RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN THE SUFFICIENCY OF

THE SCRIPTURES FOR THE SOUL CARE OF GOD'S

PEOPLE IN SELECTED SOUTHERN BAPTIST

CHURCHES IN SHAWNEE, OKLAHOMA

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A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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by

John Michael Massey, Sr.

May 2018

APPROVAL SHEET

RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN THE SUFFICIENCY OF

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John Michael Massey, Sr.

Read and Approved by:

_____

Heath B. Lambert (Faculty Supervisor)

_____

Robert D. Jones

Date _____

To my dad,

who has become wiser as I

have become older

And to Dawnda,

my wife, best friend, helpmate

and constant source of joy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

This project would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of many people. First, I would like to express my appreciation to the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for providing me the opportunity to study biblical counseling. I am forever indebted to Dr. Heath Lambert for his support, encouragement, and patience in this project. He truly has the heart of a pastor and the mind of a scholar—a wonderful combination. He has become a dear friend.

I am thankful for the people who participated in the project and their faithful attendance. Without their participation, this project could not have been completed. I am also thankful to the faithful members of Shawnee Bible Church who encouraged me along the way.

I thank God for entrusting me with a wonderful wife thirty-three years ago. She is the "wife of my youth," my daily encourager, my helpmeet, and best friend. No wonder the preacher says, "Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun" (Eccl 9:9). Without her, this project would never have happened. I love you, Dawnda Gay. I am thankful to our children, who have encouraged me and sacrificed time for the completion of this project. Five of them have married during this project, and four have had babies.

Most of all, I thank God for His salvation, and granting me the opportunity to

vii

participate in this program, and His willingness to use me in His service. All thanks and glory to God!

<div style="text-align: right">Mike Massey</div>

Shawnee, Oklahoma

May 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to restore a confidence in the sufficiency of the Scriptures for the soul care of God's people in selected Southern Baptist churches in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Goals

Five goals served to evaluate the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to challenge a group of pastors, denominational leaders, elders, deacons, and other key leaders of local Southern Baptist churches to embrace the concept and basic principles of biblical counseling. Many of these men had been trained in seminaries that taught them to refer counseling cases to secular or Christian mental health professionals while focusing on the public ministry of the Word. They had not been challenged to embrace a complete ministry of the Word, which includes not only public proclamation, but interpersonal ministry as well.

The second goal was that participants would learn the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and establish a confidence in the use of the Scriptures in counseling. Most, if not all, Southern Baptist church leaders wholeheartedly embrace the inerrancy of the Scriptures but had not been challenged on the sufficiency of the Scriptures. In the training sessions, the Scriptures' own arguments for their sufficiency were explored. For this goal, many of those leaders would embrace this doctrine when clearly presented.

The third goal was that the participants would reject the mixing of biblical truth with secular psychological theory as acceptable for God's people. The participants were

challenged from the Scriptures to embrace the Scriptures, not only as an adequate source of counsel, but as a far superior source than that which the world has to offer. They were also challenged to reject the worldly philosophies that have crept into the church in the area of counseling.

The fourth goal was to promote the return of soul care to the domain of the local church from the secular psychiatric community and the Christian counselors who are integrating psychological error with biblical truth. Through the exposure of the counseling materials, participants would be convicted by the Word of God and return to their flocks with a greater commitment to deal with individuals who were previously ignored or referred outside the local church. Students in the class were called to embrace a two-fold ministry of the Word of God: public proclamation of the Word and individual ministry of the Word that would include discipleship and biblical counseling.

The fifth goal was personal. As a counselor and pastor I wanted to become more effective in teaching and defending biblical counseling with those who have had limited exposure to biblical counseling. Many committed Christians and church leaders do not understand the difference between biblical counseling and an integrational approach, nor do they understand the concept of the sufficiency of the Scriptures. This project was an opportunity for me to grow in the areas of teaching ability, patience, and persuasiveness.

Ministry Context

The context for this project was Grace Biblical Counseling (GBC) in Shawnee, Oklahoma. GBC is the outreach arm of Shawnee Bible Church (SBC). Both were planted on June 1, 2010, as ministries of Central States Church Extension, the regional mission board of IFCA International.[1] I am the missionary pastor of SBC and the director of GBC.

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[1]Glen Lehman, "75 Years of IFCA History," accessed December 11, 2010, http://www.ifca.org/site/cpage.asp?sec_id=140001498&cpageid=140003227&nc=12920 98703756.42. IFCA International was formerly named Independent Fundamental

Shawnee is the county seat of Pottawatomie County and is located forty miles east of Oklahoma City on I-40. Several Native American tribes settled the area soon after the Civil War. The federal government deeded land over to the Sac and Fox tribes, who were then followed by the Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Potawatomi Indians. Settlers began to arrive and homesteaded in the area as a result of the Land Run of 1889. On September 22, 1891, Etta B. Ray, John and Lola Beard, J. T. Farrall, and Elijah Ally marked off present-day Shawnee.

