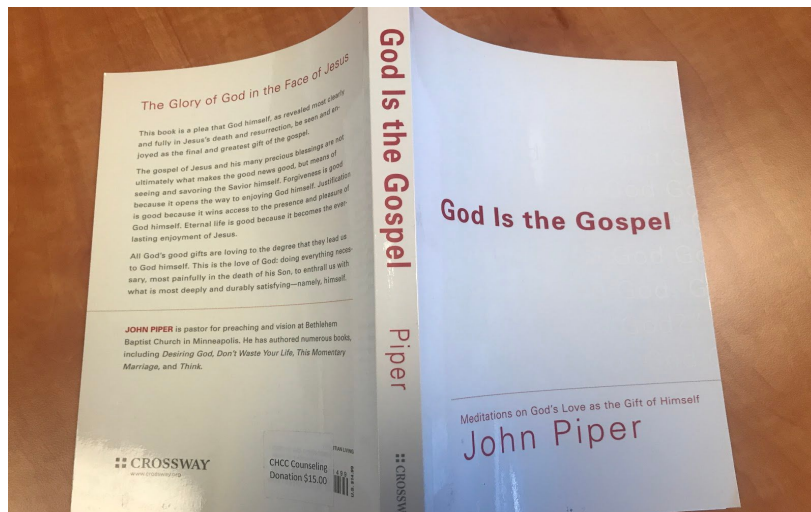


# Counseling Homework Getting the Most out of Books By Wendy Wood



As Biblical Counselors we always want the Bible to take precedence in our homework assignments. There is no substitute for hearing directly from God in His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 is clear that Scripture is breathed out by God and 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that in His Word God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. We want our counselees reading, meditation on, and memorizing Scripture. However, we are also very blessed to have so many resources available that are biblically sound for helping counselees facing specific issues. Our counselees will benefit from books that help them think biblically and apply scripture to their particular struggle in life.

I will mention some helpful books for different areas of struggles, but this blog is to encourage you to make specific assignments for each chapter as your counselee reads the book. It is easy to mistake reading and taking in information as having understood and applied what was read. As counselors who are praying for and working towards genuine heart change in our counselees, we need to help counselees get the most out of their homework reading.

First, ask your counselee about their reading habits. Is reading something they enjoy doing? Do they read for fun? Was reading a challenging subject in school for them? How long does it take them to read a page? Are they able to summarize a paragraph or a chapter that they have read? These questions will help you gauge your counselees reading ability and will guide you on how much reading to assign and what type of assignment to give. For some people, they can read a chapter in one sitting and then relate it to the sermon they heard two weeks ago, the conversation they had with a

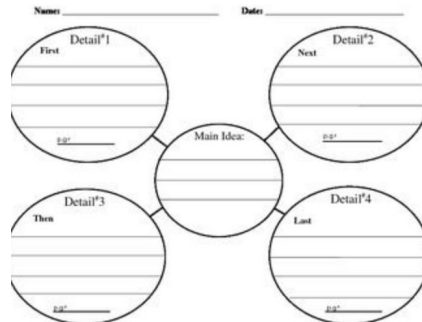
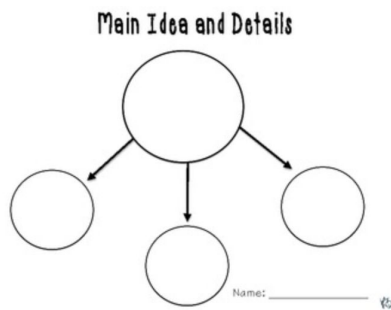
friend, and understand how the principles should be applied in their next conversation. They will be able to discuss the chapter with you while the book is closed because they have understood and applied the information in a way that is already helpful to them. You may not have to give lots of instruction to this type of counselee. Other people will give a confused look when you ask about their chapter. They will say, "I don't remember what it said, I read it five days ago." This person will need more direction with questions and application. You may need to help them make the connections between the book and real life situations. Asking questions about reading and how they process information during data gathering sessions will be helpful.

Here are some suggestions for ways your counselee can interact with a book. Use a combination of these ideas to include the main idea and application for each chapter.

#### Assignments:

1. Underline or highlight 10 key statements. Be ready to tell me why these statements stood out to you and how these apply to your current situation.
  - a. Include specific examples of how each statement could change you and your thinking and responses in your current situation.
2. Summarize the chapter in a paragraph of 5 or 6 sentences.
  - a. Write 2 examples from your own real life situations that show how you have failed to live this way.
  - b. Write 2 examples from your own real life situations when you did respond this way.
3. Summarize the main theme of the chapter in one sentence.
  - a. For each subpoint, write out the general idea the author is teaching
  - b. Write the author's explanation in your own words
  - c. What scriptures support this idea
  - d. What changes do I need to make in my life?
4. What ideas in this chapter were new to you?
  - a. How does this challenge your previous way of thinking?
  - b. What scriptures support these ideas?
5. How does your thinking or actions fall short of what God calls you to do?
  - a. What do you need to repent of?
  - b. What truths do you need to renew your mind in?
  - c. What new thinking and actions do you need to put on?
6. Are there words you didn't know? Write out the definitions.
7. Write out the key scriptures mentioned in this chapter?
  - a. Spend time meditating on these scriptures this week.
  - b. Write out a prayer based on your meditation at the end of the week.

8. Draw a “web” with the main idea in the center and supporting details on the outside.



9. Read the chapter 3 times.
- a. On the first time through just read and take in the author’s ideas.
  - b. On the second time, mark 10 key statements and write them in your own words.
  - c. On the third time, write down all the scripture verses. Which ones stand out to you the most and why?
10. Draw pictures that represent the main ideas in this chapter. (If you have a really visual learner, this may help them make connections better.)
11. After the counselee has read the entire book, have them write a sentence summary of each chapter.
- a. How will you believe, think, speak, and act differently?
  - b. What truths about God and His word do I need to meditate on?

You might want to assign a different assignment for each chapter. At the end of the book, ask your counselee which method was most helpful for them. Encourage them to keep using the helpful methods as they continue to read and grow after counseling is finished.

Here are some of my favorite books and booklets.

### Booklets

Motives by Ed Welch

Managing Your Emotions by Amy Baker

You Can Trust God by Jerry Bridges

When Trouble Shows Up by Robert Jones

From Pride to Humility by Stuart Scott

Communication and Conflict Resolution by Stuart Scott

Making Sense of Suffering by Joni Earackson Tada

### Books

God is the Gospel by John Piper

Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ by John Piper  
Trusting God Even When It Hurts by Jerry Bridges  
Pleasing People by Lou Priolo  
Relationships: A Mess Worth Making by Paul David Tripp  
Gentle and Lowly by Dane Ortlund  
Uprooting Anger by Robert Jones