

15. (Case Study) Carefully describe whether and how you would want to work with a physician to help Sarah through this ordeal. As part of your answer to this specific question, describe, in general terms, how you believe biblical counselors should cooperate with medical professionals.

- **Overview**

- Introduction
- The Importance of the Dichotomy of Man (Review)
- Carefully describe whether and how you want to work with a physician to help Sarah through this ordeal.
- How do you believe biblical counselors should cooperate with medical professionals?

I. Introduction

A. Background:

1. Sarah is a 34-year-old married mother of three who comes to you for help with depression. She says that she has been feeling “terribly sad” for the last six months and has had a lot of trouble “keeping up with life.” She came to you seeking the opinion of a biblical counselor on what she should do. Sarah has several friends who received anti-depressants from their family doctor. The medicine seemed to help for a while, but they also experienced some unpleasant side-effects that she is concerned about. She asks you explicitly, “Do you think I should see my doctor about taking an anti-depressant?”

II. The Importance of the Dichotomy of Man

A. Man is made up of both body and soul, and both aspects were affected by the fall of man.

B. Adams “Man is a complex whole. He cannot (in this life) be separated into his parts, except for purposes of analysis. All attempts, therefore, to divide man . . . in order to allocate these several parts to the physician, to the psychologist, and to the preacher, respectively, must fail.”¹

1. Mack “Physical problems can both contribute to and proceed from spiritual problems. The success of our counsel will sometimes be dependent upon understanding a particular aspect of someone’s health.”²
2. Mack “There is a close connection between the two (the inner and outer man). The inner man can affect the outer man and vice versa. Thus, we must be aware of any physical problems of our counselees if we desire to solve the inward problems they face.”³
3. Adams “That the body affects the soul and the soul the body in so many obvious, as well as subtle, ways is a fact that the Christian counselor must always remember. His work, therefore, constantly involves the organic dimension. He will strive always to work from this biblical presupposition in

¹ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 437.

² Wayne Mack, "Taking Counselee Inventory: Collecting Data" in John MacArthur, ed., *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 132.

³ Wayne Mack, "Taking Counselee Inventory: Collecting Data" in John MacArthur, ed., *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 132.

ACBC Counseling - Question 15

ways that are consistent with it. He should take the time and trouble, therefore, to study the fundamental functions of the human body.”⁴

4. Adams “Because the problem of the dividing line between problems caused by organic factors and nonorganic factors is often fuzzy, the best solution to this problem (to date) seems to be for the counselor to cultivate a close alliance with a Christian physician with whom he can work closely.”⁵

III. Carefully describe whether and how you would want to work with a physician to help Sarah through this ordeal?

- A. To answer this question, think of yourself as an ACBC Certified Counselor. Sarah is sitting across from you and has explained her situation to you and is asking for your help. She has asked what your thoughts are about antidepressants and you let her know your thoughts. But the question remains, how would you want to work with a physician to help Sarah?

1. ACBC “The Bible is clear that God created human beings to consist of both a body and soul. To be a human being is to exist in these two constituent parts, which are separable only at death. . . Christians, therefore, should respect medical interventions as a fully legitimate form of care for those struggling in this fallen world. Examinations by medical professionals are crucial adjuncts to a biblical counseling ministry as they discover and treat, or rule out physical problems, which lead many to seek counseling help.”⁶
2. Adams “The Christian Physician and Counseling”⁷
 - a. This article approaches this issue from the perspective of the Christian Physician.
 - 1) “Many of your patients suffer from more than medical problems, as you well know. Even if you tried to forget or ignore that fact, the guilty depressed women or that resentful colitis patient who will appear in your office tomorrow will raise the matter afresh. You *cannot* avoid the issue. The problem, of course, involves the further questions: ‘Should I take the time to counsel, should I refer the patient, or should I by-pass the issue of counseling by treating symptoms alone?’”⁸
 - 2) “Instead of undertaking counseling yourself, you largely may have opted for referral. This, of course, is the easiest solution. And yet so frequently it is no solution at all (as you know only too well). So often patients either find little or no help at all or return in worse condition. Referral raises the crucial question: *to whom?*”⁹

⁴ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 438-439.

⁵ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 439.