In 1896, the Choctaw Railroad terminal was established in Shawnee. Shawnee became such a booming city around the turn of the century that it came close to neighboring Oklahoma City in its growth. By 1910, three years after Oklahoma statehood, Shawnee began to fall behind Oklahoma City in its prosperity. Big businesses began to choose Oklahoma City over Shawnee when looking for a city to house their headquarters or regional offices. Some examples are the Armor Meatpacking Company and the Frisco Railroad. Also, Shawnee came in as third choice for the state capital, which would be built in Oklahoma City. However, Shawnee was successful in attracting a Southern Baptist college (Oklahoma Baptist University) and a Catholic college (St. Gregory's College), both still in existence today.[2]

Today, Shawnee has the best of both worlds—it has small town charm and big city offerings as well. The city encompasses 44.7 square miles. Shawnee is also home to the current governor of Oklahoma, Brad Henry.[3]

Grace Bible Church, of Shawnee, Oklahoma, was formed in the 1930s and grew to over 200 by the mid-1970s. In the winter of 2005, Grace Bible Church contacted

Churches of America. However, at the National Convention in 1997, the name was changed to IFCA International.

[2]The City of Shawnee Oklahoma, "City of Shawnee History," accessed December 11, 2010, http://www.shawneeok.org/History/.

[3]Shawnee Oklahoma Convention and Visitor's Bureau, "About Shawnee," accessed December 11, 2010, http://www.visitshawnee.com/about_shawnee.

Central States Church Extension (CSCE). They had lost their pastor and were attempting to maintain with a couple of elders. When Grace Bible Church contacted CSCE again in 2008, they were down to three families and wanted a missionary pastor to come for the purpose of a re-plant. CSCE did not have a missionary to send at the time. Later that year, when I made initial contact with CSCE about opportunities in Oklahoma, the mission director mentioned the towns of Shawnee and Ada. Both cities needed someone with a church planting background. After much prayer, my wife and I decided on Shawnee. When I arrived on Thanksgiving Day 2009, Grace Bible Church had disbanded and sold their property. What my wife and I saw as a possibility for a small group church plant was, in the providence of God, no longer a reality.

GBC started in March 2010, with three purposes. The first and primary purpose was to be an outreach to the community. Many in the community have a Christian background but were not attending any local church. However, a freestanding counseling ministry, which offered biblical counseling, could reach many of these non-churched professing believers. This Christian background without affiliation was evident by statistics from the local Southern Baptist Association office. According to their annual report, there were 12,811 members in the 16 local churches, or 43 percent of the population of Shawnee. However, on an average Sunday morning only 3,446 attended church, approximately 27 percent.[4] Some of those people were discipled through the ministry of GBC and became candidates for membership at SBC. Such growth allowed a new church to begin without "stealing sheep" from other shepherds and other churches.

The second purpose was to promote biblical counseling and the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures in other local churches by offering training programs for pastors and key lay people for area churches in biblical counseling. This training would

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[4]Pottawatomie-Lincoln Baptist Association, "The 2010 Annual Book of Reports," accessed December 11, 2010, http://www.plba.org/userFiles/716/2010_annual_book_of_reports.pdf.

involve offering regular classes in biblical counseling and assisting students in pursuing certification with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. Such certification was for the purpose of establishing a standard of excellence in biblical counseling.

The third purpose was to challenge all of God's people to return to the Bible for answers to life's challenges. The answers were found by embracing the Bible as sufficient and forsaking competing belief systems, such as popular psychology and so-called "Christian Counseling." It also included the return of soul care back to the proper domain of the local church.

Rationale

In June 2002, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution entitled, "On the Sufficiency of Scripture in a Therapeutic Culture." It boldly began, "WHEREAS, Southern Baptists are committed to the authority, sufficiency, and relevance of the Bible . . ." and concludes with "RESOLVED, That we call on all Southern Baptists and our churches to reclaim practical biblical wisdom, Christ-centered counseling, and the restorative ministry of the care and cure of souls."[5] This resolution presented biblical counseling and the sufficiency of the Scriptures as precisely as possible.

There was a noticeable absence of biblical counseling available among the Southern Baptists in the Shawnee area. Additionally, the local Southern Baptist Convention association, the Pottawatomie-Lincoln Association, supported and referred people to a couple of licensed professional counselors; one was a local private practice, and the other had an office at the association office.[6] Neither was a biblical counselor. The Southern Baptists on the state level, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, published a list

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[5]The Southern Baptist Convention, "On the Sufficiency of Scripture in a Therapeutic Culture," accessed December 17, 2010, http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1119.

[6]Pottawatomie-Lincoln Baptist Association, "Ministries," accessed December 17, 2010, http://www.plba.org/ministries.php.

of counselors statewide. The list is made up of psychologists and licensed professional counselors and lacks even one biblical counselor.[7] The local Southern Baptist college, Oklahoma Baptist University, also rejected the concept of biblical counseling. They offer an undergraduate degree in pre-counseling and recently began a Marriage and Family graduate track.[8] There is a cognitive dissonance between what was stated as the beliefs of the Southern Baptists on the national level and what is actually practiced on the local and state level.

Paul states, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to His own glory and excellence" (2 Pet 1:3).[9] The Bible claims to be sufficient for all Christians to live a life that pleases and glorifies God. Such a pleasing life flows from knowledge of God. Many in the churches today are quick to turn to the secular psychological community for answers to life's problems. Even most "Christian Counselors" were thinking more psychologically than biblically or theologically.[10] Jay Adams states,

> Typically, the self-appointed Christian "professional" has spent years studying psychology at the graduate level, but has little more than a Sunday School (or, at best a Bible school) knowledge of the Bible. This is woefully inadequate for a full-time counselor or teacher of counseling![11]

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[7]The Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, "Counseling Ministry," accessed December 17, 2010, http://www.bgco.org/assets/files/Leadership/2010_Counselor_Listing.pdf.

