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STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES OF SOLDIERS
OF NORTHEAST BAPTIST CHURCH,
CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

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STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES OF SOLDIERS
OF NORTHEAST BAPTIST CHURCH,
CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

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To Marilyn,
my loving wife.

You are such a
godly support and encouragement
to my life.

I am truly blessed.

(Prov 31:28)

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PREFACE

I thank God for birthing a passion in my heart to pursue academic instruction in the area of biblical counseling. I wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, those individuals whom God used to assist me along this educational process with their prayers and guidance.

First, I would like to thank my wife, Marilyn, for the sacrifices she made and the constant encouragement she gave, without which I would not have finished this project. Our children, Michael and Ashley, inspired and encouraged me throughout my Doctoral work. The prayers, encouragement, and support of my extended family and friends were also a great blessing to me.

I want to thank Dr. Charles Lawless, Past Associate Vice President for Doctoral Studies, and Dr. Stuart Scott, Associate Professor of Biblical Counseling. If not for their Christlike grace, I would not have been allowed to participate in the Doctor of Ministry program at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Scott, who served as my doctoral seminar professor and project supervisor. He helped me keep my eyes on the prize and encouraged me throughout the writing process.

I am also grateful to the family of Northeast Baptist Church. I am especially thankful for the deacons and the sixteen members who participated in the 16-week seminar. I could not have done the project without them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and teach a seminar to introduce soldiers and their spouses to Bible-centered hope and instruction for strengthening their marriages.

Goals

Three goals determined the effectiveness of the project. The first goal of this project was to assess the current overall health of the marriages of seminar participants. This goal was measured by administering a survey to all military couples of Northeast Baptist Church who participated in the seminar.¹ The questions addressed some common issues of marriage but also focused on specific struggles common to military couples such as addiction, adultery/infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This goal was considered successfully met when all participants completed the questionnaire and the results were analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the overall health that the couples had in their marriages.

The second goal of this project was to develop a eight-week seminar to introduce military couples to the foundations of biblical counseling that addressed all the issues described under goal 1. This seminar included a three-week, Sunday morning sermon series on the God of help, hope, and trust. The scriptural truths that support these three ministries of God to a believer's life were foundational to the entire seminar. The goal was measured by a panel of six

¹See appendix 1.

deacons of Northeast Baptist Church who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the materials used.² This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The third goal of this project was to increase the biblical knowledge of the participants by teaching Bible-centered help and instructional lessons that offered assistance in strengthening their marriages. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post questionnaire that evaluated the participants' understanding of biblical teachings that focused on particular issues they might have encountered.³ Military couples who are members of Northeast Baptist participated in the weekly seminar. The crises discussed included the topics of addiction, adultery/marital infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positively significant difference in the pre and post questionnaire scores.

Ministry Context

These goals were accomplished as the ministry project was carried out at Northeast Baptist Church Clarksville, Tennessee. Northeast is located on the northeastern Tennessee city limits line of Clarksville. Clarksville is the county seat of Montgomery County, Tennessee, and the fifth largest city in the state behind Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga, respectively. The city had a population of 132,957 at the 2010 census, and an estimated population of 142,357 in 2014.⁴ The city was incorporated in 1785 as Tennessee's first incorporated city, and named for General George Rogers Clark, frontier fighter, Revolutionary War hero, and brother of William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.⁵

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 3.

⁴City-Data, "Clarksville, Tennessee," accessed August 15, 2015, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Clarksville-Tennessee.html>.

⁵Neighborhood Scout, "Clarksville, TN., Real Estate and Demographic Information," accessed August 15, 2015, <http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/tn/clarksville>.

Clarksville is the home of Austin Peay State University; *The Leaf-Chronicle*, the oldest newspaper in Tennessee; and neighbor to Fort Campbell, United States Army base, site of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The armed forces are a huge part of the life in Clarksville, employing 9.88 percent of the workforce. While it is a military town, the civilian sector still plays an important part in the local economy, where Retail and Healthcare industries employ 14.94 percent and 13.48 percent of the civilian workforce, respectfully.⁶

Clarksville is an extremely ethnically-diverse city. The greatest number of Clarksville residents report their race to be White (86,998 persons), followed by Black or African-American (30,021 persons), and Hispanic (14,233 persons). Proportionately significant ancestors of people in Clarksville include German, Irish, English, and Italian. The population of Clarksville continues to grow at a constant rate of 2.49 percent, which equals to 3,756 persons a year.⁷ The median resident age of Clarksville is 29.0 years.⁸

Clarksville offers church congregations to a wide variety of religious affiliations. Presently there are 137 evangelical Protestant churches, 38 mainline Protestant fellowships, 1 Catholic church, 17 Black Protestant congregations, 1 Orthodox church, and 12 other churches.⁹ Northeast Baptist Church joins 43 other Southern Baptist churches to comprise the Cumberland Baptist Association.

In October 1976, a group of thirteen people met to pray about finding a way to start growing again in their Christian faith. The need arose out of a dispute that focused on racial discrimination among the members of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Trenton, Kentucky. An

⁶Neighborhood Scout, "Clarksville, TN., Real Estate and Demographic Information," accessed August 15, 2015, <http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/tn/clarksville>.

⁷United States Census Bureau, "State and County QuickFacts: Clarksville, Tennessee," accessed August 15, 2015, <http://www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47/4715160.html>.

⁸City-Data, "Clarksville, Tennessee."

⁹City-Data, "Clarksville, Tennessee."

organizational meeting for a new church was held at the home of John and Lois Bartee. The church was named Community Baptist Fellowship, Trenton, Kentucky.¹⁰ The church membership met in the homes of three different church members for Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night services. In January 1977, the church voted to purchase property to build a facility at 3900 Trenton Road, Clarksville, Tennessee. In April 1977, the church was constituted with twenty-seven charter members. Calvary Baptist Church, Elkton, Kentucky, served as the sponsoring congregation during the early days. Reverend Hughes Clardy became the church's first pastor, serving on a part-time basis.¹¹ In May 1978, the new church building was completed. The first services were held on May 3, 1978 with 37 individuals present for Sunday school. In October 1980, the name of the church was changed to Northeast Baptist Church in order to identify with the community.¹²

The membership of Northeast Baptist Church has grown over its history, reaching its peak in attendance during the summer of 1996. Two-hundred and five individuals attended Sunday school and worship services at that time. Northeast Baptist presently has a total membership of 810 members, of which, 433 persons are resident members.¹³ Various periods of struggle and turmoil are responsible for a steady decline of attendance, which is reflected by its present attendance of sixty-five in Sunday school. During the thirty-eight year existence of Northeast Baptist Church, a total of six "senior" pastors have served at the church.

When Northeast Baptist Church purchased the land for its original site, the surrounding territory was completely farm land that extended for miles. Approximately ten years ago, developers began to build housing subdivisions. Presently, Northeast Baptist is

¹⁰Arlene Akers, "Victory in Jesus: 30th Anniversary Celebration of Northeast Baptist Church." (Church Program, Northeast Baptist Church, 2007).

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 2.

¹³Tennessee Baptist Convention, "2015 Annual Church Profile," accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.ted.tnbaptist.org>.

surrounded by 7,877 households covering a three-mile radius.¹⁴ The general consensus is that 50 to 60 percent of these homes are occupied by military couples. In its forty-two years of ministry, Northeast Baptist Church has made no concentrated effort to reach out in ministry to the needs of these military families. As a result, the church membership has only a small contingency of military personnel in its makeup.

At the time of this writing three husbands were deployed to Afghanistan. Upon their return, they and their spouses, like many others who are serving or are veterans of military service, faced a complexity of challenges and crises in their marriages such as those previously mentioned. The chaplaincy and on-base counseling agencies offer secular based and integrated Christian counseling and assistance to husbands and their wives. One spouse said, “They tell you to do this simple thing, this, this, and this and everything will be okay, but it isn’t.”

Northeast Baptist Church’s responsibility is to provide a spiritual cure through message and ministry for the wounds suffered by those military families that are members of our church congregation and the community at large. It is crucial that we proclaim that there is help and hope in Jesus Christ. Couples need to know that there are no easy solutions, but in a growing, personal, loving, and caring relationship with Jesus Christ, their marriage relationships can weather the storms created by these crises, and be stronger and healthier.

As church members, we must change our apathetic attitude and complacent behavior and become a caring, loving, and compassionate people, reaching out to un-churched, and community military couples. Through a body of believers certified by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, our church will be able to provide Bible-centered counseling crucial to the healing of the wounds of war. Such a ministry was not available through Northeast Baptist Church until late 2012.

¹⁴ESRI, demographic study of 3-mile radius of Northeast Baptist Church prepared for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention using the 2010 Summary of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The NAMB supplied this study to the Cumberland Baptist Association, Clarksville, Tennessee, from whom I acquired the study.

This project promoted the foundational message of finding the help, hope, and trust of God as a husband and wife developed a personal, intimate, daily, love relationship with Jesus Christ and applied the life-changing teachings of the Word of God to their marriage relationships. Developing and conducting this seminar was the first step toward providing an introduction to biblical support to military families. It was the beginning of new and expanding opportunities of ministry for Northeast Baptist Church to the personnel of Fort Campbell Army Base.

Rationale for the Project

This project is vital for several reasons. First, the vision statement adopted by the Northeast Baptist Church congregation describes this body of believers as “a community of mercy that shows God’s compassionate care and unconditional love through ministering to the needs of the surrounding community for the purpose of introducing persons to Jesus Christ to the glory and worship of God.” To be faithful to the “heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19) and fulfill its purpose as a Great Commission church (Matt 28:18-20), the church family must reach out to an increasingly growing community of military families. The church family cannot overlook the critical needs and/or turn deaf ears to their cries for help. This project was foundational to the church’s future outreach and ministry to the army community.

Secondly, the Northeast Baptist Church membership believes in the sufficiency of Scripture. The church believes that the Bible provides solutions to the various crises listed in this project that cannot otherwise be found through the secularly integrated psychological methods offered through counseling from military auspices.¹⁵ This project provided the means to introduce biblical counseling to the community. It was crucial that I move forward with this project.

Finally, Northeast Baptist Church is a transitioning church located in the midst of

¹⁵All references to psychology or psychologists in this project refer to those of a secular background in thought and practice.

“fields white unto harvest” (John 4:35). The leadership of the church is moving toward a change from a 1950s mentality to one that will speak to the needs of our present day culture in its music, programming, ministry, and outreach methodology. The biblical counseling offered through this seminar will assist the church in building a new foundation for viable ministry that will promote growth not only in Northeast Baptist Church, but also in the kingdom of God as individuals, married couples, and families are changed through the life-changing message of the gospel. Therefore, for these reasons it was absolutely essential that this project be developed and implemented.

Definitions, Limitations, Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in this ministry project in order to aid the reader’s understanding of the subject.

Biblical counseling. *Biblical counseling* is a system of counseling presuppositions, principles, and methodologies that rely solely on the divinely-inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God (Bible) to provide totally sufficient, life-changing instruction (Rom 15:14, Col 1:28) and solutions to life’s issues and problems.¹⁶ The counseling process results in change in the character of a believer from one of sinful desires, thinking, and behavior, to one of biblical traits of Christ-like conduct.¹⁷

Marriage. *Marriage* is a “covenant of companionship,” a formal arrangement between a man and a woman to become each other’s loving companions for life (Mal 2:14).¹⁸ It is the closest, most intimate relationship of a husband and wife to one another, each sharing oneness intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The counseling process seeks to strengthen

¹⁶ACBC, “Membership Covenant,” accessed July 11, 2014, <http://www.biblicalcounseling.com/certification>.

¹⁷Stuart Scott, “What Biblical Counseling Is Not” (classroom lecture notes, *3400—Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, Spring 2006-2007, photocopy and audio-cassette), 1-4.

¹⁸Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 12.

each area of the military couple's relationship.

A significant limitation was the sixteen-week duration of the project. This restraint allowed only for the teaching of general introductory principles of solutions to the areas of crises aforementioned. A second limitation of this project was the limited number of active or retired military couples who participate in the life and ministries of Northeast Baptist Church. A reduction in the number of seminar participants was experienced as a result of re-assignments or deployment of military couples to other staging areas. A third delimitation of this project was the focus only on military couples of Northeast Baptist Church. This reduced number affected the total outcome of the project.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included a participant survey, an evaluation rubric of the sermons preached and curriculum taught, a pre-test assessment, an identical post-test assessment, and a t-test.¹⁹ Three goals determined the effectiveness of the project. The first goal of this project was to assess the current overall health of the marriages of military couples that are members of Northeast Baptist Church. The assessment took place via a survey distributed to all participants.²⁰ The survey evaluated responses to various issues such as addictions (i.e., substance abuse, gambling, and pornography), adultery/marital infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This survey helped inform the scope of the weekly small group sessions.

The second goal was the development of a five-week teaching seminar on how to handle crises biblically that surface in military marriages. The seminar consisted of five one-hour and fifteen minute sessions which introduced the participants to biblical solutions dealing

¹⁹All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approval of The Southern Baptist Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

²⁰See appendix 1.

with aforementioned issues. Prior to the weekly classes, a three-week sermon series was developed to address the scriptural truths that relate to God's ministries of help, hope, and trust. The goal was measured by a rubric used by the six deacons of Northeast Baptist to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the materials used in both the sermons and weekly sessions.²¹ If fewer than 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric scored as "sufficient" or above, the deacons' feedback was used to improve the content of the series, after which the material was submitted again to the deacons for approval. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The third goal of this project was to increase the biblical knowledge of the military couples by teaching the five-week series on strengthening marriages and using biblical solutions to deal with crises that surfaced in their marital relationships. The series took place on five consecutive Sunday evenings. Each session was one hour and fifteen minutes in duration. During the first session, the beginning ten minutes was devoted to giving the pre-test to determine the understanding of biblical teachings that focused on the weekly issues to be discussed. The remainder of the time was used to focus on teaching the subject material for the week. During the final session, a 10 minute period was allotted for administering an identical post-test. A t-test for dependent samples was conducted to determine the degree of increase in biblical knowledge gained by the military couples in regard to the subjects of the weekly meetings. A t-test for dependent samples, according to Neil Salkind, "involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the difference between the scores."²² This goal was considered successfully met when the t-Test for dependent samples demonstrated a positively significant difference in the pre and post survey scores.

²¹See appendix 2.

²²Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES

Three underlying concepts were foundational to the understanding of the thesis of this project. The first is *the biblical view of marriage*. It is important to understand the scriptural underpinnings of biblical marriage, which the teachings of this project seek to strengthen. In Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let us make man.”²³ This statement was God’s divine announcement to the heavenly court of angels of his master-creation, mankind.²⁴ God, the potter, skillfully shaped mankind (male and female) from the dust of the earth. God then “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen 2:7), affirming that he had made man alive by making him breathe. As a result of this divine breathing, man became a “living being” (Gen 2:7).²⁵ Being made “in Our image” (Gen 1:26), man was God’s representative on earth and was commissioned to rule his terrestrial world of life (Ps 8:6-7). Because man was God’s agent, his life was sacred.²⁶ In order for man to further fulfill his divine mandate to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), God made Eve, “a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18) from God’s rib.²⁷ Adam’s pronouncement, “This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23) was an expression referring to covenant loyalty, in which case Adam is expressing a covenant

²³Unless otherwise mentioned all Scripture references are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

²⁴G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Dallas: Word, 2009), 28.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1994), 448.

commitment.²⁸ Thus, it would serve as the biblical counterpart to the modern marriage ceremony, “in weakness [i.e., flesh] and in strength [i.e., bone].”²⁹ The ideal of marriage as understood in ancient Israel was portrayed in a relationship characterized by harmony and intimacy between partners.³⁰ As a model for marriage Genesis 2:24 defined three factors: a leaving, a uniting, and a public declaration. “Leave” suggests that the man would change his priorities. Before marriage his first obligations were to his parents; afterwards they were to his wife. “Be joined” involved the two united in a covenant of passion and permanence. Monogamy is clearly intended.³¹ “They shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24) did not refer simply to the sexual consummation of the relationship, but involved sharing spiritual, intellectual, and emotional dimensions as well.³² Marriage is not a private matter. It involves a declaration, in the sight of God, of intention and a redefining of obligations and relationships in a familial and social setting. Genesis 2:24 serves as a bedrock for Hebrew understanding of the centrality of the nuclear family for the survival of society. Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the divine norm from the outset of creation.³³ Therefore, with an understanding of this background, for the purpose of this project, biblical marriage will be defined as a “covenant of companionship,” a formal arrangement between a man and a woman to become each other’s loving companion for life (Mal 2:14).³⁴

The second conception is the *sovereignty of God*. First Timothy 6:15-16 states, “He

²⁸Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 219.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 69.

³¹Ibid.

³²Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 223.

³³Ibid., 224.

³⁴Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 12.

who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.” The sovereignty of God is defined as his supreme, absolute (no limits) exercise of rule and legal authority over the universe. He is under no external restraint whatsoever. God is the ruler of all. He does what He pleases (Pss115:3,135:6). He is the Supreme Dispenser of all events. All forms of existence are within the scope of His dominion. Man’s times are in his hands.³⁵ God so holds all things in his power, so rules by his authority and will, so governs by his wisdom, that nothing can happen except he determine it.³⁶ The sovereignty of God is the ground of peace and confidence to all his people. They rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigns; that neither necessity, nor chance, nor the folly of man, nor the malice of Satan controls the sequence of events and all their issues.³⁷

The third vital concept in understanding the thesis of this project focuses on the *sufficiency of Scripture*. Sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God they need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.³⁸ Second Peter 1:3 describes what God has granted to his followers in His Word: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” The scope of Scripture’s sufficiency includes the face-to-face relationships of counseling. The integrity of the Scriptures is the authoritative standard and source from which Christian counselors draw their

³⁵Charles Hodge, *Hodge’s Systematic Theology*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999); accessed through QuickVerse (Findex, 2009), pt. 1, chap. 5, sec. 15.

