

Serving up Homework Asian Style

by Lou Priolo

I love Asian food! When I was a boy living on Long Island, my grandparents would often drive in from Brooklyn to visit with us for the weekend. When they did, they would sometimes take my parents, siblings, and me out for Chinese food. We usually ordered “family style.”

What this meant was that we could order an entire meal for one set price based on the number of people in our party. But, the really neat thing was that we would have our choice of several dishes which were listed under each course. First, there was Column A: Soups. We each could make one selection from at least three varieties: Egg Drop, Wonton, and Hot and Sour. Then, there was the oversized appetizer plates from which the entire family could make two selections (Column B). This course contained such delicacies as egg rolls, barbecue spare ribs, crab rangoon, and my absolute favorite, butterfly shrimp (which were wrapped in bacon, dipped in batter and deep fried). Then, of course, there was Column C—the entrées—a rather long scrumptious list from which (depending on the number in our party) we could select several. Finally, we had our choice of one scoop of vanilla, chocolate, or pistachio ice cream, which was carefully crowned with a fortune cookie.

“You are making me drool, but I really don’t understand what all of this has to do with Biblical counseling.”

It has to do with the categories (columns) of assignments you, as a Biblical counselor, select as you consider your homework menu. I am a big believer in counseling homework. I give lots of it (typically three to five hours per session). But, I like to mix it up—to serve different courses, each with a distinct purpose.

There are typically five columns on my homework menu. I normally select from at least three of the columns and sometimes from all five. Let me give you a sampling (a pupu platter if you please).

Column A: Something to Read Our counseling center bookstore has hundreds of titles (scores of them written by nouthetic authors) on counseling-related subjects. Be they books, workbooks, booklets or pamphlets, I usually assign every counselee one item

from this category. But of supreme importance is encouraging the counselee to read and study God's word regularly. I make it my practice to secure a commitment from all of those I counsel to spend a minimum of ten minutes each day reading Scripture for at least as long as I am counseling with them.

Column B: Something to Write The file drawer of my desk is chock-full of Bible studies on a wide variety of topics. Additionally, I utilize a plethora of journals, checklists, and other data-gathering inventories to assist the counselee in the progressive sanctification process. I've even been known to assign an astute counselee the task of writing his own Bible study (for use with future counselees) on a particular issue with which he is struggling and for which I have no such study.

Column C: Something to Hear (listen to) We live in an audio age where compact disks and MP3 players abound. There are wonderful counseling homework audio resources available from many sources on the internet (such as Sound Word Associates and Grace to You) which can be accessed on line (some for purchase and some for free). And, don't forget to encourage your counselees to hear the word of God as it is preached every Lord's Day at a Bible-believing/teaching church.

Column D: Something to Do This is perhaps the one area where most counselors fail. It may be that because of all the different homework options to choose from, assigning practical ways to implement Biblical directives and principles requires the greatest amount of creativity on the part of the counselor. Yet, since counseling homework is intended to encourage the counselees to be "doers of the Word," it is imperative that something from this column be assigned at every session. Be it an act of worship, service, love or kindness, whatever you *do*, don't neglect to assign something from this group!

Column E: Something to Memorize The Spirit of God uses the internalized Word of God to transform each believer into the image of the Son of God. There is no better way for the counselee to cooperate with the Spirit's work in his life than to memorize and meditate upon those portions of Scripture that He wrote for specific sanctifying purposes.

As with fine cuisine, so it is with fine homework—variety is the spice of life. I trust these tidbits will enable you to add a few more items to your takeout menu.