[8]Bret Roark, Chair, Department of Psychology, Sociology & Family Science, Oklahoma Baptist University, interview by author, Shawnee, OK, December 17, 2010.

[9]All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

[10]When discussed in this project, *Christian counselors* refers to those who attempt to integrate psychology with biblical truth. The term *biblical counselors* is used to refer to those who embrace the sufficiency of the Scriptures. However, these terms are often interchangeable. For example, Dallas Theological Seminary has an integrational program called biblical counseling, while CCEF is the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation.

[11]Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 13.

Rather than the church looking outside for assistance in how to live life, Paul teaches that the answers are found in a relationship with Christ. Additionally, Paul assumed a level of maturity within the church when he stated, "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another" (Rom 15:14). Training in biblical counseling would assist participants to see both the sufficiency of the Word of God for life's issues, as well as see their own responsibility to assist others in dealing with problems.

Second, the ministry of the Word was mostly understood as the pulpit ministry. Such an understanding detracted from the full ministry of the Word, which included a personal or individual ministry of the Word. In his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Paul stated, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Paul's ministry included a public or pulpit ministry but also a private ministry where he taught and instructed people individually. Carey Hardy discusses both the public and the private aspects of Paul's ministry (Acts 20:20), writing, Paul "had even gone house to house in order to minister to them."[12] Then in Acts 20:31, Paul shows the spirit of humility in his heart as he said, "Night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish (*nŏuthĕtĕō*) each one with tears." Paul is a wonderful model of a balanced ministry that performs both functions.

The same concept is found in Colossians 1:28: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." The goal of reaching everyone involves an individual aspect of the ministry as well. Discussing Colossians 1:28 and Acts 20:20, 31, Adams connects both aspects of the ministry of the Word well: "Counseling (*nouthesia*) and teaching (*didasko*) were the two

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[12]Carey Hardy, "Frequently Asked Questions about Biblical Counseling," in *How to Counsel Biblically,* ed. John MacArthur and Wayne Mack (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 246-47.

sides of his ministry. . . . He engaged fully in both. It is a serious mistake to separate them."[13] The participants in this project were challenged to reach each member in their church of the body of Christ for the purpose of bringing all to maturity.

Definitions and Limitations

The purpose of this project was to restore a confidence in the use of the Scriptures for dealing with the problems of life and to call God's people back to the local church for a source of biblical counseling. For the purpose of this project, *biblical counseling* and *Christian counseling* are defined here.

Biblical counseling. Paul Tautges writes,

> Biblical counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby the more mature believer (counselor) comes alongside the less mature believer (counselee) for three main purposes: first, to help that person to consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning that person, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that person to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she too may become a spiritually reproductive disciple-maker.[14]

Christian counseling. Eric Johnson, a popular integrationalist, defines *Christian counseling* as "counseling done by Christians trained in the Bible, but also in psychological theory regarding neuropsychology, development, diagnosis, and dealing with people whose psychospiritual problems are severe."[15] The two approaches to counseling situations used by Christians committed to helping others are very different. The biblical counselor uses the Bible exclusively and the Christian counselor attempts to integrate psychology with theology. Additional confusion exists when the terms are interchanged. For example, Dallas Seminary offers an integration program but calls it

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[13]Jay Adams, *Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, The Christian Counselor's Commentary (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 142.

[14]Paul Tautges, *Counsel One Another: A Theology of Personal Discipleship* (Leominster, England: Day One, 2009), 21-22.

[15]Eric Johnson, "Conversations with Biblical Counseling: An Interview with Dr. Eric Johnson," *Journal of Counseling and Discipleship* 1, no. 1 (July 2008): 26.

biblical counseling. Another example of the confusion caused by these terms is the name Christian Counseling and Education Foundation, which was established to promote biblical counseling.

The limitations of this project were as follows. The length of this project was fifteen weeks, which included a thirteen-week class covering the basics of biblical counseling and the sufficiency of the Scriptures, a week to conduct the pre-course survey, and a week to conduct the post-course survey. Although some measurable differences between the pre-course survey and the post-course survey were anticipated, the full effect of this teaching would not be measurable for some time.

The delimitation for this project related to defining what churches were to be involved with this project. The phrase in the title, "Selected Southern Baptist Churches in Shawnee, Oklahoma," was understood as all of the Southern Baptist churches in and around the city of Shawnee that chose to participate. It was assumed that about half would participate in the project, but all of the churches would be invited and encouraged to be involved.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to challenge a group of pastors, denominational leaders, elders, deacons, and other key leaders of local Southern Baptist churches, to embrace the concept and basic principles of biblical counseling. At the beginning of the project, the participants completed a survey to measure their level of confidence in the Scriptures for their use in counseling. After the project, the same survey was given, and the two sets of results were compared.

The second goal was to teach participants the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and to establish a confidence in the use of the Scriptures in counseling. This was accomplished by a survey of the key passages that teach the sufficiency of the Scriptures and demonstrated by discussing how the Word can be successfully used to counsel common counseling problems.