³⁶Alvin L. Baker, “Knowing the Will of God: Toward a Practical Theology, Part 2,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 8, no. 2 (1986): 24.

³⁷Hodges, *Hodge’s Systematic Theology*, pt. 1, chap. 5, sec. 15.

³⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

presuppositions and principles for Christian counseling.³⁹ The utter simplicity and unsearchable complexity of Scripture enlightens believers about God, about themselves, about good and evil, true and false, grace and judgment, about the world that surrounds them with its many forms of suffering and beguilement, with its opportunities to shed light into darkness. This is the role of the biblical counselor to lead his counselee in such a course of discipleship.⁴⁰ There are principles and practices to cover all circumstances of life available to those who will take the time and make the effort to understand and know the Bible.

The Christian counselor knows that there is no unique problem that has not been mentioned plainly in the Scriptures and that there is a biblical solution to every difficulty of life (1 Cor 10:13b). The Scriptures have the power to transform Christian believers from all that ails them and molds the followers into the sort of person God wants them to become (2 Tim 3:15-17). To the extent that counseling is biblically based, it has power to produce godliness; to the extent that the Scriptures are ignored it loses its power.⁴¹ It is by willing, prayerful, and persistent obedience to the requirements of Scripture that godly patterns are developed and come to be a part of Christ's followers.⁴²

Turning to the Sovereign God for Help

The Bible teaches that marriages are strengthened as couples turn to the sovereign God for help. Regardless of what happens in the world or in life there is still the strength, power, and might of God. In Psalm 46:1, the psalmist speaks to the sovereignty of God. He says, "I will not be afraid, God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." His

³⁹Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 21.

⁴⁰David Powlison, "The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 3.

⁴¹Jay E. Adams, *More Than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 37.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 245.

is a help that can be found when a believer needs it. The psalmist dares the Christian couple to believe in God when the ground falls out from underneath them. To national and cosmic powers, God says, “Cease your warring! Stop your attacks! There is but one power exalted to subject history to your power. The One is God, whose work is the destruction of weapons and whose help is the refuge of those who recognize that He is God.”⁴³ Deuteronomy 33:26, 29 references the eternal God who rides the heavens and the skies in majesty and exercises his sovereignty as he “tramples over peoples, lands, even nature itself to help his people.”⁴⁴ In his “help in times of trouble” (Ps 121:3-7) one finds shelter, protection, guidance, deliverance, expectation from home to labor and returning home, all intervening activity, and the entire course of life.⁴⁵ Only when the couple ceases from frantic activity do they begin to experience God’s acting for them. Only then can the believer know that he is God (Ps 46:1).⁴⁶ Life lived in the power of God’s refuge and strength becomes eternal life—not just life that hopes to be restored in some future existence, but life that is not threatened by the imperfection of our world or even by the dissolution of all the Christian couple knows.⁴⁷

An incident that took place in the marriage of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 20:1-18) provides an opportunity to see sovereign God working in behalf of this couple. Fearing death after Abraham looked upon the destruction of Sodom, he and Sarah moved to Gerar. For their protection, the couple deceived Abimelech, king of Gerar, into believing Sarah was unmarried,

⁴³James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 184.

⁴⁴Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1994), 448.

⁴⁵Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *Psalms*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 447.

⁴⁶Gerald Henry Wilson, *Psalms, volume 1*, The NIV Application Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 721.

⁴⁷Gerald Henry Wilson, *Psalms, volume 2*, The NIV Application Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 715.

and that she was Abraham's sister. God in his sovereignty appeared to Abimelech, warning him of pending death and keeping him from the sin of adultery. Abraham was declared righteous by his faith and was in covenant relationship with the Lord. Even though Abraham devised a plan of deception out of fear, God supernaturally intervened so that his purposes would stand. When Sarah was placed in circumstances that could have compromised God's promise that Sarah would birth Issac, the sovereign God prevented Abimelech from touching her. Even as God acted in behalf of Abraham and Sarah to protect them and guide them toward fulfilling his purposes for their lives and marriage, God will do the same for all marriages of those who are his children, if they will turn to him in their times of trouble. Marriages, including those of military couples, are strengthened when they turn to sovereign God for help.

Turning to the Covenant God for Help

Marriages are strengthened as couples turn to the covenant God for help. Yahweh, the Covenant God, has committed to provide "help" to his own. The sole source of "help" comes from Yahweh, who, as Creator has unlimited power. The psalmist reflects on the promises of God as he speaks to his own soul in the second person ("you", "your"). The ground for confidence lies in the further development of the doctrine of God: the guardian of Israel; "he who watches over every believer (Ps 121:3-6).⁴⁸ What does the doctrine of Yahweh's guardianship mean? He protects, guides, and blesses his own. He will not permit them to totter and stumble. He will be the "shade" of his own as he protects them from the dangers of the day and night. He protects them throughout the day, as he is at their "right hand." The intensity of his care is further amplified by the emphasis on his watchfulness, as he never sleeps nor slumbers. The God of Israel is not like any god—he does not need to recreate, eat, or sleep. He is always there "to help." He is the "shepherd of Israel who protects, guides, and blesses his own sheep. Regardless of the happenings of life, whether at work or at home, whether asleep or

⁴⁸William A. VanGemenen, *Psalms*, in vol 5 of, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman, and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 773.

awake, the Lord is “there: to help and protect.”⁴⁹ A Christian couple’s salvation provides confidence, for the God who redeemed the believer is the Shield, Helper, and Sword of Israel. He not only provides these things, but in himself he embodies them (Ps 115: 9-11).

The prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 41:10, addresses the promises of the covenant God to past and present generations of his followers. Titles such as Israel, Jacob, seed of Abraham, my servants, friends, and my beloved all highlight the assurance of God’s love and commitment to provide security, peace, and help in relationship to those who have been chosen during lives of trial and warfare. Because of God’s power and love, Christian marriages in the past and today can face the trials of life with courage, for God’s promise to be a help to his people has not changed (Matt 28:18-20).⁵⁰

The marriage of Moses and Zipporah (Exod 4:24-26) provides support that marriages, including those of the military, can be strengthened as they turn to the covenant God for help. Moses and Zipporah had a good marriage and produced two sons, Gershom and Eliezar. Moses started out on his mission to free the Israelites from their Egyptian slavery and bondage. In obedience to God’s command, Moses, accompanied by his wife and sons, moved forward with the “rod of God” in his hand. The Scriptures recorded a meeting that took place between an angered God and Moses. God was about to fulfill His covenant engagement to Abraham. The Hebrew symbol of their covenant of faith with God was circumcision, and one of Moses’ sons had not received the rite. Moses could not lead the people of Israel if he was disobedient to one of the fundamental commandments of God (Gen 17:10-14). Even if the Jews did not know it, God knew about his disobedience, and was greatly displeased. Moses was stricken by God with an illness that could have taken his life. Zipporah, perhaps fearing that God was angry because her son was not circumcised, cut off the foreskin of her son. With Zipporah’s obedience and

⁴⁹Ibid., 773-74.

⁵⁰Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, The New American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 134–35.

performance of circumcision on the son, Moses' illness was removed, the destroying angel was withdrawn, and Moses' favor was restored in the sight of God.

In Christian marriage, a couple unites in a covenant agreement with God, vowing to uphold the promises made to one another. That covenant was enacted before God and the assembled witnesses of friends and family. Obedience matters. When either spouse sins in the sight of God, he or she must be quick to recognize that disobedience either by omission or commission, and act swiftly to confess and repent of sin. In doing so, righteousness before God is restored and forgiveness is experienced (1 John 1:9). When disobedience is allowed to linger, relationships between spouses can grow distant and reach a point of death (divorce). God can provide help to couples who have professed their faith in God as their personal Lord and Savior. God's grace will be given, favor restored, and their marriage can be strengthened when they turn to the covenant God for help.

Turning to the Personal God for Help

Marriages are strengthened as couples turn to the personal God for help. The true subject of Psalm 46 is the God who will help the people in whose midst he has chosen to be and who for a time chose Jerusalem and its temple as the locale of his "dwelling." The psalmist invites his hearers to place their trust, not in a place, but in a Presence who wills to dwell with people. God's people can celebrate the confidence of God's help because of his choice to be with them.⁵¹

In Isaiah 41:10, the prophet tells the followers of God that they need not fear anything because he, their God, is with them. He is the great "I AM." Every other being in the universe is contingent; he alone is self-existent, complete in himself. That One has given himself to them to be their God; that One is immanently present with them.⁵² In Isaiah 41:13, Isaiah continues to

⁵¹Mays, *Psalms*, 182.

⁵²John N Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 91.

present a powerful picture of parent and child: in the father's right hand is a mighty weapon to defeat any enemy, but his left hand is holding the child's right. He is physically with the child and will not allow the youngster to be separated from him. The emphatic *I* underlines the personal involvement of God in all of this.⁵³ The reason that fear is not necessary in a Christian marriage is found in the use of two motive clauses that explain that "I am with you" and "I am your God" (Isa 41:10). The couple's own God is present with them and available to care for them. God will empower the couple by "strengthening you (them), helping you (them), and upholding you (them)."⁵⁴ As a promise to his fearful people, God assures them of his help and strengthening in the midst of trial. Their problems will be carried far away just like chaff being scattered by the wind (Isa 41:6).⁵⁵ Andrew Murray beautifully describes the personal care of a loving God in his book *Abide in Christ*. "When He says "*Abide IN ME,*" He offers Himself, the Keeper of Israel that slumbers not nor sleeps, with all His power and love, as *the living home of the soul*, where the mighty influences of His grace will be stronger to keep than all their feebleness to lead astray."⁵⁶

In the New Testament, the dwelling of God with man took the form of a person and was inseparably linked to Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:23 proclaims, ". . . God with us." When unbelievers respond to the Son of God in the salvation experience, as followers of Christ, they discover that Jesus has provided a divine agent to us for living in this world. John 14:16-17 identifies another Paraclete ("helper", "the one called alongside").⁵⁷ The Paraclete "lives," "dwells," or "abides" with believers and will be in them. Jesus' promise to the disciples was that

⁵³Ibid., 92.

⁵⁴Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 135.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 138.

⁵⁶Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1979), 24.

⁵⁷Gerald L Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 123.

when he departed the Spirit of Truth would come to abide in them. The Spirit is the divine presence when Jesus physical presence is taken away from his followers. Just as God was present with them through Jesus, so he will continue. This indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is a great fulfillment of promise experienced by the early Christians and continues to be a mark of genuine Christians today (1 John 3:2, 13).⁵⁸

The Bible provides evidence from the marriage of Elkanah and Hannah to support the claim that marriages can be strengthened when they turn to the personal God for help. Hannah was one of two wives of Elkanah. Elkanah's other wife had sons and daughters but Hannah was barren. Hannah could no longer bear the pain of an empty womb so she went to the temple to present her request for a child to the Lord. For years, Hannah had bitterly cried out before God. As a part of her prayer, she made a promise to God. She said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head" (1 Sam 1:11). Hannah continued in persistent prayer in heart, but her lips moved. She was observed by the priest Eli who accused her of being drunk. She told Eli that she had not had any wine or strong drink but was deeply distressed and praying to God. Eli told her to go in peace and asked the Lord to answer and grant her prayer request. The Lord remembered the prayer of Hannah. She bore a son whom she called Samuel. After Samuel was weaned, Hannah presented him to Eli the priest at the temple.

From this occurrence in biblical history, a Christian couple can learn that God is personal in nature. No matter how deep the troubles may be in their lives, a couple can cry out to God for help. He does hear his children and he will answer according to his will and in his timing. First Peter 5:7 states, "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." When Hannah went to the temple and prayed, she left her burden there and left. In marriage, husbands and wives can lift up their prayer petitions to the Lord with the assurance that they can

⁵⁸Ibid., 124–125.

give their concerns to a personal God and leave them with him. In his timing he will answer according to his will. Marriages can be strengthened when couples, including those in the military, turn to the personal God for help.

Turning to God for Hope

The Bible teaches that marriages are strengthened as couples turn to God for hope. We live in a world that is a place of great despair for many. Some Christian couples find their resources, their basic elements of life, almost spent, and they are prepared to give up altogether. These resources may be economic, emotional, relational, or spiritual, but the lack thereof brings on a hopelessness leading to despair. These couples feel that their cultures have failed to provide answers to questions of purpose and meaning and destiny. Followers of God, they feel, have failed to provide some reason for hope. The consequence is that there is now a cultural crisis and they find themselves living in what has been called “The Age of Despair.”⁵⁹ Whether it is a terminal illness, a business failure, or a car wreck; life is fragile, and couples long and reach for a security that stretches beyond the possibilities crouched just around the next corner. Their souls are ever attempting to anchor their lives, to catch hold of something outside themselves that will transform their detached existence to a state of stability. Money, homes, positions, and even people are transitory. The world sets its hope on all sorts of fallible schemes based on human wisdom instead of godly wisdom; hence they are all hope-less. Married couples are left waiting for something with no guarantee at all that it will come to pass. Such can provide no lasting stability in life. Our God, however, is a God of integrity, of endless resources, and of a never ending future and offers Christian couples a superior basis for stability (hope) in life.⁶⁰

In Western society “hope” means “hope so.” There is no “hope so” about the biblical concept. Hope in the Scripture always is a confident expectation, something sure, something

⁵⁹George H Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 248.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 249.

certain, that just has not happened yet.⁶¹ The word hope in Scripture never carries even the connotation of uncertainty that adheres to our English term (as when we say cautiously, “I hope so”).⁶² Scriptural hope is based upon the recorded unfailing scriptural promises (Rom 15:4) of the living Creator who sovereignly sustains and guides human affairs to the predetermined ends that he has foreordained.⁶³

The gospel offers a double hope: (1) the hope for the future which is bound up with the coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the erasure of sin, pain, and tears; and (2) the hope for a new abundant life right now. The misery that comes from living sinfully can be alleviated. The believing couple can enjoy the peace, comfort, and assurance of the fullness of the living Christ of the gospel (Co1 1:5).⁶⁴

Marriage problems are not neutral. God is in the problem! God controls the universe, so even though couples experience trials, difficulties, frustrations, and various periods of hopelessness, their problems may be difficult, but they are not out of control. They are not beyond solution. God is in the events that brought them about. Couples may not know all the reasons behind those events, but knowing there are reasons itself changes everything. Life is not absurd, it has meaning—God’s meaning. In Christian marriages, every happening has a beneficent purpose (Romans 8:28-29). For the married couple there is always hope.⁶⁵

Turning to the Sovereign God for Hope

Marriages are strengthened as couples turn to the sovereign God for hope. The prophet Isaiah (Isa 40:27-31) reminds the Christian couple of the sovereign Creator’s endless

⁶¹Adams, *More Than Redemption*, 179.

⁶²Adams, *More Than Redemption*, 45.

⁶³Ibid., 179.

⁶⁴Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, 41.

⁶⁵Adams, *More than Redemption*, 44.

power, wisdom, and abundant strength to give away to those who will wait for (NIV, “hope in”) him. For the married couple today, to “wait” on God is not simply to mark time; rather it is to live in confident expectation of his action on their behalf.⁶⁶ God is always aware of the couple’s distress and their captivity, their joy and their accomplishments, and he is able to come to them, sharing the joy and delivering them from their distress. There is nothing beyond his compassion or his power. There is nothing that a sovereign Creator cannot change. Couples that follow God are of worth to him. The Creator can break chains that bind them. The couple cannot dictate the terms or the means, but they can hold on to him and release themselves into his caring hands with confident hope.⁶⁷ The living God bestows, revives, and preserves. Life depends on God. The soul cannot survive without God. The apostle Peter concludes the body of his first epistle with a strong note of hope and doxology (1 Pet 5:9-11). In the midst of suffering, trial, and hardship God will produce a fully restored or confirmed character in the couple’s lives. He will strengthen them, make them firm in their faith, and settle them—bring security to their lives so that they will not be able to be moved no matter what comes against them.⁶⁸ The psalmist proclaims in Psalm 33:20-22, “Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let Your lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us, According as we have hoped in You.”

The book of Esther provides biblical evidence from the marriage of Ahasuerus and Esther to support the claim that marriages, including those of military couples, are strengthened when they turn to the sovereign God for hope. King Ahasuerus ruled Persia from 486 to 465 B.C. After deposing his wife Vashi from her position as queen, the king held a contest to find a replacement for the royal heiress. The sovereign God providentially ruled over the proceedings

⁶⁶John N Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 448.

⁶⁷Ibid., 454.

⁶⁸Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 195-96.

of the event and Esther, a young Jewess, who was raised by her older cousin, Mordecai, was chosen to wear the royal crown. Esther 2:7 states, “The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.”

A series of events occurred between Mordecai and Haman, prime minister of Persia that led to an irreversible proclamation from the king to exterminate every living Jew in the Persian Empire, which would include those in the land of Israel as well. God watched over the Jews, superintending their circumstances to glorify his own name. Mordecai was convinced that God would care for His people Israel. He believed, with great hope, that God would use Esther to deliver them and that she had attained her position of royalty “for such a time as this” (Esth 4:14). Risking her life, because she had never divulged that she was Jewish, and further, no one entered the king’s presence without being invited, Esther affirmed, “I will go in to the king . . . if I perish, I perish” (Esth 4:16).

God worked continuous miracles in unusual ways to turn what could have been a catastrophic time in the history of his people into a time of celebration and victory. The king’s reading of the record of his reign, a second dinner party, and a request to the king from Esther, led to the hanging of Haman, a promotion for Mordecai, and the deliverance of the Jewish people (Esth 8:7-12). Hope became reality for Mordecai, Esther, and the Jewish people on the day that had been determined as the time the Jews would die (Esth 3:7, 9, 24, 26). Both Mordecai and Esther were so grateful to God for his faithfulness that they sent a letter to the Jews in all the provinces of Persia instructing them to celebrate the two day of their deliverance every year. The celebration was called Feast of Purim.

