

Word of Life's Counseling Philosophy Using the O.D.G. Formula for Seeing Change Take Place

Introduction

Counseling is all about helping others becoming more like Christ. Why do we want to see this accomplished?

Rom 8:29

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;" (NAS)

Christ's purpose for our lives is to be progressively transformed into His image. This is a process of continual examination, where we look at who we are in comparison to who Christ is, and make the changes. The predominant goal of a camp counselor or staff counselor is to help those put under their spiritual care to be like Christ.

The ODG Method

ODG is an acronym for **Observe, Diagnose, Goals**. Whether you realize it or not, the procedure of an ODG type Goals is what is involved in simple problem solving. As we solve problems, we have to make *factual observations*, which are turned into *Biblical words with the diagnosis*, and *tangible targets* are articulated with the *goals*. ODG simply helps us to remember these steps, and practically helps us to see change take place.

Why 'ODG'?

ODG establishes a consistent Biblical framework (across the counseling core) for change to take place that can be plainly and clearly articulated. Through this process, *everyone under our care is given Biblical counsel, and based on that counsel, Biblical goals.*

O - Observation

What's the purpose of spiritual observation? Observing the spiritual condition of an individual is the first step in knowing how you will help them grow. It's as we observe actions, attitudes and answers that we begin to understand how we can help others become more like Christ. We observe with the purpose of wanting what's best for the person we're observing - to help mend areas of weakness and fortify strengths. Observation allows us to take what we're seeing and begin to formulate a Biblical framework for change.

Example: you notice that your camper doesn't relate well to the other campers.

D – Diagnoses

A proper observation will now lead you to the next step: a Biblical diagnosis. *The diagnosis puts into Biblical words the truth of what our observations have told us.* What's the purpose of a diagnosis? It simply identifies Biblically areas in ones life that needs to change and begins to establishes the groundwork for how that change is to take place. A diagnosis is not always good news...but when it's based on Scripture, it's the needed truth.

How do I diagnose? Diagnosis is only possible when there is knowledge of known conditions, and what the person is supposed to be like. When we know what we're shooting for, and we know what their current state is, we can begin to diagnosis. In the medical world, what the medical professional is shooting for is physical stability. When there is instability, the doctor knows how to bring stability. Spiritually, we're shooting for Christ likeness, and it's as we know the Word of God, that we can begin to help people see who they are and how they need to change.

A diagnosis should be weighed with the total picture of what you're seeing, not necessarily single episodes. We should be looking for instances that lead to reoccurring patterns. Example: one episode of anger doesn't necessarily mean someone has an anger problem; however, daily bouts with anger would necessitate you arriving at that conclusion.

A Biblical diagnosis, just like a medical one, must be based on facts. We can't rely on hunches or inklings; we must look at our observation, and parallel these findings with the truth of the Bible. When we try to diagnosis based on feelings rather than truth, we have no Biblical basis to begin to help them change.

Example: you notice that your camper doesn't relate well to the other campers (Observation). You ask him about it, and he angrily states that friends have always let him down. You realize this anger is really bitterness, and tell him that he's bitter, and share with him Eph. 4:31 (Diagnosis).

G- Goals

You've observed, you've diagnosed, and now you have to do something with your diagnosis. Tragically, this is where many people in ministry fall short. They've determined what the problem is, but they're content to leave it at that.

What's the purpose of Goals? Going back to the medical analogy: you can imagine how heart wrenching it would be if your doctor, after observing your symptoms and coming to a diagnosis said "Sorry, you've got heart disease...have a nice day!" and walked away. No...he would tell you what the next step is going to be. Spiritually it must be the same. If we're going to help people become what Christ has called them to be (Rom. 8:29) then we've got to develop a goals that will help them to get there.

Goals deal with the question: ***based on my factual observations that lead to my Biblical diagnosis, what does the Scripture now want to see accomplished in their life?*** A Biblical goal helps them to change or to strengthen an area of their life.

How do I come up with Goals? Goals are simply the Scriptural answer to the diagnosis; it's discovering how God's Word wants us to be changed based on what God's Word says we are. The Scripture always tells us how we can change our heart in order to change our behavior. In the Goals stage, we how God's Word wants to change us/strengthen us, and we give some counsel on some practical ways to see that happen.

Example: you notice that your camper doesn't relate well to the other campers (Observation). You ask him about it, and he angrily states that friends have always let him down. You realize this anger is really bitterness, and tell him that he's bitter, and share with him Eph. 4:31 (Diagnosis). You explain that God would rather he forgive people who have 'wronged' him in the past, based on Eph. 4:32, and you give some practical actions steps to help him do that (Goals).

Thus, in this Observe, Diagnose and Goals process, we have seen an area in one's life that needs to change, we have used the Bible to understand the problem, and we have used to Scripture to explain what needs to change (with a few practical actions steps to make the Scripture a reality).

Final Thoughts: Helping someone to see areas of their life that need to change and how you want to help them change is not always easy. It can be intimidating. God has placed you in this role this summer over your specific camper for a specific purpose. Don't shy away from your responsibilities in mentoring because you fear man:

***"For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."
Galatians 1:10 (NAS)***