The third goal was to challenge the participants to reject the mixing of biblical truth and psychological theory as acceptable for God's people. During the class, participants were taught the underlying belief systems for some of the major schools of psychology and then they compared these belief systems with the Bible. Once the two competing systems were compared, participants were able to discern secular and Christian psychology as another gospel.

The fourth goal was to promote the return of soul care back to the domain of the local church, local church pastors, elders, deacons, and other church leaders. During the class, participants were exposed to Scriptures that promote a two-fold ministry of the Word, including personal discipleship and biblical counseling in addition to the preaching and teaching ministry of the Word from the pulpit. Class participants embraced the significance of the local church and her ministry in God's program of sanctification as they grew in their understanding of the Scriptures.

Each of the first four goals was measured by a questionnaire administered to participants at the beginning of the project and compared with the same questionnaire administered at the end of the project. The answers from the second questionnaire were contrasted with answers from the first questionnaire to detect a shift in the participants' understanding of biblical counseling, the role of the local church in counseling, and the sufficiency of the Scriptures in counseling.

The fifth goal was for personal improvement as a counselor and as a pastor to become more effective in teaching and defending biblical counseling with those who have had limited exposure to biblical counseling and to challenge them to reject today's secular thinking in favor of a sound biblical position. The improvement evolved during the preparation and presentation of this seminar. As I studied and built the curriculum, I expected to grow in this area. As I developed proficiency, I had ample opportunities to

put truths into practice through teaching and counseling. This goal was measured by an "Instructor Evaluation Questionnaire" given to each project participant at the end of the seminar.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL ARGUMENT FOR THE SUFFICIENCY
OF THE SCRIPTURES

Introduction

I grew up in an evangelical church that preached the saving gospel of Jesus

Christ clearly, week after week. However, due to the lack of teaching on the Christian

life, I incorrectly assumed that the Bible was limited to leading people to the saving

knowledge of Christ. I did not realize at the time that the Bible also gave clear directions

to help Christians progress to spiritual maturity and how to be conformed daily to the

image of Christ. As a senior in high school, I attended a Bible conference where the

Scriptures were shown to apply to every area of life. The conference successfully

exposed the fallacy of the popular, worldly, and humanistic reasoning that is common

today demonstrated, and how such reasoning dominates the area of psychology. The

conference also taught the sufficiency of the Scriptures, a challenge that has influenced

the rest of my life. I left at the end of the week with a new desire to know the Scriptures

and to apply the truths of God's Word to every area of my life.[1]

Twenty years later, at the age of thirty-eight, I entered the ministry during my

second year of seminary. I rejected the counseling model that was taught at my seminary

because it was based upon a perspective of integrating secular psychology with the

Scriptures. Early in my first pastorate, I encountered people with problems with which I

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[1]The sufficiency of the Scriptures refers to the view that the Bible is completely adequate for men to understand the way of salvation and for the believer to understand how to grow and change into the likeness of Christ and be pleasing to God. This approach stands in contrast to the integrational position, which integrates psychology and Scripture to counsel believers. See Edward E. Hindson and Howard Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1997), 14-15.

was unable to help. My inability demonstrated my lack of training in personal ministry and my own immaturity in the Scriptures. My seminary had equipped me to minister the Word of God effectively to a group of people on Sunday morning, but not how to help a struggling Christian on Monday morning. I was on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, I would not send people to a secular counselor or an integrationalist. On the other hand, I did not know any local biblical counselors or possess any skill in biblical counseling myself. To resolve the dilemma I began to pursue an education in biblical counseling.

This project is the result of that journey that began in 1998. I was attempting to honor the Lord in every area of my life and ministry, and to have both firmly rooted in the Word of God. I do not believe the Bible claims to be sufficient in other academic areas such as science or medicine, but it clearly does claim to be sufficient in dealing with the kinds of personal problems people seek to address in counseling. As a pastor, I want to declare the whole counsel of the Word of God both in the pulpit on Sunday morning as well as with individuals as I have opportunity during the week.

John MacArthur defines biblical counseling as "simply biblical wisdom, properly applied by spiritually mature counselors."[2] My purpose was to develop the skills in the Word of God and attain the spiritual growth necessary to become that spiritually mature counselor. I desired to grow in my own spiritual life and to be able to assist the struggling Christian who came to me for help.

The following is a discussion of five key biblical texts. These passages clearly demonstrate the Scripture's claim of sufficiency in the soul care of God's people. These texts, along with many others that could be cited, demonstrate the Bible's own claim to sufficiency for the purposes of caring for the spiritual needs of God's people. To

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[2]John MacArthur, foreword to *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture,* ed. Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert (Nashville: B & H, 2012), ix.

disregard these passages is to miss God's design for personal ministry and to undervalue the practical application of the Word of God.

Mankind Is Unique in All of God's
Creation: Genesis 1:26-30

Genesis 1:26-30 is the basic text for understanding mankind as distinct and unique from the rest of God's creation. The text says,

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

This passage teaches several properties about what it means to be uniquely made human. I discuss each of the qualities in the following paragraphs.