Married couples can know that God has a purpose for them, no matter where they are, no matter who they are, no matter where they live, to whom they are married, what they have experienced in the past, or what they are facing in the future. He will allow them to come to the place where they are in their marriage for a definite purpose, “for such a time as this.” He has something specific for them to accomplish in their present situation. If a Christian couple will

place their lives into Christ's hands and yield themselves unreservedly to him, they can be certain that he will have a great plan for them. He will use everything that happens to them in the past and every circumstance in their present experiences to help carry out that plan. He will take wrong decisions they have made, sins they have committed, and circumstances of their lives that are beyond their control to work them for good. Hope can become reality; defeat can be turned into victory. Marriages, including those of military couples, can be strengthened as they turn to the sovereign God for hope.

Turing to the Covenant God for Hope

Marriages are strengthened when couples turn to the covenant God whose promises are dependable for hope. Hebrews 6:19-20 states, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The author of Hebrews expounds the stability of Christian hope in calling it "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." A Christian couple's hope is "reliable and well-founded, offering both safety and a reliable basis for living."⁶⁹ The Christian husband and wife can be confident of receiving hope from God in the midst of life's hostile and irritating circumstances. In Hebrews chapter six, God pledges an oath to Abraham guaranteeing his faithfulness to bless him in response to his obedience. God intends that couples who have believed "who have turned from despair to Christ" might find strong or powerful hope from his oath making. His "oaths" help them to see beyond their limitations to his limitless power and provisions. The foundation for the couple's encouragement, moreover, rests in the unquestionable character of God, where two things are unchangeable: (1) the promise of God; "It is impossible for God to lie" (v. 18) and (2) the oath of which his promise is confirmed. The hope of a Christian marriage is fixed on the eternal order, where the promises of God are made good to his people in perpetuity. Their hope

⁶⁹Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 243.

based upon his promises, is the couple's spiritual anchor (vv. 11, 18, 19).⁷⁰ Couples who follow Christ find hope in the Lord's covenant promises because while all of life shifts beneath their feet, God remains the one true source of superior and lasting stability. No power exists that can shake the fulfillment of God's oaths concerning his children (Rom 8:35-39).⁷¹

The story of the marriage of Zacharias and Elizabeth, recorded in Luke 1 supports the fact that marriages, including those of military nature, are strengthened when couples turn to the covenant God for help. Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were pleasing God. They submitted to the will of God and obeyed the Word of God. While performing the duty assigned specifically to the descendants of Aaron among the sons of Levi, an angel appeared to the priest Zacharias announcing the forthcoming birth of a son. Zacharias posed a question to the angel. He asked, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years" (Luke 1:18-19). As a result of his doubt in God's ability to fulfill such a miraculous feat, Zacharias was stricken dumb, and remained in that condition for the nine-month period of pregnancy (v. 20). At a family gathering to rejoice over the birth of their child, and on the eighth day, at the child's circumcision, a disagreement over the baby's name broke out. Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and wrote the name "John," which had been given to him by the angel Gabriel. That very moment his speech returned and he praised God. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesized that on the basis of the covenant oath sworn to Abraham (vv. 72-73), where God promised to bless the descendants of Abraham and make them a blessing to the whole earth, (Gen 12:2-3) his son's birth had been accomplished. He further shared that his son was given the role of forerunner to Jesus in order to proclaim salvation in him to those who would repent and turn from the sins (vv. 76-78). He reminded those gathered that God not only remembers his promises, he keeps them.

⁷⁰F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 154.

⁷¹Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 245.

A Christian couple may think God has forgotten them and that their marital situation is hopeless. He has not forgotten them. He does impossible things for his children every day. The couple must not lose hope in the midst of their troubles. They must believe in God. He is their covenant God. Hope will become reality as he not only remembers his promises to his children, but keeps them. Marriages, including those of military couples, can be strengthened as they turn to the covenant God for hope.

Turning to God's Sufficient Word for Hope

If a Christian couple cannot “believe” God and “hope” in him, in the sense of surrendering their lives to him in a kind of life they know pleases God, then his power cannot transform their individual lives. However, if the couple will actively believe in his Word, there really are no limits to what he can do for them, their family, and their society.⁷² The Scriptures play a vital role in the lives of a Christian husband and wife. Paul does not hesitate to describe the reason why the Scriptures were written “. . . to sustain faith and renew hope.” Hope comes “through” or “because of” the consolation of the Scriptures. “Consolation” means that the Christian couple will receive strength and comfort from the Scriptures to continue living in a way that honors God (Rom 15:3-4)⁷³ The promises of God's sufficient Word provide them with a superior hope (Heb 6:18-19) because they can rest in God's assurance of a better tomorrow. Studying the abundant promises of God in the Bible, in faith, leads to enjoying the abundant hope of God in the heart. Hope comes when those of Christian marriages understand what God has promised, meditate upon those promises, and appropriate them for themselves.⁷⁴ Psalm 119:49 says, “Remember the word to Thy servant, in which Thou hast made me hope,” and in Psalm 130:5 says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.” First

⁷²Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 455.

⁷³Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 748-49.

⁷⁴Jay Edward Adams, *Hope for the New Millennium* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 2000), 30.

Corinthians 10:13 encourages the Christian couple looking for hope that (1) the couple is not the first to face trials like theirs; others have—successfully, (2) God will suit the trial to their capacities, and (3) God will bring them out of the trial in His time and way.⁷⁵

Often a couple must wait for God’s help. He works character into the lives of the husband and wife even they cannot see him at work in their circumstances. The promises of God help the married believers see future realities and draw encouragement from them. The instruction that a Christian couple gains from the Scriptures has many purposes. One of these, Paul asserts is that they might have hope (Rom 15:5).⁷⁶

The Bible provides evidence from the marriage of Joseph and Mary to support the claim that marriages, including those of military couples, can be strengthened as they turn to God’s sufficient Word for hope. Joseph was a carpenter, a versatile and skilled craftsman who worked with wood and stone. He was betrothed to Mary, who was of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of David. Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant and believing that she had been unfaithful to him wanted to quietly spare Mary and her family from disgrace by breaking their engagement privately (Matt 1:18-19). The angel Gabriel appeared to Joseph in a dream disclosing that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit and would give birth to Immanuel, translated “God with us.” Further he was told that they would call his name “Jesus” for he would save his people from their sins. As a result he took Mary as his wife. Mary and Joseph trusted the sufficient Word of God, delivered to them by an angel, and looked forward to the day that the hope of a Savior for the sins of mankind would become reality.

The Scripture reveals that while Mary and Joseph were in the city called Bethlehem, “the days were completed for her to give birth. She gave birth to her first-born son; and Mary wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger . . .” (Luke 2:7).

⁷⁵Jay Edward Adams, *Critical Stages of Biblical Counseling* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2002), 38.

⁷⁶Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 249.

Mary and Joseph were faithful to God and His Word. On the 40th day after the birth of Jesus, the couple visited the temple in Jerusalem. Both Simeon the priest and the prophetess Anna thanked God and declared the salvation that would come through Christ to the Gentiles and to God's people Israel (Luke 2:26, 32, 38).

God revealed his all-sufficient Word to Joseph and Mary by an angel. They trusted in his Word and that it would prove true despite all the circumstances and events that surrounded the pregnancy and birth of Jesus. They needed nothing more to convince them of the surety of things to come; only a word from God. Married couples today can trust in the sufficiency of God's Word for their lives, and for their future lives of marriage. God's Word provides a hope of expectant confidence even in the midst of conflicting and confusing circumstances. Christian marriages, including those of military couples, can be strengthened as they turn to God's sufficient word for hope.

Turning to the Sovereign God for Trust

To "trust" is to rely on someone or something for security, to put one's life in someone's hand, or to depend on things one has or controls to sustain life against threats to it.⁷⁷ Deciding about trust is deciding about the existential basis of living. Trust is not an independent act of human will. Trust and faith in God's promises and renouncing confidence in oneself are unusual and gifts of God (Prov 3:5-6).⁷⁸ To trust Yahweh implies that one will not trust one's own resources. In acknowledging their own innate lack of resources, a Christian married couple becomes open to trust God's power and wisdom, which is a better guide to life because he knows how things ought to go and he is willing to stake his life on it.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Mays, *Psalms*, 208.

⁷⁸Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 243.

⁷⁹Tremper Longman, *Proverbs*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 133.

Marriages are strengthened as couples turn to the sovereign God for trust. The psalmist states in Proverbs 20:7, “We trust in the name (presence, power, and person) of the Lord our God.” In the theology of the psalms, the Lord is the life of Israel in the protection of whose shadow they lived.⁸⁰ Within the temptation of a Christian couple to take things into their own hands, the prophet Isaiah states that God acts in behalf of his followers in his own best time when the Christians choose to obey God’s regulations for righteous living and rejects their own self-centered rule (Isa 26:7-19).⁸¹ The psalmist, in Psalm 18:2 expresses a declaration of trust that God is a provider of refuge, deliverance, and protection (“rock,” “fortress,” “deliverer,” “strength,” “buckler,” “horn of salvation,” “hightower”). To provide further evidence of God’s trustworthiness, the psalmist addresses a specific predicament in Psalm 37:1-7. The psalmist’s message speaks to believers who are in danger of falling into frustration, danger, and bewilderment because of trouble or need. Because of his sovereignty, the Lord God is to be trusted, feared, and honored. His power is not put into question by the couple in Christ who chooses to (1) delight in the Lord as the prime source of joy and peace in living, (2) commit their way to the Lord, (3) make faith a refuge against the threats and problems of life, and (4) wait in patience for the Lord’s hand to move in his behalf.⁸²

The story of Job as recorded in the Book of Job provides important support to the claim that Christian marriages, including those of military couples, are strengthened when they turn to sovereign God in trust. Job was “blameless and upright, he feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1). To his surprise, everything (except his own life and his wife) was taken away: his children, his possessions, his servants, and even his good health. In the height of Satan’s attack on Job and his family, his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). At this point she opened up the idea of suspending belief of and speaking

⁸⁰Mays, *Psalms*, 102.

⁸¹Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 305.

⁸²Mays, *Psalms*, 160.

against God. Job's response was, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2:10). Job did not curse God, but he went through deep depression, questioned God about why the events occurred, and persistently communicated his innocence. Job trusted God as being good and loving. That trust developed through an intimate, personal, love relationship with God (Job 29:1-5).

Today, Christian marriages, including those of military couples, can experience intense stress and suffering due to military lifestyle and deployments. In the midst of a struggle a couple can be tempted to give up and curse God. Job reminded couples in distress that God is sovereign over all things. Even as Job, Christian couples must remember that there are things in life that take place that they don't understand; things that only sovereign God understands. In those times, the Christian military couple must continue to humbly trust God, declare their lack of knowledge before the Almighty, and wait for him to speak his truth to the situation or circumstance being faced and bring his blessing. It is important to note that Job's wife disappeared after her bold statement. She was conspicuously absent from the happy ending in which Job's world was restored (evidenced by God's blessing of seven sons, three daughters, 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys). In unnumbered occasions of trial and hardship, many couples give up before they experience the blessing of God. Marriages can be strengthened as they turn to the sovereign God for hope.

Turning to God's Sufficient Word for Trust

Marriages are strengthened as Christian husbands and wives turn to trust in the sufficient Word of God. "Trusting the Lord" means becoming well acquainted with him through the Word. Such ready familiarity with Scripture is one of the most serious lacks in many contemporary Christian lives. Too much of their faith is based on emotion and feelings. When emotions fall—destroyed by the attacks of frustration, fears, disappointments, and failures of self-confidence—the believer's sense of relationship with God can be undermined. At these

moments the child of God needs to hold his emotions up to the clear testimony of God in Scripture.⁸³

God's word is a source of confidence to those beset by enemies. A Christian needs to draw on the stable assurance of God's Word rather than the wavering perspective of self-centered thinking and public opinion. It is God's Word that enables the child of God to move from fear to no fear. Because of God's praiseworthy word, the believers are able to trust. The fears that encroach at the beginning recede to non-existence (Ps 56:1-13).⁸⁴ Proverbs 3:5-6 directs the follower of Christ to "commit your (their) way to the Lord." A modern application of this advice might be to consult a road map constantly while driving through a foreign city. The more the map is studied the less likely the traveler is to lose their way. Thus, the more a Christian studies the Bible, the less chance they will find themselves going astray.⁸⁵

The marriage of Aquila and Priscilla provides important support to the claim that Christian marriages can be strengthened when they trust in God's sufficient Word. Aquila and Priscilla experienced a strong Christian marriage. Being exiled as Jews from Rome by the Emperor Claudius, the couple moved to Corinth. While there, they set up their tent-making business. They met the apostle Paul there and he helped them in their tent-making. For eighteen months Paul tutored the couple in the Word of God (Acts 18:11). The couple grew in their understanding and love of the Word of God. The couple made several moves to different locations during their lifetime. From Corinth they moved with Paul to Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla established a church that met in their house (1 Cor 16:19). They met a young Jewish preacher, Apollos from Alexandria (Egypt) who was eloquent in speech and mighty in the Scriptures. Apollos lacked much in his knowledge of Scripture, only knowing of the baptism of

⁸³Wilson, *Psalms*, 826.

⁸⁴Wilson, *Psalms*, 826.

⁸⁵Robert L Alden, *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 38.

John (Acts 18:24-25). Aquila and Priscilla invested the necessary time to disciple Apollos and pour the teachings of Christ and his salvation into his life (Acts 18:26). A third move took the couple back to Rome. Once again, they established a church in their home; a center for evangelism and spiritual discipleship in the community. While in Rome, the Christian couple risked their own lives to save Paul's life. Simply stated, Paul's two friends were willing to give everything, even their own lives, in the service of Jesus Christ. After experiencing the destruction of their home in the Great Fire of July 19, A.D. 64, the couple moved one last time to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:19).

The lives of Aquila and Priscilla were centered on the Lord and his Word. They knew the Scriptures well and they wanted to share them with others. They trusted the Word of God, and the providential workings of God in their lives as their basic, sufficient, guiding principles of their lives. Today, God would instruct Christian couples to follow the same guidelines for a successful marriage. Christian marriages, including those of military couples, can be strengthened when they trust in the sufficiency of God's Word.

CHAPTER 3
PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATING TO
STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES

Biblical marriage is defined as “a covenant of companionship,” a formal arrangement between a man and a woman to become each other’s loving companion for life (Mal 2:14).¹ “Companionship” is an integral facet of the description of this sacred union. The Lord said, “It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make him a helper suitable to him” (Gen 2:18). The word “suitable” is a Hebrew word that can also be translated as “meet,” “appropriate to,” “helpmeet,” or “approximating at every point.”² “It is not good for man to be alone” emphasizes the importance of companionship for man.³ The reason for marriage is to solve the problem of loneliness.⁴

Members of the military want people who love them, to remember them. They want children to carry on their legacy because there is this uncertainty of coming back.”⁵ Almost 43 percent of active duty members are 25 years of age or younger, and 23 percent are 26-30 years old, according to Department of Defense statistics. More than half (56.1 percent) of active duty soldiers are married. Add to those statistics, that the Army has the highest percentage of married

¹Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 24.

²Ibid., 16.

³G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Dallas: Word, 2009), 27.

⁴Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 8.

⁵Katelyn Clark, “Married Military: Soldiers Marry Young for Good Reason,” *Clarksville, Tennessee Leaf Chronicle*, December 14, 2014.

members, at almost 60 percent.⁶

Military couples face much insecurity in their marital relationships. Families of the Service exist in a unique culture characterized by non-traditional work hours, frequent moves requiring new schools, new rules, new routines, the possibilities of deployment, re-deployment, constant worries about the safety of the war fighter, and re-integration into society. When veterans return from their theatres of mission, married couples are often confronted with spouses who face Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), isolation from others, relational distress, confusion, mental health issues, and many other combat-related risk factors. Any of these issues can contribute to the weakening and/or subsequent end of marriage relationships unless proper attention and counseling is provided to the couple.

In 2013 and 2014, about 2,000 marriage licenses were issued per year in Montgomery County, Tennessee. In those same years, about 1,200 divorces occurred. These marriage and divorce statistics are not broken up by military affiliation. In 2013, the most recent year of state Health Department statistics available, Montgomery County's rate of marriages per 1,000 was 9.3, just above the state rate of 8.4. The rate of divorces however was 6.2, well above the state rate of 4.1. Montgomery County has more marriages and many more divorces than the statewide average. In most of Tennessee, the divorce rate is about half that of the marriage rate. In Montgomery County, it is about two-thirds.⁷

The focus of this project was to provide instructional guidance by means of biblical counseling that would support the strengthening of all marriage relationships of those involved in the ministry of Northeast Baptist Church. When possible, special attention will be given to specific areas of conflict that military couples confront. Alternative counseling resources are available to the married couple and their families on the military complex of Fort Campbell

⁶Clark, "Married Military."

⁷Ibid.

Army Base and in the City of Clarksville, Tennessee. The following pages present a brief synopsis of each methodology.

Behavioral Health Counseling Resources

Almost every movement in psychology has had a facet of antagonism toward dismissal of or the impulse to explain away religious faith in general and often Christianity in particular. The psychologies of Sigmund Freud, B. F. Skinner, Carl Rogers and others are often explicit (and contemptuous) in their dismissal of Christianity, and thus appropriation of what is of value from these approaches takes great care and discernment.⁸ The secular psychologies that currently dominate the field are grounded in modern worldview assumptions that in certain respects are fundamentally incompatible with Christianity.⁹ Dueck and Reimer argue that “secularity and Christianity are not only two traditions, they are competing social projects with different cultural aims and practices.”¹⁰ The founding proponents of the psychological system: James, Skinner, Freud, Alder, Jung, Ellis, Gestalt, Rogers, and others are atheistic, agnostic, humanistic, or secular hedonists in their thinking.¹¹ Whether psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic, existential, or biological, all psychologies agree that human beings are autonomous rather responsible to an objective God who speaks and acts.¹² Psychologists select and combine compatible features from diverse sources, sometimes from otherwise incompatible theories and

⁸Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011), 35.

