usage within the Biblical counseling.

Some denominational seminaries are the ones who discussed the first movement that biblical counseling should move away completely from counseling using secular theories to use of biblical teachings only. They contend that scripture is enough to address psychological problems. This movement believes that by incorporating secular counseling in pastoral

counseling, the biblical counseling has lost its way and focus on God (Goliath, 2008).

To defend their position, they quote the Bible in Paul's words that, " all Scripture is God- breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17).

The implication that pastoral counseling is not biblically based is either totally ignorant or totally arrogant. Pastoral counseling and care which is not based on the Bible or theological integrity is deficient. Again, Biblical counseling that does not include awareness of psychotherapy has a danger to be abusive.

This danger is that those with problems that cannot be wholly solved through scripture may not seek the help they need and probably will never recover. According to David Winfrey, when biblical counseling rejects the behavioral sciences, it's discarding an important source of information which has been made available by God (Koenig, 2005).

According to Phillip Monroe, the Bible is not a text book in counseling yet it is more than a pointer to God. It does not provide an all-inclusive methodologies or theories for counseling. However, it is not just a book that discusses God. It also points out truths about the human nature and life hence should be used together with counseling methodologies that are not in the scripture (MCP, 2007).

Biblical counseling is based on the notion that each and every believer performs like a counselor to other believers. Secret knowledge, professional credentials, or guild are not needed. Even if some people may have wisdom and Christian maturity that enables them to deal effectively with complex people and issues, we will all be treated the same. “ Seek the face of God, love God and others in the moment, trust God for things you cannot change and when things seem dark and dismal, repent and trust God all over again each day” (HOLY Bible).

The pastoral counselor hopes to help the person being counseled to respond in faith when in fear, when angry, when confused or grieving. When this happens, person being counseled may have the experience of peace and joy also the confusion within will be minimal (MCP, 2007).

The opposing movement has minimized the use of the Bible and uses at a larger extent secular approaches and only supplements religious thoughts when necessary. This movement poses the problem of minimizing the personal responsibility to God. Instead of being responsible to God and living His will, these secular techniques allow people to only be accountable to no one else other than themselves.

The best and the approved biblical counseling and crisis intervention methodology incorporate techniques from both the Bible and the secular disciplines. This will help in giving the counseling service to both the believers and the non believers and the pastoral counselors can even evangelize to the non believers (Koenig, 2005).

It is important to understand that it's not by simply talking about God whether in a professional or an academic manner that will reorient individuals back to Jesus. When we combine reintegration to the church community with psychological therapy it provides both the long term support and the immediate guidance an individual will require to cope with the crisis at hand (Koenig, 2005).

## Conclusion

The challenge for biblical intervention methodology is providing a valuable crisis assistance and support within the earliest time possible following victimization, and to make the resources and services available in order to meet the victim's needs by providing a direct assistance or referring to other agencies (Crisis Intervention 2008).

The Biblical crisis intervention and counseling does not imply the end of the required therapy. When an individual has been established in a church community, much support is thereafter needed. When the crisis counseling is over, many church ministries continue to offer the long term help that is much needed by their clients. Since there is a unique relationship between the client and the counselor, it should be very possible for the life counseling and guidance sessions to continue.

Biblical guidance is a beautiful way since it is a demonstration of the love of God for His people. The love and affection that the pastoral counselor displays is just a small token in comparison with the love God gives to those who believe in Him. This is a reality that guides the pastoral counselors in getting their clients back to God.

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At the same time, when we rely on God's word, it reminds us of Jesus' importance in our lives. As the Hebrew writer explains, "the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews, 4: 12). Again, in the Gospel of John, Jesus tells all those who believe in Him that "Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John, 8: 32).

Biblical therapy is counseling is not only focused on sin. It sees suffering as a given opportunity to suffer in faith as we discover how we respond to pains and sicknesses whether self inflicted or God oriented. How we respond to the difficulties that befall us reveals what we worship and seek in life whether it's God, pleasure, comfort, perfection, and escape, to be safe or to be significant.

The biblical crisis intervention and counseling is not focused on ending human suffering or teaching skills to end suffering, rather, it works with the broken and sinful people who live in sinful world and helps them live in a faithful manner and to trust in God the creator of all things.

Biblical therapy strives to help people combine the worship of God and enjoy the blessings of being the chosen people of God. It also helps to reorient people in discipleship, mercy ministry and help them in sanctifying themselves.

Biblical counseling works on the principle that the Bible has all the information we need to help us deal with our day to day problems. Most people believe that emotional and mental problems should only be dealt with <https://assignbuster.com/crisis-intervention-from-a-biblical-perspective/>

the professional psychologists but this has been proved wrong since bible therapy has seen many people be able to cope to cope with their problems and even face others in future. Again, it has been proven that bible therapy is the best as it deals with the souls of human beings and pastoral counselors are well exposed to the wisdom of God.