First, man is unique because God created him in His own image and in His likeness. "Then God said, 'Let us make man.'" The language of the creation story changes on the sixth day from God commanding into existence, with impersonal phrases like "let there be" and "let the earth," to consultation within the Godhead as God approaches the creation of man, the crowning jewel of His creation. "Let us make man" is personal and in the future tense indicating divine deliberation.[3] Such language implies that God's creation of man was very different from the rest of creation. John Calvin states,

> This is the highest honor with which he has dignified us; to a due regard for which, Moses, by this mode of speaking would excite our minds. . . . So now, for the purpose of commending to our attention the dignity of our nature, he, in taking

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[3]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 160.

counsel concerning the creation of man, testifies that he is about to undertake something great and wonderful.[4]

The transmission of the image and likeness of God in man continues after the fall (see Gen 5:1-3) and takes on a special significance in man's redemption, specifically sanctification. The subject of proper speech is discussed in light of man bearing the image of his Creator in James 3:9.[5] Each of these passages places the responsibility of being a proper image-bearer for God upon the believer. Man is in the image of God from the moment of creation. It is a matter of his identity apart from what he does. This principle is true for the fetus in the womb all the way through adulthood. This is a status given to mankind by the Creator.[6] However, in a practical way the believer is in the process of recovering God's image. Over the process of time, the believer's new nature is "being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col 3:10). Paul states, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). The very purpose for God's redemption is stated in Romans 8:29: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." The success of believers becoming faithful image-bearers of God is seen in the believers as they become increasingly like Christ in their moral character.[7]

Second, man was unique from the rest of creation because, up until this point, God had not given any command or instruction to His creation. "And God blessed them. And God said to them." God gave man specific instructions and demanded obedience. God

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[4]John Calvin, *Genesis*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, electronic ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), Gen. 1:24-31.

[5]Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 217.

[6]David J. Magee, "When Does a Human Being Begin? A Primer on a Crucial Bioethical Issue," *The Journal of Modern Ministry* 5, no. 1 (2008): 108.

[7]Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 445.

continues, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." Man's role in this world became one of stewardship before the Creator who had given specific instructions for family as well as man's physical environment. Man, was not only given positive commands, but was also given restrictions as well as warnings of the consequences of violating God's Law. God instructed man, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16–17). For the first time in the creation story, there were clear instructions from God as well as consequences for disobeying Him.

God's command was not without opposition. In the beginning, Satan challenged God's Word by questioning it and challenging the nature and goodness of God. Jay E. Adams discusses this account in terms of two opposing sets of counsel: God's counsel and Satan's counsel. God's counsel was for man's benefit and man was responsible to God for his obedience. God's counsel was "simple, plain, true and beneficent" in contrast to Satan's counsel in Genesis 3. Satan's counsel was "complicated, confused, and contorted God's truth."[8] God's counsel was practical instruction on how to live a life in harmony with Him and pleasing to Him and continues to stand in stark contrast with the world's wisdom and with Satan's wisdom.

Third, man is unique in that God gave him a responsibility to rule over the creation. God said, "And have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." This rule was a representative type of rule, much like that of the Egyptian kings. As a result of the fall, not all is under man's leadership. Christ will establish His dominion over the earth at His coming (Heb 2:8).[9]

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[8]Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 5.

[9]Allen P. Ross, *Genesis*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 29.

Fourth, the creation of man was unique because God fashioned him with both physical and spiritual aspects. The physical component is seen in God forming man from the dust of the earth. The spiritual aspect is seen where God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (Gen 2:7). Adams explains this unique relationship:

> This personal, direct, unique in-breathing constituted a separate act on God's part that distinguished human creation (and human life) from other animate life. There is an earthly side to man, but there is a heavenly or spiritual side as well. Man belongs to both worlds.[10]

The spiritual side of man comes with special responsibilities before God. As God's image-bearers, man shares God's communicable attributes. Allen Ross explains,

> Being in God's image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God's nature, that is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.[11]

As God's image bearers, man has a responsibility to model such attributes before a fallen world.

Fifth, man is also unique because God created only mankind to live in fellowship and harmony with Him. God designed mankind to be obedient to His counsel and instruction and ultimately to submit to God's Law. This counsel and instruction was binding upon man by his Creator who held him morally responsible for his actions. It is impossible for man to reach his full potential apart from these instructions from God. This text also demonstrates that even before the fall man was dependent upon counsel from God Himself. God's counsel to man was given before the fall and not as a result of the fall.

God gave man the gift of language that allows God to communicate with man and man to communicate with God. Adams points out that man was not created to live in isolation from other men or God. In the beginning of creation man was walking and

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[10]Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 109.

[11]Ross, *Genesis*, 29.

fellowshipping with God in the cool of the day. Man was thus created to have relationships both vertically with God and horizontally with man.[12] Although the fall corrupted the fellowship that God designed for man, man is still called to fellowship with God through the saving gospel of Christ and to live by the very Word of God (Matt 4:4; 2 Pet 3:9).

This passage provides an understanding of man's unique place in all of creation and his special place as an image bearer of God. Believers cannot be accurate image-bearers if they do not accept the responsibility to hear and obey their Maker's instructions. God's counsel is in direct conflict with the "world's" wisdom, but believers are called to submit to God, have an ongoing relationship with Him, and continue the process of salvation by growing in the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only are believers to walk in obedience to God and His Word, but they are to call others to the wisdom of God as well as obedience to Him.