⁹Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 100.

¹⁰Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 2nd ed., 44.

¹¹Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991), 109-75, 256-304.

¹²David Powlison, “Ready to Speak, with Gentleness and Fear,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 5.

systems in an effort to find valid elements in all doctrines and theories and to combine them into a harmonious whole.¹³ All psychologies agree that the problems encountered by man are not a result of sin but can be explained in purely psychological, psycho-social, or psycho-somatic terms.¹⁴

Many psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators offer various programs and systems designed to facilitate a focus on internal experience and encourage a concern for individual self-development and self-actualization. Contemporary secular psychology, and particularly a number of relatively modern applications, methodologies, and pop psychological techniques which are permeated with the emphatic belief that feelings, self-actualization, and self-focused concern (self-awareness, self-development, personal fulfillment) are of primary importance for living, behaving, understanding the reality of life, and for overcoming personal problems. These beliefs are fundamentally incompatible with the genuinely Christian approach to counseling.¹⁵ The psychological way of counseling is limited to man-assisted self-effort. All too often in psychology the goals for clients are to become well-adjusted and do one's best at a purely human level, rather than radical realignment of one's life to the claims of Christ, as promoted by Christianity.¹⁶

Psychology is a humanistic religion whose foundational precept declares that man is essentially good and that he contains the power to heal himself, but cannot prove it.¹⁷ Contemporary messages of mental health suggest clients are not sick but victims of his genetics,

¹³David Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 25.

¹⁴Powlison, "Ready to Speak, with Gentleness and Fear," 3.

¹⁵Gregory Gavrillides, "Secular Psychologies and The Christian Perspective," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 3, no. 4 (1979): 5.

¹⁶Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 2nd ed., 86.

¹⁷ Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 203.

life circumstances, and neurochemicals. Pop psychologists instruct their patients to look out for their own needs. . . . Their message is clear: happiness comes by avoiding discomfort, sacrifice, and pain.¹⁸ Psychologist Albert Ellis wrote, “The emotionally healthy individual should primarily be true to himself and not masochistically sacrifice himself for others.”¹⁹ This type of hedonistic, individualistic ethic is not compatible with Christian spirituality. Those who see hedonism and shallow independence as the goal of counseling deny the spiritual life and the role of brokenness in healing.²⁰

Psychologists believe the Bible is useful in helping us consider spiritual matters, but it is not a science book. The contemporary science of psychology recognizes that there are countless soul-care issues that are not directly addressed in Scripture.²¹ Jones and Butman believe that the Scriptures are not an all-sufficient guide for the discipline of counseling and that God’s Word was never intended to be a textbook of all psychological conditions and disorders.²² Psychologists believe that while the Bible is sufficient for salvation, doctrine and morality, the phenomena of Scripture itself force upon us the conclusion that it was not God’s design to have the Bible answer directly all the concerns of psychologists or counselors for all places in all times, containing everything that would be of value to soul care in the future.²³ Mark McMinn suggests that scientific research is so limited that it is premature to draw any conclusions about the effective use of Scripture in counseling. Religious psycho-therapy, in general, introduces the risk of imposing unwanted values or beliefs on a client, and explicitly using Scripture in

¹⁸Mark R. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, (Carol Stream: IL: Tyndale House, 2011), 19.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*, 119.

²²Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 2nd ed., 49, 53.

²³Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*, 185.

counseling quickly magnifies this risk. in counseling.²⁴ They believe that insights of scientific research and discoveries are needed to help counselors understand why man does what he does and how to help him change.²⁵ Psychologists truly believe they know more about the human heart than pastors do. They characterize pastors as unwitting and confused pathogenic agents who shape sick churches with sick theologies.²⁶ Christian pastors have succumbed to an incessant barrage of psychological messages coming from Christian books, magazines, film series, radio, and television. Pastors have been brainwashed into believing that psychological training is necessary to counsel effectively. Many pastors believe this specialized training enables them to uncover subconscious causes for inner problems.²⁷ The acceptance of specialization has intimidated many pastors into accepting a secondary role in ministry to souls. Pastors have chosen to refer their parishioners to psychologists and psychiatrists for treatment of serious emotional and behavioral disorders.²⁸

The following organizations practice psychological counseling based on the above philosophy. These groups provide limited help and hope to their clientele because they are depending on man-centered thinking to remedy problems that stem from the heart of man. These needs can only find their ultimate solutions from God and his Word.

Hillenglad Hope and Healing

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the most prevalent conditions being faced by married couples in the military to date. Hillenglade Hope and Healing provides specialized counseling to its counselees aided by Equestrain Therapy (ET) or

²⁴McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 144.

²⁵Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 37.

²⁶Ibid., 219.

²⁷Ibid., 18.

²⁸Ibid., 23.

Equine-Assisted Therapy (EAT).²⁹ EAT is a form of therapy that makes use of horses to help promote emotional growth. The concept that horses might be helpful or healing to people struggling with mental health issues is based on the idea that horses (as domesticated prey animals) are extremely sensitive to changes in the human being (as a predatory creature). Due to their sensitivity, horses react and respond to people differently based upon the person's emotional state. Since emotional states in human beings also impact physiology, it only makes sense that horses smell or sense (using their vomeronasal organ) those changes. The horse acts as a large biofeedback machine, providing the client and the therapist with information regarding the client's moods and changes within those moods. If a client arrives anxious, the horse will act and respond one way. If the client is able to reduce his or her anxiety, the horse's behaviors will also change. This provides a plethora of information and skill building opportunities for both the client and the therapist.³⁰ Equine-facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) is particularly applied to patients with ADD, anxiety, autism, dementia, depression, trauma and brain injuries, behavior and abuse issues, and other mental health issues. In the process, therapy aims for its patients: (1) to build a sense of self-worth concept, (2) to improve communication, (3) to build trust and self-efficiency, (4) to develop socialization skills and decrease isolation, and (5) to learn impulse control and emotional management. Primary techniques used are cognitive therapy, practicing activities, play therapy, activity scheduling, and storytelling and talk therapy.³¹

Currently, many therapists are conducting equine-assisted therapy, but there is little consensus about how it should be conducted or how effective different therapy programs are for the treatment of different psychological symptoms.³² Health personnel with widely differing

²⁹Jennifer O Neal, "Hope and Healing at Hillenglade" (presentation, PTSD and Suicide Prevention Town Hall Meeting, February 24, 2015).

³⁰Equestrian Therapy, "What Is Equestrian Therapy?," accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.equestraintherapy.com>.

³¹Equine Therapy, "What is Equine Therapy?," accessed February 12, 2015, <http://www,equine--psychotherapy.com/equine.html>.

³²Julie L. Earles, Laura L. Vernon, and Jeanne P. Yetz, "Equine-Assisted Therapy for

philosophies and from diverse disciplines and theoretical backgrounds find that the incorporation of horses into clinical practice can have beneficial effects. In the therapeutic setting, horses are engaged as change agents to facilitate the process of enhanced biopsychosocial development, growth, and education. In one study, participants' PTSD symptoms, emotional distress, anxiety symptoms, depression symptoms, and alcohol use decreased significantly following program participation. Participants' mindfulness increased following treatment. There were no significant changes in physical health, proactive coping, general perceived self-efficacy, social support, life satisfaction, or optimism.³³ Creatively and carefully designed and conducted research and the subsequent promotion of interventions involving equines as a credible form of treatment will be critical to its further implementation and ultimate success.³⁴

The Soldier Center

A second form of counseling is offered by the Soldier Center of Clarksville, Tennessee. The head of the clinic, E. C. Hurley and other therapists use Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), a powerful new psychotherapy technique, to help counselees who suffer from trauma, anxiety, panic, disturbing memories, PTSD, and other emotional problems.³⁵ EMDR is considered a breakthrough therapy because of its simplicity and the fact that it can bring quick and lasting relief for most types of emotional distress. The EMDR therapy uses bilateral stimulation, right/left eye movement, or tactile stimulation, which repeatedly activates the opposite sides of the brain, releasing emotional experiences that are “trapped” in the nervous system. This assists the neurophysiologic system, the basis of the

Anxiety and Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 28 (April 2015): 151.

³³Ibid., 150

³⁴Alison Selby and Alexa Smith-Osborne, “A Systematic Review of Effectiveness of Complementary and Adjunct Therapies and Interventions Involving Equines,” *Health Psychology* 32, no. 4 (2013): 429

³⁵The Soldier Center, “E.C. Hurley, PhD—Director,” accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.soldier-center.com/director.html>.

mind/body connection, to free itself of blockages and reconnect itself.³⁶ The therapist works gently with the client and asks him/her to revisit the traumatic moment or incident, recalling feelings surrounding the experience, as well as any negative thoughts, feelings and memories. The therapist then holds her fingers about eighteen inches from the clients face and begins to move them back and forth like a windshield wiper. The client tracks the movements as if watching ping pong. The more intensely the client focuses on the memory, the easier it comes to life. As quick and vibrant images arise during the therapy session, they are processed by the eye movements, resulting in painful feelings being exchanged for more peaceful, loving and resolved feelings.³⁷

The United States Veterans Administration and Department of Defense have concluded that EMDR is a “Level A” treatment, “a strong recommendation that the intervention is always indicated and acceptable for all trauma populations, including combat veterans with PTSD.”³⁸ David Albright and Bruce Thyer state that evidence supporting the use of EMDR to treat combat veterans afflicted with PTSD does not rise to the thresholds of an empirically supported treatment.³⁹ The research conducted by these men left them wondering what exactly EMDR provides to combat veterans that a number of behavioral and cognitive-behavioral treatments do not already provide.⁴⁰ In a Davidson & Parker meta-analysis, EMDR failed to prove that it was more effective than other standard treatments used for the treatment of PTSD. Eye-movements that were supposed to be an essential part of EMDR seemed to be of no

³⁶Carol Boulware, “What Is EMDR?” accessed January 26, 2015, [http://www .emdr-therapy.com/emdr.html](http://www.emdr-therapy.com/emdr.html).

³⁷Boulware, “What Is EMDR?”

³⁸Louise Maxfield, Kristine Lake, and Lee Hyer, “Some Answers to Unanswered Questions about the Empirical Support for EMDR in the Treatment of PTSD,” *Traumatology* 10, no. 2 (June, 2004): 73.

³⁹David L. Albright and Bruce Thyer, “EMDR: “EMDR Is Not an Empirically Supported Treatment for Combat-Related PTSD. . . Yet: A Response to Elisha C. Hurley, DMIN, Colonel, USA (Retired),” *Behavioral Interventions* 9, no. 3 (September 2003), 355.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 357.

significance.⁴¹

Centerstone Military Services

Centerstone is one of the nation's largest not-for-profit providers of community-based behavioral healthcare.⁴² Courage Beyond is a program of Centerstone and Centerstone Military Services (CMS), providing confidential, no-cost services to military couples facing PTSD and other stressors that go along with military service.⁴³ Through a supportive online community, retreats, eGroups, face-to-face counseling services across the nation provided by the parent company (CMS), and a 24-hour crisis line, service men and women and their loved ones are empowered to heal and thrive. CMS also offers Her War, Her Voice, a program giving husbands and wives the chance to meet with other strong men and women. Just Wait is another outreach of CMS that asks military spouses considering suicide to choose another option. Through Courage Beyond, Centerstone provides counseling for these strategic areas and other marital issues faced by couples.

Marriage and Family Life Assistance Center

The Military and Family Life Assistance Center (MFLAC) of Fort Campbell Army Base provides counseling to Service members and their families with issues they may face throughout the cycle of deployment, from leaving their loved ones and possibly living and working in harm's way to re-intergrating with family and community.⁴⁴ The MFLAC program

⁴¹Christoph Rothmayr, "Treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with EMDR," *Health Psychology* 2013): 7. Accessed January 22, 2016. http://healthpsych.psy.vanderbilt.edu/EMDR_PTSD.htm.

⁴²Centerstone, "Welcome to Centerstone," accessed January 16, 2015, <http://www.centerstone.org>.

⁴³Centerstone Military Services, "Courage Beyond," accessed January 16, 2015, <http://www.couragebeyond.org>.

⁴⁴Army Marriage Project, "Marriage and Family Life Assistance Center," accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.armymarriageproject.com/resources.htm>.

provides opportunities for individuals to “chat” with a friend. No professional therapy takes place and no records are kept. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers are not exchanged and no follow-up is conducted. MFLAC gives participants the opportunity to talk without fear of compromising their military identity or status.⁴⁵

Child and Family Assistance Centers and School Behavioral Health Programs

The Child and Family Assistance Centers (CAFACs) and School Behavioral Health Programs (SBH) have been designed to implement the best practices in the delivery of evidence-based care with several lines of effort to reduce barriers to care and to mitigate behavioral health stigma. CAFACs and SBH programs provide a full spectrum of behavioral health services to enhance mental performance and encourage resilience in Army families and children. Programs provided by these organizations are aligned with the deployment cycle and support the core concept of the “Military Family as the deployable unit.”⁴⁶

School Behavioral Health Services

The School Behavioral Health Services provide treatment for children and adolescents attending school on Fort Campbell. Independently licensed mental health providers are embedded within each on-post school to provide ease of access to care. The providers assist children and families with school-related concerns, behavior modification, mood management, problem solving, communication development, improving self-esteem, deployment/re-unification support, decision-making skills, dealing with change or loss, and strengthening family relationships. Services offered at the schools include assessments, consultation with school staff, medication evaluation and management, individual, group, and

⁴⁵Lisa Broadhead, LCSW, Family Advocacy Program, Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, interview by author, Clarksville, Tennessee, February 22, 2015.

⁴⁶Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, “Child and Family Assistance Center,” accessed March 6, 2015, <http://www.ftpccontent.worldnow.com/wsmv/fortcambellptsd.pdf>.

family therapy.⁴⁷

Soldiers and Families Embraced

Soldiers and Family Embraced (S.A.F.E.) offers individual and group counseling services, as well as peer support groups for active duty, veterans, and their families. The services are provided at no cost, and no insurance is required. All are conducted in a “safe place” where veterans can feel free to discuss any issues or problems without fear of judgment or the need to justify why they have the worries and struggles they do.⁴⁸ The counselors and staff of S.A.F.E. are made up of veterans, family members of veterans or active duty military, or have extensive experience working with them. Soldiers and Families Embraced is a resource for the community to ease the readjustment and reintegration of military members returning from our current wars and their families, as well as veterans from previous eras. After returning from combat, restoring a “normal” pre-deployment life is impossible—veterans have seen and done things that have given them a different outlook on life and ways of looking at themselves and others. A “new normal” doesn’t need to automatically equate to negative feelings or outcomes. It is a healthy and productive way to live life, and how people come to grips with the trauma they have been through. Counselors “get it”, and in many cases have been through the struggles the clients deal with on a regular basis. Because of this connection and understanding, counselees can count on their counselor to be there for them and with them.⁴⁹

Family Advocacy Program

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is designed to break the cycle of child

⁴⁷Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, “School Behavioral Health Program,” accessed March 6, 2015, <http://www.ftpcontent.worldnow.com/wsmv/fortcambellptsd.pdf>.

⁴⁸Soldiers and Families Embraced, “About Us,” accessed on March 2, 2015, <http://www.soldiersandfamiliesembraced.org/about>

⁴⁹Soldiers and Families Embraced, accessed on March 2, 2015, <http://www.soldiersandfamiliesembraced.org/2010/10changes-in-family-life/>.

or domestic abuse as early as possible and to provide treatment for affected soldiers and their families. FAP provides assessment and counseling services for victims, offenders, and families where child abuse/neglect or adult abuse has occurred.⁵⁰ Referrals are taken from friends, family members, command, physicians, military police, and various civilian and military agencies. All allegations of abuse are screened immediately and scheduled for an assessment at that time. Services include: individual, marital, family and group therapy to address anger control, communication skills, relationship enhancement and parenting skills. FAP offers domestic abuse, anger management, parenting and victim's support groups.⁵¹

Trinity Behavioral Health

Therapists of the Trinity Behavioral Health System provide a wide array of services to include individual counseling and family therapy. Marital counseling or therapy helps all types of couples recognize and resolve conflicts improving their overall relationship. It is often a short term process depending on what type of issues a couple is seeking to resolve. Common issues/concerns that couples seek help with include: communication problems, sexual difficulties, substance abuse, anger, infidelity and/or issues with trust, divorce and/or divorce prevention. Therapists utilize various techniques to help the couple meet the desired goal discussed in previous session(s).⁵²

Christianity and Psychology rest on different foundations, move in contradicting directions, and rely on opposing belief systems. Psychology is man-centered, avoids authority, merely reflects the culture at the time, and has goods antithetical to the Scripture. Christianity should stand against it and separate itself from it. Christians should view with suspicion any

⁵⁰Family Advocacy Victim Advocate Program, "Federal Benefits Page," accessed on March 3, 2015, [http://www.myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/BenefitLibrary/Federal_Benefits_Page/Family-Advocacy-Programs\(FAP\).html?serv=147](http://www.myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/BenefitLibrary/Federal_Benefits_Page/Family-Advocacy-Programs(FAP).html?serv=147).

⁵¹Broadhead, interview.

⁵²Trinity Behavioral Health Services, "About Us," accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.trinitybehavioralservices.com/marital-couples-counseling.html>.

counseling that does not ‘make sense’ from a biblical standpoint.⁵³ The world view of the psychologist is intended to promote life apart from God. Psychologists themselves acknowledge that their profession often smacks of modern alchemy—full of jargon, obfuscation, and mystification, but precious little real knowledge.⁵⁴ Help and hope offered through the above agencies is temporary at best. The best counselees can hope for is to learn to cope. There will be need for endless therapy.

