

Selecting a Christian Counselor

The key criteria for selecting a Christian counselor involve the counselor's credentials and faith.

by Mitch Temple

The key criteria for selecting a Christian counselor involve the counselor's credentials and faith.

Just because a person refers to himself as a counselor does not necessarily mean he's properly trained. A counselor should be licensed by the state in which he practices. Also, if you are experiencing marriage problems, you may want to look for a Marriage and Family Therapist. MFTs have specific training in relationship dynamics. Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) have specific training in dealing with individual problems, but many also have experience and training in marital issues. You may also look for someone who has specific experience in working with couples in crisis.

You can ask questions that will help you decide if a particular therapist is a good fit for you:

- What type of license do you have? The most common types of licensure include: Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Psychologist, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and Psychiatrist (MD).
- Where is the license held? Which state? The license should be from a state licensing board, not simply from a professional or national counseling association. The counselor's license should also be from the state where the therapist is currently working, not just from any state.
- Is your degree from an accredited university?
- What other credentials do you hold? Professional memberships?
- Do you have specific experience in working with couples in crisis? What type of problems have you worked with?
- Are you active in your faith?

Just because a person refers to herself as a Christian therapist does not necessarily mean she is Christian in beliefs and practices. Here are some questions to help determine a therapist's level of faith:

- Is she recognized and recommended by the local church community?
- Does she attend church regularly? What activities is the counselor involved with at church? Does she teach a class or participate in service activities?
- Who is the counselor's minister or pastor? Does the counselor feel uncomfortable with the prospect of you talking to her pastor?
- Does the counselor have a statement of faith? Do her beliefs conflict with yours?
- What does the counselor believe about marriage and divorce?
- Does she encourage reconciliation and offer therapeutic services to couples toward that end?
- Does the counselor use prayer and Scripture in her practice?

If a counselor seems reluctant or uncomfortable in answering these questions, feel free to seek other recommendations from trusted Christian advisors such as church leaders, staff, Sunday school teachers, denominational boards, etc.