God Alone Is God and His Word Is to Be Obeyed and Passed to the Next Generation: Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 is one of the key biblical texts in the Old Testament about transmitting the truth of God to others. This text teaches members of the covenant to hear and obey the Word of God by trusting exclusively in God in contrast to Israel's polytheistic neighbors, to demonstrate love for God by being obedient to His Word, and to teaching God's commands to the next generation. The text says,

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

God's people were called to trust in God alone and their love for God was to produce obedience to Him. Richard D. Nelson translates the first portion of this passage

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[12]Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 126.

as "hear, O Israel. Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone."[13] The passage is known as the *Shema*, because the first word translated "hear" is from the Hebrew word *Shema* and means to "hear, listen, and obey."[14] Israel is being called to obedience, exclusively to God alone. From a practical standpoint, the children of Israel had already discovered the uniqueness of God because after crossing the Red Sea they sang, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (Exod 15:11). This rhetorical question implies a negative response. From a theological perspective, Yahweh alone is God. This perspective stood in sharp contrast to the Mesopotamian religious thought of the day where tension existed by attempting to please a multitude of gods. Yahweh, however, is God alone, there are no others. When God speaks, none can contradict. What God promised, there were none to contradict and when God warned, there were no other gods to provide refuge. As the one and only God, He was omnipotent.[15]

In this passage, God has also called for Israel's complete love and loyalty and called them to demonstrate their love by their unyielding obedience. Nelson states, "In this way, the *Shema* unifies the entire proclamation of Deuteronomy into a single statement, narrowing Yahweh's nature to the single point of 'oneness' and Israel's obedient response to a single command to 'love.'"[16] This love-producing obedience is consistent with the Lord's teaching in the New Testament (see John 14:15, 14:23-24, 15:14; Luke 11:28).

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[13]Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 86.

[14]Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1375.

[15]Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 168-69.

[16]Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 90.

Finally, this passage also calls for each generation of God's people to pass on to the next generation the knowledge of God and His commands. This knowledge must be firmly rooted in the innermost part of the soul of man and saturate his very being. It is therefore significant that Moses penned, "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart" (Deut 6:6). Calvin clearly explains,

> He would have it implanted in their hearts, lest forgetfulness of it should ever steal over them; and by the word "heart" He designates the memory and other faculties of the mind; as though He had said that this was so great a treasure, that there was good cause why they should hide it in their hearts, or so fix this doctrine deeply in their minds that it should never escape.[17]

Moses continues, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." This teaching is to encompass all of a person's labor and life is demonstrated by a double contrast, from sitting to walking or inactivity to activity and from rising up to lying down, or all of time.[18] These truths are at the heart of biblical counseling, applying the truths of God's Word to all of life and living with Him at the very center of one's being.

This verse is significant to biblical counselors today because believers live in a world that has many voices that compete with the counsel of God from His Word. The world, the flesh, and the devil compete for alliance and hearts. God has called his people to a unique loyalty and exclusive relationship with Himself. Believers are to trust exclusively in Him, their love for God is to produce obedience to Him and His Word, and they have a responsibility to pass on biblical truth to the next generation.

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[17]John Calvin, *Harmony of the Law: Calvin's Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, electronic ed. (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998), Deut 6:6.

[18]Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 167.

The Word of God Speaks to All
of Life: Psalm 19:7-11

Psalm 19:7-11 is one of the strongest statements in the Bible to address the

comprehensive nature of the Word in the life of mankind. Each of the six phrases has

direct application in biblical counseling. Each phrase declares the beauty and

completeness of God's Word.

> The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

This passage of Scripture is especially significant to the biblical counselor

because it teaches that God's Word can instruct in all areas of life. His Word is infinitely

better than any other source of wisdom. It teaches man to live in a way that is pleasing to

God and challenges and exposes his heart in a way that nothing else is able. The world's

wisdom only offers a temporary solution while God's wisdom is permanent and His way

of life offers "great rewards" that are profitable in this life and the life to come when

believers apply them. MacArthur agrees, and writes,

> The most comprehensive statement regarding the sufficiency of the Scriptures. . . . It is an inspired statement about Scripture as a qualified guide for every situation. Scripture is comprehensive, containing everything necessary for one's spiritual life. Scripture is surer than a human experience that one may look to in proving God's power and presence. Scripture contains divine principles that are the best guide for character and conduct. Scripture is lucid rather than mystifying so that it enlightens the eyes. Scripture is void of any flaws and therefore lasts forever. Scripture is true regarding all things that matter, making it capable of producing comprehensive righteousness. Because it meets every need in life, Scripture is infinitely more precious than anything this world has to offer.[19]

This sufficiency stands in sharp contract with the "truth" claims of a secular world. The

believer has been entrusted with God's very Word, His perspective, His values, and

ultimately what matters throughout all eternity.

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[19]John MacArthur, "The Sufficiency of Scriptures," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 15, no. 2 (2004): 165.

This section of Scripture is written as a psalm of praise for the Law of God, His written Word. The passage lists six phrases "the law of the Lord," "the testimony of the Lord," "the precepts of the Lord," "the commandment of the Lord," "the fear of the Lord," and "the rules of the Lord" that can be understood from a poetic perspective as synonymous, each referring to God's Word. Each phrase is expounded to explain a benefit of the Word in the life of God's people.