Integrated Counseling Resources

The term ‘integration’ is used to denote the effort to define relationship between theology and psychology and the limits to which the two may or may not be understood in concert with one another.⁵⁵ Mark McMinn states that intradisciplinary integration in Christian counseling is both conceptual and relational. Conceptually, it draws upon important ideas from theology, psychology, and counseling theory and offers practical suggestions for how these concepts are applied within the discipline of Christian counseling. And practically, intradisciplinary integration in Christian counseling is thoroughly relational—emerging out of a counselor’s relationship with God and others, and ultimately influencing clients relationships.⁵⁶ Integrationists believe that psychological training is necessary to help Christians with deep problems.⁵⁷

Integrationists believe that Christians in psychology should use all the means at their disposal that will yield the greatest amount of relevant information about individual human

⁵³Almy, “Psychology,” 10.

⁵⁴John MacArthur, “Biblical Counseling and Our Sufficiency in Christ,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 12.

⁵⁵John F. MacArthur, Jr., and Wayne Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: A Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994), 64.

⁵⁶McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 30.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 9.

beings. Such a practice includes the use of statistics and natural-science methods of research (e.g., naturalistic observation, questionnaires, case studies and experiments) neuropsychology, cognition, personality traits, and group dynamics. Human science methods including ethnographics, narrative, phenomenological and discourse analysis, should also be used.⁵⁸ Biblical teachings about human nature and salvation should also be included as legitimate psychological information. Christian psychologists should approach the Bible as a research instrument that enables them to see human beings in ways they cannot without it's aid.⁵⁹ The Bible, although containing God-inspired revelation that is infallible and authoritative, is nevertheless of limited scope (i.e., Scripture doesn't cover everything). Thus it is not unfaithful to search out how to reasonably expand our understanding beyond what God chose to reveal in the Bible.⁶⁰ In the end, integrationists openly declare their intention to take the best of both theological and psychological worlds and integrate them into a hybrid counseling system.⁶¹

The integrated counselor promotes a worldview that supports truths designed to encourage life apart from God—it is in competition with God, and at odds with His creation. The system of counseling fails to deal with questions such as: Has God revealed truth about himself, about man and about his world, is God concerned, does He care about people, has he done anything to alleviate human suffering and change the human condition, and if so, what does he say about such change and how it may be brought about?⁶² Promoters of this view of the environment are either atheistic or humanistic (man-centered) in thinking. At best what one offers from this standpoint is an uncertain “hope-so” kind of hope. Life is projected as a grin-

⁵⁸Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*, 149.

⁵⁹Ibid., 151.

⁶⁰Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 2nd ed., 41

⁶¹Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 102.

⁶²Ibid., 42.

and-bear-it stoicism. Left with himself and without God's help, man is hopeless and powerless to change his inner nature and his ultimate destiny.⁶³

All integrationism evidences a defective view of human nature and a flawed functional epistemology.⁶⁴ Psychology compromises our faith in the power of God, in the truth of His Word, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people. For the integrationist, sin is never the specific issue that underlies problems in living.⁶⁵ Clinical-humanistic thinking states that, "others are responsible for our problems and changes. Minimizing guilt and relieving suffering before experiencing its meaning. Apology for harmful effects." This value statement suggests that psychological sickness, not sin, causes human problem.⁶⁶ In the integrationists' view, self-psychology works against salvation. Wrong practices and feelings are viewed as deficiencies of self-esteem. Self-satisfied people do not experience poverty of spirit, guilt and conviction, do not mourn over sins, do not seek the face of God or repentance, and do not desire purification (they really see no need for it).⁶⁷ The integrationist considers neither the Scriptures nor prayer to be a part of psychotherapy. His effort is to try to retranslate and reinterpret hundreds of biblical passages in order to square them with thousands of conflicting psychological principles made by the advocates of scores of conflicting systems.⁶⁸ Integrationists are Christians that rely upon almost any other source than the Scriptures, and use the Bible (if at all) only in a token, superficial or illustrative manner. The Scriptures, when used, rarely provide the true base for the theories that are propounded. Scriptures are used to support

⁶³Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 274.

⁶⁴Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," 29

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 206.

⁶⁷Almy, "Psychology," 10.

⁶⁸Jay E. Adams, *Your Place in the Counseling Revolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 35.

humanistic views that not only disregard these very same Scriptures, but are hostile to them.⁶⁹ When counselors try to mix theology and psychology they usually end up with a watered-down Christianity instead of a Christianized psychology.⁷⁰ When tenets of psychology are used as the determiners of truth, theology comes out the loser. Doctrines end up redefined according to psychological dogma. Psychologists substitute methods of psychology for work of the Holy Spirit. There is no need for the Holy Spirit to develop spiritual fruit, since they can all be duplicated by any competent psychologists.⁷¹ Integration promotes the sin of accommodation, which consists of accommodating (including) Christianity to some other view.⁷² If God is not brought into the picture properly (i.e., if he is not included in a manner that accords with what he himself has required in the Scriptures) it is worse to introduce him than to leave him out altogether. Bringing God into an ungodly picture (system), attaching God's name to a godless method is repugnant. It is to dishonor him (Isa 42:8). It is to infer that God is in favor of ungodliness.⁷³ This practice of inclusion leads counselees to (1) false assurance, (2) trust in authority and submit to unscriptural systems as if they were biblical, and (3) doubt and despair in God when the system fails.⁷⁴ When counselees are told that the Bible cannot guide them in their day-to-day problems of living, they have every reason to doubt that it can lead them to eternal life. Integrationists dispense psychological remedies that are doomed to failure rather than the Word of God—truths that are the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).⁷⁵ Through the integrationists' practice, whether out of deception or ignorance, the

⁶⁹Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 96.

⁷⁰Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 184.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 197.

⁷²Adams, *Your Place in the Counseling Revolution*, 25.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁷⁵Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 203.

church's confidence in Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and preaching as the means through which the Spirit of God changes lives is undermined and as a result, vast numbers of Christians are directed away from pastors and fellow believers for spiritual help and into psychological clinics.⁷⁶

Townsend Psychological Services

Rebecca G. Townsend is a Senior Licensed Psychological Examiner and a Licensed Professional Counselor. She has been working in the field of mental health for over fifteen years. Townsend has extensive training and experience in working with military service members and their families. In 2010, she was in the first group to graduate from the Center's Post-Master's Certificate in Military and Veteran Behavioral Healthcare at the United States Department of Defense's Center for Deployment Psychology. She is a solution-focused therapist. Her goal for counseling is to "uncover a client's true potential and lead them to experience a life that is worth celebrating."⁷⁷ Townsend applies complementary therapy approaches and techniques to unearth long-standing behavior patterns or negative perceptions that may be holding a counselee back from experiencing a more fulfilling and meaningful life.⁷⁸ She, as well as other therapists of her service, provides support, problem-solving skills, and enhanced coping strategies for issues such as depression, anxiety, relationship troubles, unresolved childhood issues, grief, stress management, body image issues and creative blocks. Depending on the specific need, therapy can be short-term, for a specific issue, or longer-term, in dealing with more difficult patterns. To get the most out of scheduled regular sessions, a therapist may lead the client to read a pertinent book, journal on specific topics, noting particular

⁷⁶MacArthur and Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, 4.

⁷⁷Rebecca G. Townsend, "About Me," Townsend Psychological Services, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.rebeccatownsend.com/About Me.en.html>.

⁷⁸Rebecca G. Townsend, "About Me," Townsend Psychological Services, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.rebeccatownsend.com/About Me.en.html>.

behaviors or taking action on their personal goals. People seeking psychotherapy are ready to make positive changes in their lives, are open to new perspectives, and take responsibility for their lives.⁷⁹

Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee

Through a cooperate effort with churches in the Clarksville area, First Christian Church of Clarksville provides a place for people seeking a licensed Pastoral Counselor offering religious and faith-based counseling. The PCCT exists to restore lives to wholeness—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Pastoral Counseling has evolved through the years from religious and spiritual counseling to pastoral psychotherapy which integrates theology and the behavioral sciences.⁸⁰ Most of the pastoral counselors are ordained clergy, priests, or rabbis who are certified by one or more of the following clinical organizations: The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education. The therapists are licensed as Professional Counselors, Marital and Family Therapists, Clinical Social Workers, and Clinical Pastoral Therapists by the State of Tennessee.⁸¹

The Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee provide individual, couple, and family counseling, premarital counseling, and group therapy. Counseling is offered for partner—relationship problems, and difficulties with parents, children, co-workers, or other significant relationships. Therapists recommend other treatments including outpatient treatment and 12-step programs for a variety of compulsive behaviors including alcohol, drugs, sex, and gambling.

⁷⁹Rebecca G. Townsend, “Common Questions” Townsend Psychological Services, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.rebeccatownsend.com/CommonQuestions.en.html>.

⁸⁰Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee, “Who We Are,” accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.pcctinc.org>.

⁸¹Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee, “What Is Pastoral Counseling?,” accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.pcctinc.org/about/pastoral-counseling/>

The staff is available to provide counseling and medication services, when needed, to help with depression and anxiety. Clients experiencing problems with stress, grief and loss, and self-image issues can also find a counselor that will help them with these needs. Specialized assistance is offered to those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Brain Trauma.⁸²

Family Life Chaplains

Fort Campbell Army Base has one Family Life Chaplain and three interns that provide free confidential counseling to individual soldiers and couples. Services include marriage counseling and counsel for anxiety, combat stress, PTSD, sexual addictions, and depression.⁸³

The net effect in every integrationist's system is that secular error eats up biblical truth, so that false views of human nature, of Christ, and of the change/counseling process control the system.⁸⁴ If one accepts the logical conclusions of psychology, sin must be reduced to medical dysfunctions and a person can no longer be held responsible for his behavior, his ethical conduct, his thought life, or his morality. Since man is ill rather than disobedient to God, he does not need salvation but improved self-esteem.⁸⁵ Though it is often called "Christian" or even "biblical," psychology that has taken evangelicalism by storm is nothing more than Freudianism, disguised with spiritual imagery or repackaged with sprinklings of Christian terminology.⁸⁶

⁸²Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee, "Services," accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.pcctinc.org/counseling/needs>.

⁸³Army Marriage Project, "Family Life Chaplains," accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.armymarriageproject.com/resources.htm>.

⁸⁴Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," 25.

⁸⁵Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 203.

⁸⁶MacArthur, "Biblical Counseling and Our Sufficiency in Christ," 13.

Biblical Counseling Resources

The system of biblical (nouthetic) counseling was launched by its founder, Jay E. Adams, in 1970. Adams, a Presbyterian minister, was appointed Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1966. Through nouthetic discipleship, Adams sought to redefine both personal problems and the counseling task in opposition to secular psychotherapy by intentionally constructing a parallel sectarian counseling system—an intellectual, methodological, and institutional alternative to the mental health system.⁸⁷ Biblical (nouthetic) counseling is a ministry that is conducted by pastors and believers in a local church setting. Biblical counseling is defined as the “changing of sinful patterns and activities in the life of a counselee through verbal loving, caring, and familial confrontation with the Scriptures as the counselor is empowered by the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁸ The biblical counselor promotes a worldview that upholds the truth that God is around us, in us, and with us. In this view, man’s problems are not neutral. God is in the very center of every problem that is faced.⁸⁹ The assumption that sovereign God controls everything saturates Adam’s approach both in theology and practice and is the cornerstone of his system.⁹⁰ Life is not absurd; it has meaning—God’s meaning. This counseling practice offers hope, blessed in Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13), a confident expectation based upon the recorded promises of the living Creator who sovereignly sustains and guides human affairs to the predetermined ends that He has foreordained.⁹¹

For the biblical counselor, the ultimate truth is rooted in divine wisdom and points to

⁸⁷David Powlison, *Competent to Counsel? The History of a Conservative Anti-Psychiatry Movement* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 1996), 238.

⁸⁸Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: A Layman’s Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1981), 9.

⁸⁹Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: A Layman’s Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1981), 28.

⁹⁰Powlison, *Competent to Counsel?*, 41.

⁹¹Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 44-45.

God. Truth is born out of systematically thinking about human beings in a way that is exegetically careful, and emerges out of Scripture (exegesis) rather than reading into Scripture (eisegesis).⁹² Every concept of biblical counseling must build upon the foundational premise that there is an infinite and personal God who has revealed himself propositionally in the written Word, the Bible, and in the living Word, Jesus Christ.⁹³ The biblical mandate says the problems of living are due to separation from God because of the sinful condition of mankind and the presence of sin in the world after the fall. The biblical answer is Jesus, who has provided the only means to reestablish relationship between God and man and to enable people to live by faith in God.⁹⁴ God has a plan for changing people. His plan for change is the way of the cross (Matt 7:14). The entrance into new life through faith in Jesus is the small gate. The narrow way is the walk of sanctification (becoming more like Jesus). Biblical counseling is one small aspect of the total ministry of leading believers along the narrow way of sanctification.⁹⁵ Biblical counseling has comprehended uniquely that the goal of counseling should be nothing less than visible obedience to the Lord. No other counseling system perceives that this is the central issue facing troubled, sinful, and suffering human beings.⁹⁶ The motivation for change is love for God and the desire to please him. During the counseling process, guidance is offered in the implementation of a biblical plan of nouthetic counseling involving instruction in how to relate biblical truth to life through meditation, establishing long and short term objectives, scheduling ways and means, techniques, steps and procedures, a commitment to understand all the details, a desire to reach all the goals in order to please Jesus Christ, and prayer for the supply of wisdom

⁹²Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," 25.

⁹³Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 30.

⁹⁴Bobgan and Bobgan, *Psycho Heresy*, 207.

⁹⁵Bobgan and Bobgan, *Psycho Heresy*, 225.

⁹⁶Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 9. no. 3 (1988): 56.

and strength from God to complete the implementation process.⁹⁷

The goal of biblical counseling is spiritual maturity as the believer is changed (transformed) into the image of Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit in a progressive process of sanctification and through the believers' obedience to the Word of God (Rom 8:29, Eph 4:22-25, 13-16). Counseling ultimately must rest upon revelation, not reason or research. Reason and research apart from God's interpretive Word are not trustworthy.⁹⁸ Man's wisdom and experience are not a sufficient basis upon which to build a person's life. You must have confidence in God, not man (Jer 17:5-18). Helping people involves faith—faith in God and His Sovereign Word (Isa 8:9-9:7). Faith in God's Word must be foundational for reasoning and research.⁹⁹ No matter what problem a person may have, God has a solution found in the Word of God. In all non-physical categories of inter-personal relationships, the Bible has the answers to questions of counseling psychology: who is man, what is his purpose, what is wrong with him, how does one change him, where does the power to change come from? These are answered either by direct precept or by proper application of biblical principles.¹⁰⁰ The Bible provides the principles necessary to deal with eating disorders, non-biogenic depressions, scholastic failure, child abuse, bitter memories, anxiety, and a host of other modern problems.¹⁰¹ The Word of God contains everything pertaining to life and godliness (1 Pet 1:3-4). Biblical counselors believe the Bible is solely sufficient to help man with his problems and validates that sufficiency without the addition of eclectic principles, theories, or practices. No right teaching, reproof, correction, or training with regard to spiritual matters is possible apart from the all-sufficient Word of God (2

⁹⁷Adams, *Ready to Restore*, 66-67.

⁹⁸David Powlison, "25 Years of Biblical Counseling: An Interview with Jay Adams and John Bettler," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 9.

⁹⁹George C. Scipione, "Eeny, Meeny, Miny, Mo: Is Biblical Counseling It or No?," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 9, no. 4 (1989): 51-52.

¹⁰⁰Scipione, "Eeny, Meeny, Miny, Mo, 49.

¹⁰¹Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 27.

Tim 3:16).¹⁰²

The system of biblical counseling is built upon a systematic theological foundation. The counselor views all of life as sacred; none is secular. All life is God-related; none is neutral. Systems, methods, actions, values, attitudes, and concepts are either God-oriented or sinful. None are neutral.¹⁰³

Unit Chaplains

There are seventy unit Chaplains on Fort Campbell Army base. Chaplains spend a majority of their time with military members for the purpose of creating a bond of trust and encouragement among the soldiers. Chaplains, participate in physical training (PT), participate in training exercises, offer prayers, provide immediate on-site counsel with soldiers that request special ministry, hold religious services for military members while they are on post and when they deploy on mission. The thought is that when in times of personal crisis, whether at home or in combat, chaplains will be there to provide immediate spiritual support. Their ministry will be more easily accepted because of the time that the chaplains have spent with the soldiers in building personal relationships. These chaplains are not used in long term counseling.

At present there is no biblical (nouthetic) counseling ministry available to secular and military couples in the Clarksville area. There is no counselor certified by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors located in the Clarksville area. With the development of a counseling center at Northeast Baptist Church, pastors will no longer have to refer the members of their congregations to secular counselors who offer humanistic solutions to the problems they face in their everyday lives. In the future, pastors and trained lay members will be able to offer biblically-based, biblically accurate, and biblically appropriate, Christocentric and evangelistic,

¹⁰²MacArthur, "Biblical Counseling and Our Sufficiency in Christ," 12.

¹⁰³Bobgan and Bogan, *Psycho Heresy*, 201.

action-oriented (godly) instruction.¹⁰⁴ Fellow believers and their spouses will be able to find lasting help and hope through the Word of God for the personal and marital problems they are struggling with. This challenge will be met by the completion of this project.

¹⁰⁴MacArthur and Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, 297.

CHAPTER 4

THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT

The completion of this project was an important step toward determining the future direction of a biblical counseling ministry to military couples of the surrounding community of Northeast Baptist Church. Participants in the seminar would be able to pass on information received from the weekly meetings to neighbors, friends, and military acquaintances who are struggling with various crises in their marital relationships.

