



Communities who Care: helping non-Christians find hope

HELEN THORNE
BIBLICAL COUNSELLING UK

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DISCUSSION TIME

Is biblical care / biblical counselling just for Christians?

In the middle of tough times, would you open your Bible and pray with someone who does not yet believe?



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Can we use biblical counsel in the community?

- If we believe God is sovereign over all
- If we believe God is the ultimate source of help and hope for all
- If we believe God's ways are good for all
- If we believe God's invitation extends to all
- If, like me, you have plenty of friends who are struggling

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Examples of outreach in times of strife

- The example of Jesus (and his healing ministry)
- The example of Jesus (and his ministry with outcasts and sinners)
- The example of Paul (and the Philippian jailer who was about to take his life)
- The example of Ruth (in her time of grief)
- The example of Rahab (in her sinful lifestyle)
- The example of the Samaritan woman at the well (an outcast)



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Dangers of which to be aware

- Assuming knowledge of the word of God
 - Using language that is opaque or mis-leading
 - Mis-applying (over-promising) the promises of God
 - Assuming people's struggles are spiritual (rather than biological)
 - Underplaying the cost of following Jesus
 - Evangelism by stealth and manipulation of the vulnerable
- We are offering hope we're not guaranteeing healing!



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Anxiety and our unbelieving friends

In 2013, there were **8.2 million** cases of anxiety in the UK.

In England women are almost **twice as likely** to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders as men.

The one-week prevalence of generalised anxiety in England is **6.6%**

Depression is the **predominant mental health problem worldwide**, followed by anxiety, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

In 2014, **19.7% of people in the UK aged 16 and over** showed **symptoms of anxiety or depression**



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DISCUSSION TIME

What are the:

- Emotional
- Relational
- Physical
- Spiritual symptoms of anxiety?



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Caring by sharing common grace

- Rest
- Exercise
- Reprioritising life tasks
- Breathing
- Grounding
- Medication
- Meditation?



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A word on mindfulness

- It reminds us of the need to be still, to be aware, to be in the present ("tomorrow has enough troubles ...")
 - It gives a structure in which to stop and recharge
- BUT
- It encourages emptying mind rather than dwelling on "whatever is good", noting and setting aside thoughts rather than taking "every thought captive" and find strength within not with God



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Caring by offering practical help

- Drop round a meal
 - Offer to walk the dog
 - Offer to babysit
 - Lifts to the GP
 - Help with shopping
- (A word on safeguarding ...)

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Caring by dwelling on common ground

- Getting to know the person before us by listening well
- Asking helpful questions to enable them to reflect on their experiences
- Teasing out the link between anxiety and life circumstances (past, present and future)
- Sharing appropriate self-disclosure (sharing our stories)
- Sharing a meaningful song, poem or prose

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Caring by engaging with the Bible: Wisdom literature

- Expression of emotion through the Psalms
- Exploration of what works in Ecclesiastes
- Common sense reflections on the Proverbs

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DISCUSSION TIME

How can you use Psalm 88 to help a non-Christian friend:

- Express emotions
- Consider the depths of their struggles
- Acknowledge the reality of a broken world
- Consider the possibility that God is listening
- Consider the possibility of turning their expression into prayer?



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Caring by engaging with the Bible: Combatting the lies

- I am all alone
- Everything is out of control
- I don't know where to turn
- I am at fault
- I will always be like this ...



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DISCUSSION TIME

What biblical truths / invitations can be used to combat the lies of anxiety:

- I am all alone
- Everything is out of control
- I don't know where to turn
- I am at fault
- I will always be like this ...



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What structure works well for building communities that care for unbelievers?

- Make contact through door knocking / leafleting / book tables / invitations (online or paper)
- Contact where people can address questions or prayer requests
- Intentional social action initiatives (food distribution / English conversation classes / night shelters)
- Support groups (grief / parenting) or book groups
- With plenty of 1-to-1 follow up with those who want to know more

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QUESTION TIME

Please use the chat function to message Helen directly



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