The first phrase, "the law of the Lord is perfect," declares the completeness of the Word of God. The word "law" is from the Hebrew word *Torah*. *Torah* in the strictest sense refers exclusively to the five books of Moses. However, in this context, *Torah* refers to the whole counsel of God in contrast to general revelation in verses 1-6, and it is didactic in nature. The Lord's counsel is "perfect." To be perfect is to lack nothing, to be complete in revealing God's truth, to be absolutely true, and provide wisdom for man.[20] God's Word is comprehensive and is sufficient to counsel man in every area of life to live in a way that gives glory to God. The purpose of God's revealed Word is "reviving the soul." This "reviving of the soul" has the effect of restoring man to his relationship with his Creator. This restoration turns man from loving himself to worshiping God and seeking God's holiness. This change is not an exterior change, but one that is deeply rooted in the soul, the innermost part, of man.[21] The end result is changing a person, from the inside out, into the man or woman that God desires for them to be. This change is the primary goal in biblical counseling.

The second phrase, "the testimony of the Lord is sure," refers to the surety and accuracy of the divine witness of all the Scripture. This biblical witness is instructing mankind of who God is, what He has done and is doing, and what He requires of man.

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[20]Albert Barnes, *Psalms*, vol. 1, Notes on the Old Testament (1872; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 171.

[21]C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, n. d.), 1:272.

Apart from this self-revelation of God to man, it would be impossible for man to know God or how to please Him. Such knowledge is foundational for man to know how to live in the present or how to prepare for eternity. [22] God's testimony exposes sin and declares His righteousness.

The result of this testimony is "making wise the simple" or providing instruction to mankind. Ultimately this includes all humans. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way" (Isa 53:6). The term simply refers to sons who are deceived or persuaded easily. The wisdom that comes from God's testimony is the cure for being simple. God's wisdom provides the ability to live life in a way that honors and pleases God.[23] God's wisdom is contrasted to the foolishness of man's wisdom (see 1 Cor 1:20) and must be the standard for biblical counseling. Any counseling model that neglects the wisdom of God's Word departs from the wisdom of God himself, and by its very nature substitutes man's ideas and wisdom. Such substitution is far removed from the sure wisdom of God and will always fail.

The third phrase is "the precepts of the LORD are right." The precepts are the statutes or regulations from God. God's precepts are principles and guidelines for godly conduct, behavior, and character. There is a sharp contrast between the righteousness and moral virtue of God's precepts and the perverse ways that flow from the heart of man. The Lord's precepts make the Scripture not only applicable to the ministry of counseling, but superior to any alternative source of wisdom. Calvin explains, "It is therefore of great importance to be well convinced of this truth, that a man's life cannot be ordered aright unless it is framed according to the law of God, and that without this he can only wander in labyrinths and crooked bypaths."[24]

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[22]MacArthur, "The Sufficiency of Scriptures," 168.

[23]James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. "פְּתִי."

[24]John Calvin, *Psalms*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, electronic ed. (Albany, OR:

The result of obedience, or aligning one's life according to the Word of God, is the "rejoicing the heart." This is not an earthly superficial happiness but an internal joy that can be experienced even during extreme difficulty, stress, and hardship. Such joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit (see Gal 5:22). This joy outlasts the temporal pleasures of man attempting to satisfy his own longings and desires (Heb 11:25). This is a joy that gives comfort in the afflictions of life (Ps 119:50). This is the joy that flows from a growing relationship between a man and his Creator.

The fourth phrase, "the commandment of the Lord is pure," powerfully demonstrates the non-optional nature of the Creator's law. Swanson explains that the Hebrew word for commandment means an "authoritative directive, either written or verbal, given as instruction or prescription to a subordinate."[25] God's commands are authoritative and binding upon all His creation and not mere suggestions. Humans are creatures with a responsibility to the Creator; mankind lives and operates in His world. With obedience comes the blessings of God and disobedience to His commands results in consequences. Anyone who would disregard His non-optional commands does so at their own peril.[26]

The commandment is described as pure and comes from the Hebrew word meaning purity in a moral sense and radiating light to give understanding to man.[27] The purity of the Lord's command is seen in its freedom from corruption or error. Such lucid and clear instruction is not puzzling, confusing, or difficult to understand, but by design

Ages Software, 1998), Ps 19:8.

[25]Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*, s.v. "מִצְוָה."

[26]Calvin, *Psalms*, 170.

[27]Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*, s.v. "בַּר."

clear and discloses God's truth to man. Some things in the Word are more difficult to understand than others, but collectively, the Word of God is not a confusing book.[28]

The result of the purity is "enlightening the eyes." God's Word illuminates the life of a believer by correcting thinking, challenging the motives of the heart, and correcting behavior. Such a resource is indispensable for a wise counselor. Spurgeon colorfully explains this phrase as "purging away by its own purity the earthly grossness which mars the intellectual discernment: whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, the Scripture is a skillful oculist, and makes the eye clear and bright."[29] It is the only source of pure wisdom for mankind. Calvin states, "Whence it follows, that none are truly wise but those who take God for their conductor and guide, following the path which he points out to them, and who are diligently seeking after the peace which he offers and presents by his word."[30]

In the fifth phrase, "the fear of the Lord," the word "fear" is used as a synonym for the Word of God and calls for a proper reverence for God and His revealed Word. It also brings about a proper response of obedience and worship. Scripture becomes a manual on how to please God with obedience and how to worship Him.[31] The fear of the Lord is different from the other phrases: the law, the testimony, the precepts, the commandment, and the rules. Each of these other phrases are objective and external to man. The fear of the Lord is internal and subjective. The Word of God, then, is understood as teaching the proper reverence for God and the beginning of true wisdom (Prov 9:10; Prov 1:7; Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Eccl 12:13).[32]

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[28]MacArthur, "The Sufficiency of Scriptures," 170.