Thus, this project consisted of developing and teaching a seminar on biblical help and hope that is found in God's Word and in a personal, daily, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. By participating in the seminar, couples found scriptural instruction to aid them in finding solutions to crises such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, addictions, domestic abuse, marital infidelity/adultery, and communication. The overall duration of the project was sixteen weeks, and a description of the weekly methodology is provided in this chapter. Another foundational element of the project was the three Sunday morning worship services that preceded the five-week seminar which focused on the preaching of sermons on "The God of Help," "The God of Hope," and "The God We Trust. These sermons provided scriptural instruction to worshippers for strengthening their marriages as they established a time alone with God each day and were obedient to the teachings of God's Word. These worship services were followed by five Sunday sessions which were held at 4:45 in the evening. Each meeting featured general teaching on one of the five issues mentioned earlier. Three weeks prior to the beginning date of the seminar an invitation letter was sent to active and retired military couples of North East Baptist Church. These couples were invited to a Thursday evening supper where they received information about the sermons and weekly seminar sessions.

As you may know, I am working on my Doctor of Ministry Degree in Biblical Counseling at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. I would like to invite to attend an informational supper in the fellowship hall of the church on Thursday night, August 3, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. to learn more about the five-session seminar I will be conducting with military couples (husband and wife, or husband or wife) of Northeast Baptist Church. I need your help in completing the requirements of my degree. I would like to explain your participation requirements and see if you would agree to be a member of the study group in this special project.

The supper is free and being prepared by Marilyn. We will provide supper for your children and some special entertainment for them while the meeting is taking place. I would really appreciate your participation. Please let me know if you are planning to attend. You can see me personally or call me on my cell phone at 931-494-1629.

In Him,

Bro. Melvin

Prospective participants who were unable to attend the supper received a phone call in an attempt to secure their commitment to the seminar. Most of the couples responded positively to the invitation.

Week by Week Syllabus of the Class

Week 1

The first week of the project was dedicated to preparation of a sermon entitled “The God of Help.” A manuscript of the message was given to each of the six men who serve as deacons at Northeast Baptist Church. These men were chosen to act as the evaluation panel for the project. The deacons assessed the sermon using an evaluation rubric. Responses were checked on the following basis: 1 = insufficient, 2 = requires attention, 3 = sufficient, 4 = exemplary. The range/spectrum was selected in order to reflect their understanding in regard to questions that focused on the criteria of biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance. A copy of the rubric is provided in Appendix 2. Subject matter of the sermon was considered approved for presentation when a minimum of 90 percent of all rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level. The evaluation forms were distributed ten days prior to the preaching date and were to be returned no later than Thursday before the message was delivered. Comments received from the deacons were used in the completion of the sermon preparation.

Week 2

On Sunday of this week, I preached the sermon entitled “The God of Help.” The Scripture text for the message was Psalm 121. Other supportive passages of Scripture were used in the message.¹ The central truth of the message was “your individual lives, your marriages, your families will be strengthened when you turn to God for help.” The goal of the sermon was that worshippers would respond during the invitation time to God’s call to salvation and further seek his help for the strengthening of their individual lives, marriages, and families.

Two major points that lead to finding God’s help were addressed in the message. First, a couple must admit their need for help. This step requires a married couple to deal with pride. Some couples will only face their neediness when they are desperate and out of other options. The psalmist reminds the follower of Christ that “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth” (Ps 121:1-2). Secondly, a couple must affirm the sovereign, covenant, and personal God as their source of help. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” As sovereign God, he provides shelter, protection, guidance, deliverance, expectation from home to labor and returning home, all intervening activity, and the entire course of life. An illustration from the marriage of Abraham and Sarah found in Genesis 20:1-18 was used to show how God sovereignly acted in their behalf to guide them in fulfilling his purposes for their lives.

As a covenant God, he contracts with his own followers to protect, guide, and bless them as they are obedient to the promises and commitments of his Word. When a Christian couple recognizes their disobedience to one another or to God, acts swiftly to confess and repent of sin, and returns to obedience to the Word of God, the Lord can provide help, give grace, restore favor, and their marriage can be strengthened. Although God does not promise to prevent harm in every situation, an incident in the relationship of Moses and Zipporah described in

¹Ps 46:1, Psa 34:22, Isa 41:10,13, 1 Pet 5:7.

Exodus 4:24-26 does illustrate an example of God's swift action to return personal health to Moses as a result of an act of obedience to God's Word performed by his wife.

As a personal God, he is involved in believers' lives to strengthen and uphold them. Today, the dwelling of God has been provided in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the child of God. From an incident in the marriage of Elkanah and Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:11, a Christian couple learns that no matter how deep the troubles of life may be, they can cry out to a personal God for help and they can give their burdens to the Lord with the assurance that he cares about them (1 Pet 5:7).

An invitation was extended to the congregation. Worshippers were invited to respond to God's call for personal salvation and/or to cry out to him in prayer in their time of personal crisis in order to seek his help in strengthening their individual lives, marriages, or families.

Week 3

Week 3 of the project was set aside for the preparation of a sermon entitled "The God of Hope." A manuscript was given to the deacons of Northeast Baptist Church. The evaluation methodology used during week 1 was also used for this week's sermon material. Information received from the deacons was used in the further development of the biblical message.

Week 4

On Sunday of week 4, I preached the sermon "The God of Hope." The focal passages for the message were Isaiah 40:27-31, Esther 8:7-12, Hebrews 6:11-20, and Romans 15:3-4. The central truth of the message was "your individual life, your marriage, your family will be strengthened when you turn to God for hope." The word "hope" was defined as a confident expectation of good; an indication of certainty.² The goal of the sermon was that worshippers would respond to the message by turning to God for salvation by faith in Christ and/or find hope in Christ for the crises they may be facing in their marital relationship.

²Jay E. Adams, *More Than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 45,179.

Three major truths were explored in the context of the address. First, a believer's life, marriage, and family can be strengthened as they turn to the sovereign God for hope. In Isaiah 40:27-31, the prophet reminds followers of Christ today that God's endless power, wisdom, and abundant strength await those who wait for/hope in him. In the midst of suffering, trial, and hardship God will bring strengthening to life, faith, and relationships so that they will not waver, no matter what comes against them (1 Pet 5:9-11, Ps 33:20-22). The marriage of Ahasuerus and Esther, as discussed in Esther 8:7-12, provided biblical evidence to support the claim that God has a purpose for the lives of his children, no matter where they are, no matter who they are, no matter where they live, to whom they are married, what they have experienced in the past, or what they are facing in the tomorrow or the days to come. As children of God place their lives in God's hands, he will carry out his plan regardless of wrong decisions made, sins committed, and/or circumstances of life that are beyond their control.

A second major truth was that the believer's life, marriage, and family can be strengthened when they turn to the covenant God for hope. In Hebrews 6:11-20, the writer explains that the foundation for hope rests in the unquestionable character of God where (1) it is impossible for him to lie, and (2) the promises of God are made good to his people in perpetuity. No power exists that can shake the fulfillment of God's oaths concerning his children (Romans 8:35-39). The birth of John to Zacharias and Elizabeth, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapter 1, confirms these truths. A Christian couple may think that God has forgotten them and that the situations they find themselves in are hopeless. However, God is a covenant God. They can believe in Him. Hope will become reality as he remembers his promises to them and keeps them.

A third truth was that a follower's life, marriage, and family can be strengthened as they turn to God's sufficient Word for hope. Romans 15:3-4 reminds Christians that hope comes when they understand what God has promised, meditate upon those promises, and appropriate them for themselves. The story of the birth of Jesus to Joseph and Mary, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapter 2, provides biblical support for this fact. The couple trusted in the

revelation of truth proclaimed to them by an angel from God. Despite all the circumstances and events that surrounded the pregnancy and birth of Jesus, they needed nothing more to convince them of the surety of things to come; only God's Word. Today, followers of Christ can trust in the same sufficient Word of God for the well-being of their lives, marriages, and families. The message of the Bible provides a hope of confident expectation even in the midst of conflicting and confusing circumstances.

An invitation was extended at the close of the service, offering those who did not know Jesus as their Savior the opportunity to trust in God for the hope of eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Church members were challenged to turn to God to find hope for the needs of their individual lives, marriages, and families as they faced impossible troubles, trials, or difficulties.

Week 5

Preparation for the sermon "The God We Trust" was conducted during week 5. The same evaluative procedures were used in examining the research for this message as had been used in previous weeks. Information received from the deacons was used in the further development of the biblical message.

Week 6

During the Sunday morning worship service, I preached the message "The God We Trust." The Scripture text for the time of revelation was 2 Kings 18:1-37. The central truth of the sermon was "when a Christian couple completely trusts in the living God and his promises, even in the most desperate of circumstances, their marriage will be strengthened." "Trust" was defined as relying on someone or something for security, to put one's life in someone's hand, or to depend on things one has or controls to sustain their life against threats to it. To introduce this concept of trust, I demonstrated the definition by conducting a "trust fall" during the morning worship service. I enlisted eight men from military couples to help me in the demonstration. After climbing to the eighth step of a ladder, I blindfolded myself, turned my back on the men

who were standing below with arms and hands interlocked. I gave the following command, “falling” and the soldiers replied, “fall.” At that point I fell into the arms of the men, thus illustrating an act of relying on someone for security, putting my life in someone’s hands. It was a very persuasive presentation of a biblical truth.

Three major points were developed in this sermon. First, Hezekiah’s trust in God was a trust that did not change (vv. 5-6). The king’s ultimate trust was in the sovereign God who was on the throne and in control of everything; beyond everything he could see and behind everything he could see but did not understand. Hezekiah’s trust was a ceaseless trust. His trust was solid not only in the good times, but also when he faced circumstances that seemed to defy God’s goodness. From the king’s life, we learned that Christians must learn to grow in their trust in God, not only when visible signs give them confidence, but also when those evidences are not present.

A second truth was that Hezekiah’s trust in God was a trust that knew conflict and challenges (vv. 17-18). The king sought to be faithful to God by ridding Judah of all idols. Rather than bringing stability and peace to the land, his actions brought more conflict. From Hezekiah’s experience, the follower of Christ learns that trusting in God often leads to conflict with others. A second lesson to be learned was that a believer must not compromise with the enemy in order to avoid pain. Compromise may offer a way out, but it will not be God’s way. Trust is trusting in God alone.

A third fact was that Hezekiah’s trust in God was a trust that made champions (2 Kgs 19:14-19). When faced with the enemy, Hezekiah prayed that God would defend his own name, not the name of the king. God delivered a message of victory to the king in 2 Kings 19:32-37. Hezekiah believed in the sufficiency of Scripture; that God’s Word contains all that God intended for his people to need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.³ Through his experiences, Hezekiah teaches believers in Christ that they can have

³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 127.

absolute and confident trust when it comes to God defending his name and making it known. Trusting in God completely may not always be an easy choice, but it will always be the best choice.

An invitation was given at the close of the message. Unbelievers were invited to respond to God's call to salvation by way of trusting in Christ by faith. Believers were asked to place their total trust in God and his Word as the answer to the struggles they were facing in their lives, marriages, and families.

Week 7

During week 7, the deacons of Northeast Baptist Church evaluated the manuscript for the first week of the "Strengthening Marriages" seminar. The topic for the session was "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)." The material used to teach this class did not originate with me. The resources used were *PTSD; The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*; and *When War Comes Home*.⁴ The primary resource for this class was notes taken from a lecture on PTSD by Charles Hodge, MD, at the Biblical Counseling Training Conference in Lafayette, Indiana.⁵ The deacons were given a manuscript of the material to be taught during the Sunday evening session. The same procedures that were used during the evaluating of sermon materials were used in the assessing of seminar teaching notes. The goals of the session were as follows:

1. Increase the participant's knowledge of the biblical origin of PTSD.
2. Increase the participant's biblical knowledge of the need to change the motive of the heart in order to find solutions to PTSD.

⁴Richard K. Thomas, *PTSD* (Charleston, SC: Booksurge Publishing, 2009); Glenn R. Schiraldi, *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook* (Chicago: McGraw Hill, 2009); Jeremy Lelek, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013); Chris Adsit, Rahnella Adsit, and Marshelle Carter Waddell, *When War Comes Home* (Newport News, VA: Military Ministry Press, 2008).

⁵Charles Hodge, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (workshop presented at the Biblical Counseling Training Conference at Faith Church, Lafayette, Indiana, 2010).

3. Increase the participant's knowledge of a biblical interpretation of the definition of PTSD as it is explained in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSMIV).

Information received from the deacons was used in the further development of the teaching curriculum for this session.

Week 8

During the beginning session, seminar participants were asked to complete a survey designed to identify the health of their marital relationship in regard to issues that many military couples experience in their marriages (i.e., PTSD, communication, addictions, domestic abuse, marital infidelity/adultery). A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix 1. Responses were recorded on the following basis: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Questions were designed to indicate the healthiness of the marriage. Data responses were converted from a letter to a numerical value. The conversion was necessary for the statistical analysis of the project. Answers to questions were given a number based on the rating scale of one to six, with numbers 5 and 6 being the most healthy answers, and numbers 1 and 2 being the most unhealthy. The statistical results revealed that 12 individuals described their marriage relationship as "healthy", 1 individual responded that their marriage was "not healthy," and 1 individual described their marriage as "at risk." The results of the survey helped me to better understand the condition of the marriage relationships of those participating in the seminar.

A second activity of the meeting involved administering a pre-test to the members. The test was composed of thirty-one true-false statements used to gauge the group's understanding of the biblical teaching on PTSD, communication, addictions, domestic abuse, and marital infidelity/adultery. An identical post-test was given during the last seminar meeting. The post-test will be further explained in the week 16 discussion.

The presentation was presented on the topic "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist

incidents, serious accidents, or serious personal assaults like rape. The central theme of the meeting was “marriages can be strengthened when couples turn to God and his Word to find solutions to PTSD.”

The presentation included (1) a description of symptoms of the disorder, (2) a history of PTSD in the military setting, (3) a consideration of the question, How could God have allowed this to happen?, (4) an examination of the motive of the heart when seeking biblical counseling, and (5) an explanation of the application of biblically-based instruction to PTSD as defined by DSMIV criteria.⁶ The criteria identifies the following symptoms:

1. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with threatened death or injury. The person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
2. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or dreams of the event.
3. The traumatic event involves acting or feeling as if reliving the experience, with illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated.
4. The person displays intense psychological distress and physiologic reactivity at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
5. The person exhibits persistent personality changes; marked diminished interest or participation in significant activities; feelings of detachment or estrangement from others; restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings); a sense of foreshortened future.
6. The person experiences persistent symptoms of increased arousal with sleep disturbances, anger, and difficulty in concentration, hyper-vigilance, and exaggerated startle response.
7. The duration of the disturbance is more than one month.
8. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of function.

During the instruction, general biblical instruction was applied to each of these criteria.

Participants were also introduced to specific actions in dealing with worry and fear; two areas most commonly experienced by PTSD counselees.

⁶Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2000), 218-220.

Week 9

Preparation of teaching materials for the second session of the seminar was completed during this week. The topic was “Addictions.” The material used to teach this class did not originate with me. The resources used were *The Heart of Addiction; Just One More; Hope and Help for Gambling, Breaking the Addictive Cycle*.⁷ The deacons were given a manuscript of the material to be taught during the Sunday evening meeting. The procedures that were used during the evaluating of sermon materials were used in the assessment of seminar teaching notes. The goals of the session were as follows:

1. Increase the biblical knowledge of the heart motive behind the bondage of addictions.
2. Increase the biblical knowledge of the four actions that an addict must take in order to find freedom from the bondage of addiction in his/her life.

Comments from the evaluation forms received from the deacons were used in the further development of the teaching curriculum for this session.

Week 10

“Addictions” was the topic for week 10 of the class. The central theme of this meeting was “marriages can be strengthened when couples turn to God and his Word to find solutions to addictions being experienced in the marital relationship.” An addiction was defined as a bondage to the rule of a substance, activity, or state of mind, which then becomes the center of life, defending itself from the truth so that even bad consequences don’t bring repentance and lead to further estrangement from God.⁸

The teaching began with a discussion about two opposing motives of the heart, living to please self or living to please and glorify God. In discussing the self-centered motive for

⁷Mark E. Shaw, *The Heart of Addiction* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2008); Edward T. Welch, *Just One More* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002); Mark E. Shaw, *Hope and Help for Gambling* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2007); David Powlison, and *Breaking the Addictive Cycle* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010).

⁸Edward T. Welch, *Addictions—A Banquet in the Grave* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 35.

living, five warning signs to guilty and sinful pleasures were each explained. Those signs were (1) the pleasure is plain wrong, (2) the pleasure captivates and captures the individual, (3) the pleasure becomes hidden, (4) the pleasure steals the person away from the good he ought to be doing, and (5) the pleasure does not deliver. An explanation was given about the thinking errors of one who displays the selfish motive of the heart and how the actions that accompany these signs are sinful. God's Word holds mankind responsible for sin. God is loving and good and knows that the sin of an addictive lifestyle seriously harms the addict and the individual's loved ones. Sin is destructive and the addict will be destroyed if not for the love of God.

The second motive for living is to live to please and glorify God. This is the God-ordained purpose for the follower of Christ. A discussion was led on each of four actions that must be taken by a believer to find release from the futile lifestyle of addiction.

1. The addict must repent. The story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:14-16 was used to offer insight into this step.
2. A believer experiencing healing from his addiction is to show fruits or actions demonstrating that repentance has taken place. A worksheet entitled "Taking Thoughts Captive" developed by Stuart Scott was given to the group and explained.⁹
3. An addict must "put off" outward sinful behaviors and "put on" conduct that pleases the Lord. The concept of "put off" and "put on" was examined from Ephesians 4:22-24. A bible study on this concept, developed by Martha Peace from her book *The Excellent Wife*, was given to the participants.¹⁰
4. An addict must develop a strategy for knowing more about God. Misconceptions about God were discussed and attention was given to the need of the believer to search the Scriptures and find truth of God's love for them.

