

Capturing What God is Teaching Me and What to Do Next

Taken from Jason Hsieh's "Been in Counseling a Long Time?
How to Remember Your Sessions"
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Objective 1: Processing Life

- *Why do I do what I do?* Your counselor has likely asked you a series of questions to understand what drives you. Review where those motivations are Christ-honoring and where they're not.

- *How does my past impact me?* Think of impact in multi-faceted ways. How has your counseling uncovered how your past has impacted you spiritually, relationally, practically, and emotionally? Or how has your view of God, difficulties, people, and hardships been shaped by your past?

- *How am I responding to my present circumstances?* To be realistic, you and your counselor have likely found that sometimes you respond to life in biblical ways and other times less so. Be encouraged by the former, and for the latter, remember the perspectives your counselor has offered to steer you toward Christ.

Objective 2: Needed Perspectives

Processing life is a good first step, but perspective is needed to bring your heart and responses into alignment with how God has designed us to live. Perspective is about how you view life, something, or someone. These questions should help you capture the perspectives you're getting from counseling:

- *How can I see things from someone else's vantage point?* Much counseling deals with relational conflict, so chances are your counselor has talked with you about listening to others and putting yourself in their shoes to work towards understanding and unity.

- *In what ways do I need a reality check?* Good counsel helps you see what you wouldn't on your own. This could be about whether a particular emotion (such as anger or discontentment) is appropriate or whether you're suited for something (such as a career, ministry opportunity, or marriage prospect). It can also be about your level of spiritual maturity (you may be more or less mature than you think).

- *What specific biblical truths are most relevant to my struggle?* In the counseling, you've been directed towards the most relevant aspects of God's Word, character (such as His goodness, sovereignty, grace, and justice), and purposes (such as why He gives us trials, relationships, and blessings). What particular truths has your counselor steered you toward, and how do you need to grow in your understanding of those truths? Or perhaps you need to grow in applying that truth, which brings us to practicalities.

Objective 3: Practicalities

Perspectives are necessary, but they must be followed up with practicalities to help you grow in Christ. These questions can help you remember what you've discussed, along with some supports to drive long-term follow-through:

- *What are meaningful, realistic, and specific actions I need to take?* Think back to the homework or action steps your counselor has given you. Most likely, they covered a range of actions. "Meaningful" here means some practicalities will be hard to do, but necessary to drive change or maturity in Christ. "Realistic" means some practicalities need to be a little easier or gradual since change takes time. "Specific" means particular to you, taking into account who you are and how you need to grow.

- *Why should I do these things?* To curb legalism, you must remember *why* you're doing what you're doing. Think back to ways your counselor helped you understand the why behind the practicalities. This could be about the joy that comes in reflecting Christ. It could be about love for others or having a good testimony to non-believers. It could be about living more in the line with the overall purpose of glorifying God with your life.

- *Who in the church can I enlist?* God gives us the church family and other believers to help us in our spiritual growth. Who in your church can you meet with regularly for encouragement to persevere? Who is living out what you're trying to do and could encourage you and serve as a real-life example that this new, and more biblical way of living, is possible?

Making the Most of the Above Questions

Write out your answers. This way, you can see them rather than just think about them.

Review your answers regularly. I've had counselees tell me their answers to these questions are like their spiritual medications—specific to them—and if they don't review them, the impact of the counseling wears off, and their hearts or actions veer further away from Christ.

Add and modify questions as needed. While the questions posed here could apply to many counseling issues, they're certainly not comprehensive. Other questions or slight modifications could be helpful for new or existing struggles, so tailor away.

Recognize the limits of good questions. As sinners, we can know the right answers and get the best counseling but still want to live unbiblically. Hopefully, this exercise has been helpful.

But remember answering even the best questions is a distant fourth place to three other critical factors of growing in Christ:

1. The work of the Holy Spirit
2. Time
3. Your willingness to put forth effort to grow in Christ