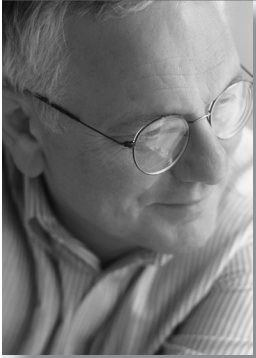


## Nouthetic Counseling



**C**ompassionate Counselors, Inc. is a 501(c)3 ministry committed to a “nouthetic” approach to Biblical Counseling.

The term “Nouthetic” Counseling comes from the Greek verb “noutheteo” (or the noun “nouthesis”) and means “to admonish, to warn, to teach or to counsel.” The word is found in

numerous passages of Scripture and describes the manner in which we are to counsel and help other Christians. Biblical (nouthetic) Counseling seeks to change the heart, not just alter behavior (Mk. 7:21-23; Prov. 4:23).

## Nouthetic Counseling Aims at the Sanctification of the Individual

**T**he goal in all nouthetic, or Biblical Counseling is “sanctification.” This means that we must desire not simply outward behavioral change, but inner change of the heart so that we are more like the character of Jesus Christ. This is God’s will for every person’s life (1 Thes. 4:3). This not only glorifies God the most, but also brings the most lasting joy to a believer. We don’t want to help someone, for instance, just to make their marriage better by giving them techniques to keep peace in the home. We desire change so that Jesus Christ is glorified by the change that God brings about in the person’s heart (Rom. 8:28-29). God uses the body of Christ, not just Pastors and church leaders to accomplish His purposes (though Pastors and church leaders must take the lead in this).

## Nouthetic Counseling is Compassionate in Nature

**I**n Acts 20:31 (“for a period of 3 years I did not cease to *admonish*\* each one with tears”), we discover that this form of counseling must be motivated by compassion. It is a ministry that springs from a heart of mercy and love. Even though Paul “admonished” people, he did so with tears of compassion. In Gal. 6:1-2 we see this mercy

displayed through “gently” seeking to “restore” those struggling in sin. This is not self-righteous gloating, but a sincere desire to assist and “bear one another’s burdens.” In this way we are proving to “fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2) and love one another as Jesus Christ loves His people (Jn. 13:34). There is deep involvement in the lives of those struggling; not a “professional detachment” from them or their problems. This compassion must be accompanied by an appeal to change into conformity with God’s Word; otherwise this “admonition” becomes empty sentimentalism.

## Nouthetic Counseling Recognizes God’s Word as our Ultimate Authority

**A** key aspect of nouthetic counseling is the conviction that Scripture is sufficient to address any and every problem of life. There is an intimate connection between nouthetic counseling and “teaching” as can be seen from several passages. Col. 1:28 says “We proclaim (Jesus), *admonishing* every man and teaching every man...so that we may present every man complete in Christ.” It is not just listening to people’s problems and asking them “what do **you** think?” It involves giving counsel from the Scriptures that directs believers to not only see things that need changing in their lives (admonish) but also how they are to change (teach).



**F**urthermore, this passage highlights the goal of sanctification mentioned earlier (complete in Christ). Col. 3:16 likewise links together this dual emphasis on “teaching and *admonishing*” the saints. They are both integral aspects of nouthetic counseling. The same text reminds us that this is only possible insofar as “the Word of Christ richly dwell(s) within you.” Nouthetic Counseling urges the struggling saint to constantly reflect upon the Scriptures.

## Nouthetic Counseling is Completely Dependent Upon the Ministry of the Holy Spirit

**N**outhetic counseling also recognizes the essential importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We believe that no man, no matter how godly or educated, is capable of giving God-glorifying counsel without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God uses the Scriptures as His authority (not the counselor’s opinions, experience, or education). The Spirit of God opens the heart to comprehend the Scriptures (Jn. 16:7-11) and also convinces us that it is true (Jn. 14:16-17). He is the One who guides us in making application of the Scriptures in life (Jn. 16:13; Rom. 8:26-27). His goal is to see Jesus Christ glorified through counseling (Jn. 16:14). Without His ministry, the Bible will appear to be “ink on trees” (you will never understand it, apply it or see God’s glory without the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 2:10-14). This is why we view the Holy Spirit as being of more importance than the counselor himself.

## Nouthetic Counseling is a Ministry of the Community of Saints to One Another, Not Just the Ministry of Specialists

**O**ne common mistake in counseling is to make it into a “professional” ministry. How often have you heard Christians say, “he needs *professional* help”? The Scriptures remind us that counseling is not merely a professional ministry. It is to be practiced by all of the body of Christ. In fact, everyone *does* counsel other believers – some with faithfulness to the gospel, some by minimizing the gospel. Both Pastors and laymen are to be involved in nouthetic counseling (Pastors should “equip” their people in this area – Eph. 4:12). In Rom. 15:14, Paul is confident that these believers are “. . .full of goodness, filled with



all knowledge and able also to *admonish* one another.” It is godly character, coupled with knowledge of the Word of God and complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit that makes a Christian a suitable counselor.

Believers in the church are exhorted to “*admonish* the unruly” fellow Christian within the church (1 Thes. 5:14). This is actually the “brotherly” way to treat a fellow believer: “*admonish* him as a brother” (2 Thes. 3:15). The implication is that if we do not practice this kind of “nouthetic” care for one another then we are not being good brothers and sisters with one another. Even in the family relationship, parents are to raise their children by “bring(ing) them up in the discipline and *instruction* of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). In this passage the nouthetic ministry is described as “instruction.” This reminds us that teaching and guidance are integral to the nouthetic ministry of the Lord’s people.

## Nouthetic Counseling Views Our Hope in Jesus Christ as Integral to Biblical Counseling

In 1 Cor. 10:13, we are reminded that our struggles and temptations in life are common to man and that our ultimate hope rests in the faithfulness of God to train us through them. You are not alone in your struggles since others have struggled just like you have and God has given them grace to change. God Himself is central to all nouthetic counseling, not incidental. Nouthetic counseling recognizes that the ultimate hope of man must not be on counseling techniques or theories, but on our sovereign and good Lord God. Struggling men and women must be directed to “hope in God” (Psalm 42:5; 43:5) and not in their counselor or in their own resources. Nouthetic (biblical) Counseling always directs people to Jesus Christ as the One in whom they should place their hope, not the nouthetic counselor.

In summary then, Nouthetic Counseling incorporates *Sanctification* as its goal, is filled with *Compassion* for suffering individuals, uses the *Scriptures* as our authority and source with dependence upon the *Holy Spirit*, and sees our ultimate *Hope* residing in Jesus Christ Himself. Our desire is that we would have the privilege of ministering to you and helping to equip you to utilize the Scriptures in counseling in such a way that they are “profitable for teaching, for reproof,

for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

### Nouthetic Counseling:

- Views *Sanctification* as the ultimate goal
- Exercises *Compassionate* care for all people
- Uses *God’s Word* as its authority to teach God’s Will for any life problem
- Recognizes our full dependence upon the *Holy Spirit*
- Sees counseling as the ministry of the *Local Church*, not of specialists
- Gives *Hope* in Jesus Christ to the struggling.

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*\*In each of the passages cited the term “admonish” is the Greek noun or verb from which we get the term “nouthetic” counseling.*

Please send your tax-deductible donations to:

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Compassionate Counselors, Inc. is an approved 501(c)3 organization registered with the IRS and the state of Arizona. All contributions are tax deductible.

# What is Nouthetic Counseling?



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