Week 11

Teaching materials were prepared for this session on "Domestic Violence" during the week. The deacons were given a manuscript of the material to be taught during the Sunday evening meeting. They followed the same evaluation procedures as were used in earlier

⁹Stuart Scott, "Taking Thoughts Captive" (lecture presented at the Biblical Counseling Training Conference at Faith Church, Lafayette, Indiana, 2014).

¹⁰Martha Peace *The Excellent Wife* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2005), 161-63.

sessions. The material used to teach this class did not originate with me. The resources used were *Abuse, Living with an Angry Spouse*; “*Why Me?*”; *Domestic Abuse*; *Help! Someone I Love Has Been Abused*; and *When War Comes Home*.¹¹ The goals of the session were as follows:

1. To increase knowledge of the biblical explanation of abuse and its impact on both husband and wife (i.e., the abuser and the abused).
2. To increase the biblical knowledge of why people abuse, the false beliefs of abusers, and characteristics of an abuser.
3. To increase the biblical knowledge of steps that must be taken if the victim is to be helped.

Remarks from the evaluation forms were used in the further development of the instructional material for this session.

Week 12

The subject covered in this session was “Domestic Violence.” The central theme of this meeting was “marriages can be strengthened as couples turn to God and his Word to find healing from domestic violence in the marriage relationship.” *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook* defines “domestic violence” as “. . . any behavior that is intended to control and subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation, and verbal or physical assault. . . it is the systematic persecution of one partner by another.”¹²

A biblical explanation of abuse and its impact on both husband and wife (i.e., the abuser and the abused) was shared. The fact that abuse is sin and that such behavior stems from a heart characterized by various expressions of deception was explained. The following truths from the bible about God, abuse, and the victim were presented.

¹¹John Henderson, *Abuse* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2012); Edward T. Welch, *Living with an Angry Spouse* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008); David Powlison, “*Why Me?*” (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003); David Powlison, David Tripp, and Edward T. Welch, *Domestic Abuse* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002); Jim Newheiser, *Help! Someone I Love Has Been Abused* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2010); and Chris Adsit, Rahnella Adsit, and Marshale Carter Waddell, *When War Comes Home* (Newport News, VA: Military Ministry Press, 2008).

¹²Dawn Bradley Berry, *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook* (Los Angeles: Lowell House, 1995), 1.

1. God hates oppression, cruelty, abuse, and violence (Ezek 45:9, Mal 2:16-17).
2. The spouse is not the possession of the husband (1 Cor 6:19-20).
3. It is the victim's husband's responsibility to take care of his spouse and provide for her needs, not neglect her and make his wife's life more difficult (1 Tim 5:8).
4. If the spouse's husband abuses her or treats her disrespectfully, he will experience resistance from God (Isa 58:4, Ps 7:16).
5. The violence that people practice will eventually backfire (Ps 7:16).
6. God forbids verbal abuse and name-calling (Matt 5:22, Eph 4:29).
7. God expects husbands to respect and honor their wives in matters of sex and will punish those who violate this principle (1 Thess 4:3-7).

Those participating also received instruction on why people abuse, the false beliefs abusers have, and characteristics of an abuser.

Actions that must be taken by and for victims of domestic violence were also explained. Those actions include (1) the victim needs to be safe, (2) the victim must be heard, (3) the victim needs to face up to personal sin, (4) the victim needs to honestly face the sinfulness of others, (5) the spouse needs to confront the abuser, and (6) the victim needs to be prepared to offer forgiveness .

The class ended with consideration being given to how victims become overcomers of abuse. Three steps must be taken: (1) the victim must trust in God's justice (Ps 10:12-15), (2) the victim must put his/her hope in God (Ps 22:9-11, 16-18, Rom 8:38-39, 1 Pet 2:20-22), and (3) the victim must trust in God's sovereignty even in the midst of suffering (Ps 10:16-18).

Week 13

In Week 13, the class preparation focused on "Marital infidelity/adultery." The deacons were given a manuscript of the material to be taught. The procedures used in earlier sessions continued to be followed. The material used to teach this class did not originate with me. The sources used to prepare for the instruction of the class were *After Adultery; Sexual Sin; Help! My*

Spouse Committed Adultery, Renewing Marital Intimacy, and Marriage Matters.¹³ The goals of the session were as follows:

1. To increase knowledge of the condition of marriage and divorce in Montgomery County, Tennessee.
2. To increase the knowledge of the strains on military marriages in Montgomery County, Tennessee.
3. To increase biblical knowledge of the beginning point of turning to God's Word and promises to deal with marital conflict.
4. To increase biblical knowledge of the offender's path and the offended partner's path to transformation.
5. To increase biblical knowledge of how to rebuild intimacy in a marriage relationship.

Information taken from the deacon's evaluation forms was used in the further development of the materials used in teaching this session.

Week 14

The subject title for this week's class was "Marital Infidelity/Adultery." The central theme of this meeting was "marriages can be strengthened through turning to God and his Word for solutions to marital infidelity/adultery in a marriage relationship." The teaching began with a summary of statistics on divorce in Montgomery County, Tennessee. Further information was shared about the multiplicity of challenges that military couples face that add to the strain of a marital relationship. An explanation of the starting point of dealing with marital crises was given. That directive is for the couple to ask God to help them believe his promises. The teaching of Psalm 46 reinforced this vital step to finding a solution to marital infidelity/adultery. The instruction was ended with posing the question, Whether you are the offender or the offended, do you want to follow Jesus more than anything, even more than restoring your

¹³Robert D. Jones, *After Adultery* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006); Jeffrey S. Black, *Sexual Sin* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003); Winston T. Smith, *Help! My Spouse Committed Adultery* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008); David Powlison, *Renewing Marital Intimacy* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008); Winston T. Smith, *Marriage Matters* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008).

marriage? Is God your highest aim?

After a short break, the class was taught about the path of the offender to transformation. Details of several steps to transformation were given to the class:

1. Transformation involves severing the adulterous relationship immediately.
2. Transformation requires that the offender admit the facts and disclose the affair honestly.
3. Transformation requires that the offender confesses to God, spouse, and appropriate others the adultery and the deception/lies, and seek their forgiveness.
4. Transformation requires that the offender develop and implement a specific action plan for godly change.

When exploring the offended partner's path to transformation the following steps were covered:

1. The offended partner must find words to express the pain of her betrayal to God.
2. The offended partner must find her security and identity in Jesus Christ, not in her spouse or marriage.
3. The offended spouse must view the trial biblically. The individual believer has been sinned against and is suffering.
4. The offended spouse must forgive her spouse, thus releasing him from her judgment and entrusting him to God (1 Pet 2:22-23, 4:19, Eph 4:31-32).
5. The offended spouse will set boundaries for her spouse.
6. The offended spouse must examine herself and acknowledge any ways that she may have contributed to the weakness in her marriage.

The final minutes of the class were dedicated to communicating steps that must be taken in rebuilding intimacy in the marriage relationship:

1. The couple must seek intimacy with God.
2. The couple must turn to God for forgiveness and mercy.
3. The couple must seek daily encouragement and hope from godly and wise friends.

Week 15

This week was spent in preparation for the final session of the seminar. The class title was "Communication in the Marriage Relationship." The final manuscript of the teaching

sessions was presented to the deacons for their evaluation. They used the same process and evaluative procedures as they had in all the other evaluations. The material used to conduct this class did not originate with me. The primary resource for this class was Stuart Scott's booklet entitled *Communication and Conflict Resolution*.¹⁴ Other supportive materials used were *Communication* and *War of Words*.¹⁵ The goals of the session were as follows:

1. To increase the participant's understanding of God's plan and purpose for godly communication.
2. To increase the participant's biblical knowledge of the qualities of God-honoring communication.
3. To increase the participant's knowledge of the four basic biblical rules for communication.
4. To increase the participant's biblical knowledge of how married couples can resolve marital conflict in communication.

Suggestions offered from the evaluation forms collected from the deacons were used in the further development of the teaching material for this session.

Week 16

The last class, "Communication in the Marriage Relationship," ended the time together as a group. The central truth of this session was "marriages can be strengthened through the practice of godly communication."

Teaching was given on God's design for communication. God has a specific plan and purpose for using God-honoring communication in the talk of the body of Christ. Teaching at this point focused on the negative effects of poor communication and the positive effects of good communication. A chart from Rob Green's booklet *Communication* was used to explain the differing and opposing qualities of self-centered communication and God-honoring

¹⁴Stuart Scott, *Communication and Conflict Resolution* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2005).

¹⁵Rob Green, *Communication* (Lafayette, IN: Faith Resources, 2008); Paul David Tripp, *War of Words* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2000).

communication.¹⁶

The remaining teaching time was focused on two major issues. The first issue discussed was the four biblical rules of communication: (1) Be honest and open, (2) Keep current, (3) Attack the problem, not the person, and (4) Act, do not react.¹⁷ The second issue dealt with resolving conflict in marital communication. A chart was used from Scott's booklet *Communication and Conflict Resolution* to help explain the role of the motive of the heart in our communication.¹⁸ It was explained that a believer can be assured that quarreling will result when his heart is focused on "encamped lusts." Good communication results when the motive of the heart is given to "entrusted desires." As a final activity, the participants received three examples of homework that counselors would give to a counselee to help them determine the communication needs of a Christian couple and help them develop godly communication in their relationship.

Following the closing discussion, participants took a post-test that was identical to the pre-test taken at the beginning of the seminar. The data gathered was designed to measure the increase of biblical knowledge that was achieved as a result of participating in the classes. To analyze the two data samples, the Data Analysis function in Excel was used, specifically the option t-Test Paired Two Sample for Means. The mean difference was set to '0', with Alpha at .05. The teaching of the materials to the select group of median adults made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge ($t_{(13)} = 3.881, p < .001$).¹⁹

The overall biblical knowledge of the participants of the seminar was very strong, especially when responding to statements on the pre-post survey that dealt with the issues of

¹⁶Green, *Communication*, 22.

¹⁷Randy Patten, "Four Rules of Communication" (workshop presented at the Biblical Counseling Training Conference at Faith Church, Lafayette, Indiana, 2008).

¹⁸Scott, *Communication and Conflict Resolution*, 18.

¹⁹See appendix 4.

adultery, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There was no overwhelming increase of knowledge displayed in responses given to assertions. A nominal increase was noted throughout the post-survey. Two individuals showed an increase in knowledge on the post-test by their response of “True” to the statement, “The Bible teaches that forgiving a spouse for infidelity and/or adultery is required.” One group member showed a positive change in understanding as they answered “False” on the post-survey to the statement, “There comes a time in communicating with one’s spouse that a marriage partner is no longer responsible for their words.” In regard to the crisis of domestic violence, 2 group members correctly changed their reply to “True” when responding to the statement, “Violence begins in the heart of an abusive husband or wife. Therefore, the Gospel is his or her only hope.” However, it was noted that after the instruction had been given in the seminar, 2 individuals changed their post-response to the wrong answer, “False,” to this same statement. Three people showed an increase in biblical understanding when they changed their answer from “false” to “true” when replying to the declaration, “Selfish pride is at the heart of domestic violence.”

The strongest increase of biblical knowledge was evidenced in responses to all 8 statements that dealt with the issue of addiction. Three members who responded incorrectly on the pre-survey answered correctly with “True” in the post-survey to the statement, “It is good to avoid anything or anyone that may cause emotional or physical harm.” In answer to the assertion, “The Bible speaks of an addiction as a disease,” 4 members changed their answer from “True” to “False” on the post-survey. It is also important to note that 4 members of the group responded with the wrong answer, “True,” on the post-survey. In a corresponding claim, “The Bible addresses addictions as a physical and psychological problem,” 6 members of the group answered wrongly with a choice of “True.” Finally, the replies to the statement, “Addictive behaviors are evidence of a worship disorder,” showed strong increase in biblical knowledge. Five additional group members replied with the correct “True” answer on the post-survey. In contrast, 4 individuals answered wrongly on both the pre and post survey.

The data gathered from the pre-post survey will aid in further development of

instructional materials. After evaluating the facts of the pre-post survey, whether in seminars or individual counseling sessions, I will more thoroughly address the concepts of sin as a possible origin of crisis problems, heart motives, and the meaning of worship. With the results of the documented detail of increased biblical knowledge, the personal reflection of the 5-week seminar, the positive interaction of the participations, and the fulfillment of projected goals, I believe the project was a success.

CHAPTER 5

THE FINAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS PROJECT

Introduction

The completion of this project was a significant step toward implementing a biblically based, Christ-centered counseling ministry to the residents of the growing community surrounding the facilities of Northeast Baptist Church. This ministry will focus on active duty and retired military couples and families, giving special attention to problems encountered as a result of the rigors of military life and crises faced as a result of deployment and/or relocation.

The congregation of NEBC knew that I was a certified biblical counselor through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). However, they had no idea of the meaning of biblical counseling and how it differs from secular philosophies and practices. Conducting this project provided the opportunity for an important segment of the church membership to be introduced to the field of nouthetic counseling. They were able to experience how the life-changing truths of the Word of God are able to offer solutions to various issues of crisis being faced in marriages of military couples. I realize that a single sixteen-week period of planning and conducting the seminar is not sufficient to persuade the Northeast congregation to a point of enthusiastically embracing a ministry of biblical counseling. However, this project has served as the catalyst for the establishment of a viable biblical counseling ministry at NEBC. No other church or Christian agency in the Clarksville and Montgomery County area offers nouthetic counseling to its clientele. The opportunities for life-changing ministry to the community are limitless. I am prayerful that participants of the seminar will share the information they received with neighboring families of military service. As a result, I am hopeful that the counseling ministry will grow to the point where other laymen of the church will

want to be trained, certified, and involved in this outreach ministry.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

As indicated in preceding chapters, the specific purpose of this project was to develop and teach a seminar to introduce military couples to bible-centered hope and instruction for strengthening their marriages. This project specifically involved designing and teaching a series of classes toward that end. As described in chapter four, the material covered throughout the sessions was chosen to meet the specific goals listed below.

At the inception of this project, there were sixteen individuals representing ten military couples of Northeast Baptist Church participating in the seminar. These couples represented both active duty and retired veterans of the United States Army. Three spouses were deployed to Afghanistan during the implementation of this project.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this project in achieving its overall purpose, three measurable goals were established:

1. Assessing the current overall health of the marriages of seminar participants.
2. Developing an eight-week seminar to introduce military couples to the foundations of biblical counseling that address issues of addiction, adultery/infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The seminar included a three-week, Sunday morning sermon series on the God of help, hope, and trust and a five-week seminar dealing with the above mentioned crisis issues.
3. Increasing the biblical knowledge of the participants by teaching Bible-centered instruction which offered couples guidance in how to strengthen their marital relationships.

With respect to the first goal, the marriage survey provided clear insight into the

overall health of the marriage relationships of those participating in the seminar. Results of the survey were discussed in chapter 4. Information gleaned from the assessment aided my presentation of materials, especially in reference to PTSD. I believe this goal was clearly achieved.

As discussed in chapter 4, all sermon materials (i.e., textual study and supportive information) and teaching curriculum used in the five weeks of seminar sessions met the requirements for presentation as evaluated by the deacon committee. With the addition of suggestions made by the deacons in their reviews, the preparation and presentation of the material was judged as exemplary. Furthermore, each seminar class involved the distribution of fill-in-the-blank listening notes which further encouraged comprehension of the subject matter discussed. I believe that the second goal was successfully accomplished.

As previously discussed in chapter 4, the results of the t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means clearly showed that there was an increase in the biblical knowledge attained by the participants during the five-session marriage seminar. In general, therefore, I believe that the three specific goals of this project were successfully met within the scope of the sermon presentations and the conducting of seminar sessions.

Strengths of the Project

Within the context of Northeast Baptist Church, several strengths of this project are worth noting. First, the thrust of the project was successful in that it reached all of the military couples presently active in the church. Participation in the seminar by both active duty soldiers, retired servicemen and their spouses allowed for varying perspectives on issues that were discussed. Notably absent from the meetings were three husbands that were serving in the military theatre of Afghanistan.

A second strength of this project was that it provided a means through which the church can become more relevant to the community. Northeast Baptist Church has struggled in finding a way to identify with the family needs of local residents. This project will serve as a

medium of outreach to families of the surrounding community. In future days, more expanded and targeted seminars on specific issues discussed during the seminar can be offered to the neighborhood. It is prayerful that these specialized opportunities of instruction would lead to the scheduling of individualized counseling sessions with military married couples, which in turn will result in stronger, godly marital relationships and a healthier community.

A third strength of this project is the interest developed during the seminar presentations on the areas of communication and PTSD. From data gathered from the marriage survey and the information drawn from the limited time of discussion, it became very clear that twelve of the participants had experienced some symptoms of the disorder either as a soldier or as a spouse of the service member. In general, all participants agreed that better communication skills needed to be developed in their marriages. In the near future, I will follow up with these couples to pursue the possibility of scheduling counseling sessions with them.

Weaknesses of the Project

The first weakness of the project concerned the time scheduled for each seminar session. Weekly meetings were structured for a time period of 1 hour and 15 minutes. Even though the majority of individuals participating in the seminar did not regularly attend Sunday evening services, it was decided by the group that the best time to meet was on Sunday afternoon from 4:45 to 6:00 p.m. Participants' commitments to other family activities and responsibilities prevented the scheduling of the seminar during the regular weekdays. Another factor that influenced the meeting time involved the beginning time of the Sunday evening worship service, which was at 6:00. Due to these restraints and the amount of material to be covered, there simply was not enough time available to give proper attention to the presentation of the subject matter, allow questions from participants, or enter into discussion with them. I did not believe that those attending would have given additional time for the seminar meetings. All but three of the couples left the church immediately at the close of the sessions because they had other responsibilities or activities to attend to.

