

## **RETHINKING THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTIVE COUNSELLING - Lambert Chiang**

Having problems in life is an anomaly for most people in spite of the fact that we have cautioned by Job that are living in a fallen world fraught with trouble and sufferings just like sparks will fly off from a fire (Job 5:7) Despite of that, most people only consider seeking counselling when they are 'stuck' with personal or marital problems after unsuccessful self-therapy.

The counseling fraternity especially the mental health professionals and marriage & family therapists must proactively promote by conducting preventive counseling talks and/or workshops on problems within the family or at work faced by Christians. This would pre-empt the possibilities of psychological problems or dysfunctional family which would in turn adversely affect their spiritual life and some even lose their faith in God.

"Everyone wants successful in material sense as well as in the spiritual sense!" Both Christians and non-Christians are living in a very success-oriented society where failure not an option. An individual or family failing to become successful usually bring upon him/her tremendous stress, humiliation and even hopelessness in life. Hence, preventive counseling is warranted as it would arrest such situation.

The context of a successful family in Singapore is; parents are making up to the top of the corporate ladder and children are academically doing well in school. This is indeed a difficult task to perform as it is like burning a candle on both ends and expecting it to burn bright and long at the same time. This mindset needs rethinking from a Biblical perspective and such paradigm shift has to be incorporated into preventive counseling talks/workshops. While it is true that God wants His people to be diligent, but His people in doing their best must NEVER do it at the expenses of losing sight of God and things of God desires! Truly, it is every parent's desire to have responsible and academically successful children, and it is also every child's desire to have caring and loving parents. Is there these super Mom & Dad that can such successful family?

Super Mom or super Dad is just a myth and not a reality as most cannot meet even the basic requirement of putting in reasonable quantity and quality time with the family to bond. If there are ever such so-called super moms or dads it is NOT because they are super but it is only because their children happened to be of the compliant type as well as of studious type and hence little effort is needed to supervise them.

However, when the family life is put right especially from the scriptural context, many problems would automatically be resolved by themselves. Hence we need to turn to God's words to understand why and how people get themselves into problems in life as well as the solutions to such problems. The fact is, God has been using preventive counseling most of the time through His Word and we need to do likewise. God's method of preventive counseling is by prescribing to us the "dos" and the "don't's" in life so that we will not run into troubles with people, both with believers and non-believers alike.

As such, we as Christian counseling professionals must offer more of such preventive counseling that is based on biblically teachings as well as extra-biblical knowledge like psychology, behavioral science and family system.

The importance and urgency of running preventive counselling talks to pre-empt or to prevent the worsening of problems through the following talks or workshops.

### **1. The Principles of Vibrant Christian Family Life**

As we examine successful families in general, certain principles unmistakably emerge. As in the business world, sporting arena and academic domain, those who have succeeded had strategies, goals and objectives. They tenaciously stuck to the ground rules they set.

They acted in humility and had open communication. Really, nothing just happens by chance as success or failure is often time planned for whether one admits it or not!

## **2. Proper Parenting to Ensure Wholesome Family**

There are many ideas about how to rear children. Some parents adopt the ideas their own parents used. Others get advice from friends. Some read books about parenting. Others take classes offered in the community clubs. No one has all the answers. However, psychologists and other social scientists now know what parenting practices are most effective and are more likely to lead to positive outcomes for children.

## **3. Understanding the Basics of Parenting**

Parenting children should be simple since we have all been children ourselves and have experienced the parenting styles of our own parents and those of other family members and friends with kids while growing up.

## **4. Is Parenting A Science?**

Many people believe that there is a science to parenting and that child rearing means getting hold of a guidebook and follow it through step-by-step with sections on baby parenting, child parenting, parenting teenagers and so on.

### **Pre- Marital Counselling Program (marriage preparation program)**

Though problems in marriage and family life can come from many sources but the below ten are the common ones that more attention has to be paid to.

- i. Understanding & accepting of role relationship and
- ii. Expectations in a marriage
- iii. How to deal with family of origin issues
- iv. Correctly handling the In-laws issues
- v. Understanding and discussion of couple's and family's map
- vi. Effective couple/family communication skills
- vii. Conflict management and anger management
- viii. Parenting styles
- ix. Sexual Intimacy, family planning and fertility awareness
- x. Managing personality differences.

## **Conclusion**

Just the saying goes "Prevention is better than cure", it has tremendous truth in it as even God employs this method of ensuring our successful pilgrimage to heaven by prescribing us His commandments. And of course failing which, we can still have the grace to God to help us strive on. Hence, let us Christian counsellors or marriage/family therapists stress about the importance and urgency of running preventive counseling talks/workshops in our churches. We who are in the front-line of this much required ministry, let us pray and act on it. The sooner the better!