⁶ Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, *Mental Illness and Medicine: I. Mental Disorders and Biblical Counseling*. Available at: <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/beliefs/statements-from-the-board/mental-illness-and-medicine/>

⁷ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 439-443.

⁸ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 439.

⁹ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 440.

ACBC Counseling - Question 15

- 3) “Can you, in good conscience, refer a patient to such a psychiatrist when it is his task to attempt to change behavior and attitudes through value change? If his values are not Christian or if he divorces his personal faith from the Rogerian, Skinnerian, or Freudian presuppositions and methods by which he practices psychiatry, how can you justify referral?”¹⁰
- 4) “Brethren, something has been happening, and you should be aware of the fact since you may be able to enlarge the effectiveness of your own ministry as a physician by achieving a significant alliance with a minister (or ministers) to whom you confidently can refer patients for counseling. Do not expect this new pastoral counselor to have all of the answers anymore than you would claim answer to every organic problem, but look for a man who can do far more to help complement you in your medical ministry that many pastors whom you previously have known. I encourage you to explore this possibility to the full.”¹¹

IV. How do you believe biblical counselors should cooperate with medical professionals?

- A. Adams “The pastor, or other Christian counselor, works back to back with the physician. The latter will help him immensely in sorting out cases in which thyroid deficiency, myxedema, or some other similar condition is at the root of a disorder. There is, of course, a gray area between, where it is uncertain to both whether a problem stems basically from organic or non-organic sources.”¹²
- B. Implications for Counseling Practice
 1. ACBC “Biblical counselors shall encourage the use of physical examinations and testing by physicians for diagnosis of medical problems, the treatment of these problems, and the relief of symptoms, which might cause, contribute to, or complicate counseling issues.”¹³
 2. ACBC “Biblical counselors reject the notion that medical interventions solve spiritual problems. They embrace the use of medicine for cure and symptom relief, but deny that medical care is sufficient for spiritual problems, which require Christ and his gospel for ultimate relief and lasting change.”¹⁴
 3. ACBC “Biblical counselors shall nurture a spirit of humility, understanding many issues at the nexus of body and soul defy simplicity. They recognize that many problems are combinations of physical and spiritual issues. Others are problems, which are not easily identified as one, the other, or both.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 440-441.

¹¹ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*, 443.

¹² Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*, 37.

¹³ Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, *Mental Illness and Medicine: III. Counseling Practice*, Available at: <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/beliefs/statements-from-the-board/mental-illness-and-medicine/>

¹⁴ Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, *Mental Illness and Medicine: III. Counseling Practice*, Available at: <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/beliefs/statements-from-the-board/mental-illness-and-medicine/>

¹⁵ Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, *Mental Illness and Medicine: III. Counseling Practice*, Available at: <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/beliefs/statements-from-the-board/mental-illness-and-medicine/>

ACBC Counseling - Question 15

- C. Assist your counselee to develop a plan for when they meet with their doctor. Most folks are ill-equipped to question their doctor. Most time, the average patient doesn't even know what questions they should be asking.
1. Why do you think that I need this medication?
 - a. If I start taking this medication, what symptoms do you expect to improve and how long do you expect that to take?
 - b. "In our experience, doctors often offer medicines when they think this is what their patient wants, but they may also know about other more commonsense solutions that are just as good, or even better. So it is important for you to find out what your doctor really believes will be the most helpful for you."¹⁶
 2. How long do you anticipate that I will need to take this medication?
 3. Do you have any experience treating patients with this medication or helping your patients stop taking this medication?
 4. Are there any alternatives to medicine that could also relieve my symptoms?

V. Suggested Reading

- A. Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 37.
- B. Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 437-443.
- C. Laura Hendrickson, "How to Talk with Your Doctor" in Elyse Fitzpatrick & Laura Hendrickson, *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?* 217-221.
- D. Robert Smith, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference*, 195-223.
- E. Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, *Mental Illness and Medicine: I. Mental Disorders and Biblical Counseling*, Available at: <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/beliefs/statements-from-the-board/mental-illness-and-medicine/>

¹⁶ Elyse Fitzpatrick & Laura Hendrickson, *Will Medicine Stop The Pain? Finding God's Healing for Depression, Anxiety, & Other Troubling Emotions*, 218.