A second weakness of the project was created by the limited number of participants in the seminar. The small number of military families active in the church membership of Northeast Baptist and the absence of spouses due to deployment during the project meetings created an imbalance of male and female participants. Although the setting was not ideal, the only way of providing for a qualified number of members to complete the assignment was to allow spouses whose husbands were deployed to attend.

A third weakness dealt with the data collected from the pre-test/post-test that was conducted during the seminar. While the body of data gathered was helpful, I became convinced that the use of true-false statements alone did not reveal a true measure of the understanding of the materials covered. In addition to the true-false statements, multiple-choice questions and short answer responses to statements of biblical teaching would have given a clearer indication of biblical knowledge. However, the test data was useful in pointing to the need for further clarification in future teaching opportunities.

What I Would Do Differently

If I were to conduct the seminar again, I would consider changing two components of the process. First, I would introduce two additional sermons to the series that I preached before the beginning of the individual classes. I would preach a message on the sovereignty of God and a second sermon on the sufficiency of God's Word. These concepts are foundational to understanding the scope of God as being the all-sufficient source of help, hope, and trust.

A second change that I would consider involves the number of crises topics to be covered in the seminar and the time allotted for conducting each session. The change could take one of two directions. A choice could be made to lessen the number of topics to be covered. By doing so, additional sessions could be devoted to covering various aspects of one single crisis issue. A second option would be to increase the length of time for conducting each session to 1 hour and 30 minutes. Either choice would provide for additional time for a question and answer segment as well as a period for group discussion. Participant scheduling would have to be taken

into consideration in making either of these changes

Theological Reflections

In reflecting upon the theological implications of this project for Northeast Baptist Church, I believe participants of the seminar engaged in a use of the Word of God in handling crises situations of marital relationships that they had never considered possible. Our present culture relies heavily upon the psychological theories and practices of humanistic counseling and a heavy use of medications. This counseling methodology has been too readily accepted and practiced by pastors and churches, as if there were no other option. As a result, individual believers and Christian couples are void of the experience of the transforming power of the gospel that can bring change to individual lives, marriages, and families. Through the weekly presentations of the seminar, participants discovered that the sufficiency of Scripture alone can bring help and hope to couples experiencing marital conflict. I believe that this project will promote a higher view of Scripture in the body of Christ at NEBC.

A second implication focused on the apprehension of military couples to seek help in times of crises. Although secular counseling is offered on Fort Campbell Army Base without cost, soldiers who suffer from issues such as addiction, domestic violence, and PTSD are cautious about sharing information concerning these issues for fear of losing their military careers. If commanding officers discover the presence of these problems, soldiers could become subject to disciplinary action, which could further lead to discharge from the Army. Because of this practice of secrecy, the couple's troubles continue to grow more intense and troubling. If marital counseling is not sought, divorce often becomes the only recourse considered. As couples discover that they can turn to the pastor or a layman of NEBC for biblically-based, Christ-centered counseling, in an environment of confidentiality, they will be more open to disclosing their need and seeking help and hope from God and his Word. When couples come to a biblical counselor for help, state laws of Tennessee and Kentucky must be followed in reporting incidents of abuse. In Tennessee it is not state-mandated that domestic violence be

reported. However, in Kentucky, state authorities must be contacted about acts of spouse abuse. Because soldiers are government employees, military cases of domestic violence must be reported to the Family Advocacy Office of Fort Campbell Army Base. Information about the case will be forwarded to state officials in Kentucky. There is one exception in the military known as “Restricted Reporting.” When a victim of abuse comes to a counselor for help, he or she can sign a waiver so that the incident will not be reported to state officials.¹

A third implication will be observed as biblical counseling is viewed positively as a process of discipleship and spiritual growth, rather than in a negative sense as a system of problem solving. Such a point of view will minimize the stigma of a counselee’s negative attitude of dealing with “a problem.” The biblical counseling process is deemed successful when ungodly attitudes and behaviors are replaced with a Christ-like character and lifestyle (Eph 4:24). This result is achieved through the development of a guided life-changing process of progressive sanctification. This course of action begins with instruction received during individualized counseling sessions and continues on through the lifetime of a counselee (Phil 1:6).

A final implication will be witnessed through the opportunity that church members will be given to become involved in a personal one-on-one relationship of discipleship with counselees. A church member who has become a certified ACBC will become actively involved in a personal fulfillment of the Great Commission, as he or she teaches their counselee to “. . . observe all that I commanded you. . .” (Matt 28:20). This obedience to Scripture will also challenge the counselor to give attention to his or her own growth in biblical discipleship so that he or she will always be prepared to guide the counselee in the next step toward transformation into the image of Christ in their life (Rom 8:29). I believe that as a biblical counseling ministry

¹Lisa Broadhead, LCSW, Family Advocacy Program, Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, interview by author, Clarksville, Tennessee, February 22, 2015.

is developed at Northeast Baptist, the church membership as a whole will sense the need to develop an age-graded discipleship program for the entire church. Such a program would provide for the progressive growth of sanctification to advance from childhood to adulthood as participants received guided teaching from adults. Such a ministry would provide the opportunity for every church member to “be diligent to present themselves approved to God as workmen who do not need to be ashamed, but are accurately prepared to handle the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Counselees will be provided the opportunity to continue on in this on-going discipleship process through the discipleship ministry of the church which will further support their growing faith and lifestyle as a devoted follower of Christ.

Personal Reflections

On a personal level, this project and the preparation required to conduct the seminar has been very beneficial to establishing my ministry at Northeast Baptist Church. Seven years ago, God birthed a burning passion and call in my heart to pursue the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Biblical Counseling. Fulfilling this last requirement of the program (i.e., completing this project) has affirmed God’s direction in my life. With the passing of time, God has been increasing my desire for biblical counseling. I enjoy preaching the Word of God, but I have begun to reap a greater sense of fulfillment of God’s call upon my life as I use Scripture to bring hope and help to individual believers and couples who are encountering various crises, such as those dealt with in this project. It is very satisfying to see marital relationships strengthened as couples experience the power of God’s Word transforming the motives of their hearts, their attitudes, and their behaviors into those of a Christ-like nature.

Secondly, the lessons I have learned through preparing and delivering weekly sermons and seminar sessions have influenced my personal preaching ministry. I have grown in my personal understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture to deal with problem issues. As a result of this project, I have begun to broaden my weekly sermons to specifically speak to needs and crises that are being faced in individual lives and in the relationships of married couples. I have

not specifically targeted these issues in messages that I have previously delivered.

Thirdly, I am still learning to wait on God for direction in further developments in the church biblical counseling ministry. As described earlier, Northeast is a small congregation. Counseling opportunities have been few and far between. I am eager to enlarge the counseling ministry. I do not know exactly how that will happen. I do know that God has a plan and in his timing he will reveal that to me. Until such a time, I will continue to share the vision of a biblical counseling ministry with the leadership of the church in order to gain their support of the development of this outreach endeavor. Further, I will begin searching for members that express an interest in becoming involved in counselor training.

The military community is constantly growing, troops continue to deploy, return home, and relocate. The number of issues that cause conflict in military couples and families continues to expand. The opportunity for a biblical counseling ministry at Northeast Baptist is certainly of critical demand. Getting the word out in regard to the availability of such a ministry is an urgent need. I look forward to the future with much anticipation. God birthed a passion for biblical counseling in my heart for a purpose and I am anxious to move forward. Until his plan and timing are more fully revealed, I will continue to study the Scriptures and further acquaint myself with biblical counseling materials so that I will be ready to minister to individual lives, marriages, and families.

Conclusion

The project's purpose of designing and teaching a seminar to introduce military couples to bible-centered hope and instruction for strengthening their marriages has been successfully achieved. Further, the project has exposed a small segment of the Northeast Baptist Church to the concept of biblical counseling. This project has also served as a significant step in the initial development of a biblical counseling ministry at Northeast Baptist Church. The implementation of much a service to the community will be an ongoing process. As the congregation at Northeast becomes more engaged with the community, they will become more

aware of the crucial need to reach out with resources to help strengthen the marriages and families of the neighborhoods that surround the church.

The entire process of developing a biblical counseling ministry has been bathed in prayer. Prayerfully, God will birth a passion in the hearts of NEBC members to be a part of the answer to reaching the crisis needs of military couples. Prayerfully, they will respond in obedience to God's call upon their lives by seeking the training necessary to become certified agents of God. Prayerfully, these followers of Christ will reach out to couples experiencing troubled marital relationships with the message of hope, help, and trust that is found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and through faithful obedience to God's Word. Each new day is now met with watchful anticipation and expectation of how God is going to move in the hearts and lives of the members of Northeast Baptist Church.

APPENDIX 1
MARRIAGE SURVEY

The marriage survey was used to to assess the current overall health of the marriages of military couples that are members of Northeast Baptist Church. The survey evaluated responses to various issues of addiction, adultery/marital infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

MARRIAGE SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help identify the health of your marriage in regard to various issues that are being experienced in the lives of military couples today. This research is being conducted by Melvin D. Felts for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research you will answer questions before the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Name: _____

What is your age in years? _____

How many years have you been married? _____

Directions: Answer the following questions. Please give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

Addiction

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I or my spouse drink alcohol two or more times a week. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. When I or my spouse drink we drink 2 or more drinks. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. I or my spouse gamble on a regular basis. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I sometimes feel guilty about behaviors my spouse is unaware of. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I participate in activities I would be embarrassed for others to know about, including my spouse. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Adultery

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. My spouse has never given me a reason not to trust trust them. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 7. I am satisfied with affection shown to me by my spouse. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I am satisfied with the sexual intimacy within our marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. My spouse has/is doing certain things that lowers (or questions) trust. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I trust my spouse. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I believe that my spouse trusts me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Communication

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 12. When disagreements arise, we are able to resolve the conflict with open communication | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. I tell my spouse that I love them. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. My spouse tells me they love me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. My spouse and I talk about each other's needs. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. I can talk with my spouse about work related stress. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Domestic Violence

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 17. I feel safe at home alone. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I feel safe with my spouse at home. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. I have never been concerned about my personal safety. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. In our marriage, we have never contacted authorities to act as mediation to resolve a conflict. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. Conflict arises to the point of physical contact. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 22. My spouse or I have experienced a traumatic event (an experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress or harm). | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 23. In the past 2-4 weeks, my spouse or I have experienced any one or more of the following: | | | | | | |

(1) recurrent, unwanted, distressing memories of the traumatic event, (2) Upsetting dreams about the traumatic event, (3) severe emotional distress or physical reactions to something that reminds us of the event.

SD D DS AS A SA

24. In the past 2-4 weeks my spouse or I have avoided places, activities, or people that reminds us of the traumatic event.

SD D DS AS A SA

25. In the past 2-4 weeks my spouse or I have experienced any one or more of the following: (1) Negative feelings about ourselves or other people, (2) Inability to experience positive emotions, (3) feeling emotionally numb, (4) lack of interest in activities we once enjoyed, (5) hopelessness about the future, (6) memory problems, including not remembering important aspects of the traumatic event, and/or (7) trouble maintaining close relationships.

SD D DS AS A SA

26. In the past 2-4 weeks my spouse or I have experienced any one or more of the following: (1) Irritability, angry outbursts, aggressive behaviors, (2) Always being on guard for danger, (3) overwhelming guilt or shame, (4) self destructive behavior such as drinking too much, or driving too fast, and/or (5) trouble concentrating sleeping, being easily startled or frightened.

SD D DS AS A SA

Marriage

27. I would define our marriage as healthy.

SD D DS AS A SA

28. I am comfortable with my role in our marriage.

SD D DS AS A SA

29. My spouse and I have made a commitment to stay married no matter what.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2
EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR SERMONS AND WEEKLY
LESSON PLANS

The evaluation rubric was given to the deacons of Northeast Baptist Church for the purpose of evaluating the three sermons preached on God's ministries of help, hope, and trust. Further, the rubric was used to evaluate the curriculum used during the five weekly sessions of the project. The materials were assessed on the basis of their biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance to the issues to be discussed.

COVER LETTER FOR EVALUATION RUBRIC

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help identify the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon/weekly session to be presented this week. This research is being conducted by Melvin D. Felts for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the presentation of weekly material. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this evaluation rubric, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Please check the appropriate box (**X**) that expresses your evaluation of each particular item on the survey. Please use the back of this sheet to express any additional comments.

Evaluation Rubric for Sermons and Weekly Lesson Plans					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The central theme and content of the sermon / lesson was derived from Scripture.					
The sermon / lesson helped you understand the text better.					
The sermon displayed the favor, compassion, and love of God.					
Clarity					
The goals and purpose of the sermon / lesson were clear.					
The sermon / lesson held the listener's interest, engaged the issues, and challenged and strengthened their faith.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Relevance					
The sermon / lesson revealed God's active presence and grace in our world today and in the situations people face today.					
The sermon / lesson showed an awareness of contemporary issues.					
The sermon / lesson made a connection between the biblical world and our current situation.					

APPENDIX 3
PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY

This pre-project and post-project survey was given to determine the degree of increase in biblical knowledge of the military couples in regard to the subject of the weekly meeting. The issues discussed were domestic violence, adultery, addictions (i.e., substance abuse, gambling, pornography), communication, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the degree of increase in biblical knowledge in regard to the issues of the weekly meetings (i.e., addictions (i.e., substance abuse, gambling, pornography), adultery/marital infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and grief/depression. This research is being conducted by Melvin D. Felts for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research you will answer questions before the project. You will answer the identical questions at the end of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Name: _____

What is your age in years? _____

How many years have you been married? _____

Directions: Answer the following questions. Each question is a true false question. Please circle the answer that best expresses your knowledge of the issue.

Addiction

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. It is good to avoid anything or anyone that may cause emotional or physical harm. | True | False |
| 2. The Bible teaches that it is impossible to fight addictions | True | False |
| 3. The Bible speaks of addictions (i.e., gambling, pornography, alcohol, substance abuse) as a spiritual problem of sin. | True | False |
| 4. The Bible speaks of an addiction as a disease. | True | False |
| 5. The Bible addresses addictions as a physical psychological problem. | True | False |
| 6. Overt addictive behavior begins in the heart with what you desire. | True | False |
| 7. Belief in God and the teaching of Scripture are necessary | | |

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| for recovery from addictions | True | False |
| 8. Addictive behaviors are evidence of a worship disorder. | True | False |

Adultery

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 9. Looking at a member of the opposite sex with lustful eyes is considered adultery. | True | False |
| 10. The Bible teaches that once marriage infidelity or adultery has occurred, a marriage must end. | True | False |
| 11. The Bible teaches that a spouse must confess his/her marital infidelity/adultery to their marriage partner. | True | False |
| 12. The Bible teaches that forgiving a spouse for infidelity and/or adultery is required. | True | False |

Communication

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 13. The Bible teaches that good communication is extremely important to God. | True | False |
| 14. I am accountable to God for everything I say. | True | False |
| 15. If a couple communicates poorly, it will have a negative effect on the marriage relationship. | True | False |
| 16. There comes a time in communicating with one's spouse that the marriage partner is no longer responsible for their words. | True | False |
| 17. Communication involves the heart. | True | False |
| 18. My communication points to my relationship with God. | True | False |

Domestic Violence

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 19. Harshness is considered acceptable in God's eyes when disagreements are unable to be resolved. | True | False |
| 20. A husband and wife should not go to bed angry. | True | False |
| 21. The Bible teaches that domestic violence is a sinful abuse of power and authority control. | True | False |
| 22. Violence begins in the heart of an abusive husband or wife. Therefore, the gospel is his or her only hope. | True | False |

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 23. Selfish pride is at the heart of domestic violence. | True | False |
| 24. The abuser must be forgiven by the victim if biblical repentance is expressed and fruits of repentance are witnessed. | True | False |

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 25. The Bible provides specific instruction on how to live a guilt free life. | True | False |
| 26. You do what you do, and you feel what you feel because of the way you think. | True | False |
| 27. I am his and God cares about me. | True | False |
| 28. The Bible offers a complete solution for fear in my life. | True | False |
| 29. The Bible offers me a future life of happiness with a purpose and meaning for living. | True | False |
| 30. I must realize that while my physical responses to a perceived threat feel legitimate, it is likely I am depending more on my own perception and wisdom than on the wisdom offered to me by God. | True | False |
| 31. God has something to say about the trauma I have experienced at the hands of another person. | True | False |

APPENDIX 4

T-TEST SURVEY RESULTS

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>
Mean	54.71428571	58.57142857
Variance	13.2967033	8.263736264
Observations	14	14
Pearson Correlation	0.369012483	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t Stat	3.881594087	-
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00094545	
t Critical one-tail	1.770933383	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001890899	
t Critical two-tail	2.160368652	

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ABSTRACT

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES OF SOLDIERS OF NORTHEAST BAPTIST CHURCH CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

Melvin Dennis Felts, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project examined biblical counseling instruction that aids in strengthening marriages of soldiers who encounter crises such as addiction, adultery/infidelity, communication, domestic violence, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Chapter 1 defines the historical, contextual, and practical issues that impact the development and implementation of this project at Northeast Baptist Church. Chapter 2 presents an exegesis of Old and New Testament passages that explain how couples can find help, hope, and trust when they turn to the sovereign, covenant, and personal God. Chapter 3 reviews the available secular, integrated, and biblical counseling agencies in Clarksville, Tennessee and Fort Campbell Army base. Chapter 4 and 5 provide the results, analysis, and conclusions of this project.

During the 16-week project, participants listened to sermons and lectures that focused on the aforementioned crises. The project goal was that individuals would experience an increase in biblical knowledge in the subject areas. That increase was measured by a marriage survey administered before and after the seminar. This project served as a foundation for the development of a ministry of biblical counseling at Northeast Baptist Church.

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Diploma, Springfield High School, Springfield, Tennessee, 1970
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