[29]Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 1:273.

[30]Calvin, *Psalms*, Ps 19:8.

[31]MacArthur, "The Sufficiency of Scriptures," 170.

[32]G. Rawlison, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London: Funk &

"The fear of the Lord" is described as "clean." Barnes explains, "There is nothing in it that tends to corrupt the morals or defile the soul. Everything connected with it is of a pure or holy tendency, adapted to cleanse the soul and make it holy."[33] Because of the Word's perfection and lack of corruption, it is "enduring forever," which is consistent with the words of our Lord, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt 24:35).

Such a growing reverence for God is required for man to turn to God and receive His instruction and His wisdom, which is the substance of wise biblical counseling. In His high priestly prayer, the Lord prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Armed with the powerful Word of God is the only way any counsel can stand the test of time.

The final phrase in the sequence is "the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether." The "rules," also translated "judgments" in the AV and NASB, refer to the decisions made in heaven by a holy and just God. The Bible is the only standard for evaluating life here and now and discovering man's eternal destiny. MacArthur rightly concludes,

> Because Scripture is true, it is "righteous altogether" (Ps 19:9). The implication of that phrase is that its truthfulness produces a comprehensive righteousness in those who accept it. And because it is a complete and exhaustive source of truth and righteousness, we are forbidden to add to it, take from it, or distort it in any way (Deut 4:2; 2 Pet 3:15–16; Rev 22:18–19).[34]

The ultimate goal of a believer is to live life for the glory of God. This goal is not possible apart from the clear revelation of God Himself and His standard, and the application of truth and wisdom according to faith which is also a gift of God. To

Wagnalls, 1909), 130.

[33]Barnes, *Psalms*, 173.

[34]MacArthur, "The Sufficiency of Scriptures," 172.

disregard, distort, or misuse His Word in any way is to reject the wisdom of God and ultimately reject God Himself.

The strength of this passage is the stark contrast of the vast wisdom of God with the foolishness of man attempting to understand himself and his environment apart from the Creator. The Lord said, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (John 8:47). God's Word is profitable, sufficient, beneficial, and designed to benefit man and assist him in honoring God. From a theological perspective, each of these phrases embrace all of life.[35] Each phrase forms comprehensive categories in which one can understand the Word of God and the benefits the Word provides. Each demonstrates the complete sufficiency, even the superiority, of the Word of God for the biblical counselor more than any other source of wisdom. Therefore, biblical counselors can counsel from the Word of God with a boldness and confidence that they are sharing the truth with those that need to hear it.

God's Word Is Sufficient for the Soul Care of His People: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Second Timothy 3:16-17 is perhaps the clearest reference to the authority of the Word of God for the ministry of the Word in general and to biblical counseling specifically: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." This passage describes four elements or functions of the ministry of the Word. In describing each function of the ministry of the Word, Paul simultaneously describes an aspect of biblical counseling. The purpose of this section is to discuss each of these elements.

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[35]Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 181.

The first element listed is teaching. *Teaching* comes from the Greek word *didaskalia*, and refers to both the act of teaching as well as the content or doctrine of what is taught.[36] The Scriptures must be the sole source of truth, of faith, and of practice. The Scriptures declare what Christians are to believe, orthodoxy, and also how Christians are to live in a way that honors and glorifies God, orthopraxy. Such teaching of truth is not only appropriate to the entire fellowship from the Sunday morning pulpit, but also in dealing with believers in counseling or discipleship situations. Paul distinguished between the public ministry of the Word and the private ministry of the Word. He declared to the Ephesians all that was spiritually profitable "in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). William D. Mounce correctly states, "Scripture is the only true source for pastoral and doctrinal teaching."[37] The teaching of biblical truth is a vital aspect of biblical counseling and perhaps one of the most distinguishing aspects from all other forms of counseling.

The second aspect of biblical counseling seen in this passage is *reproof*. *Reproof* is the Greek word *elegmos* that refers to the refuting of error, rebuking sin, and exposing false thinking or sinful behavior. Such refuting of error includes the countering "of every religious lie, falsehood, fiction; truth naturally destroys all these and frees from them."[38] This aspect had a specific application to young Timothy's ministry in dealing with the errors of false teachers in his public ministry. It also has implications for the personal ministry of the Word of God. The Word of God is used to reprove worldly systems of counsel as well as the individual ministry of exposing and rebuking error and sin. Thomas

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[36]Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*, s.v. *didaskalia*.

[37]William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Dallas: Word, 2000), 570.

[38]R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), 846.

D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin state, "Scripture can show sinners their failures, clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new sense of peace and wholeness."[39]

Rebuke or reproof is a vital aspect of biblical counseling believers. Believers are prone to conform and adapt to the world's system, beliefs, and practices (Col 2:8; Rom 12:1-2). The Word of God must be used to expose and rebuke before calling for correction, the very next element.

The third function of the Word of God in counseling is correction. Correction is from the Greek word *epanorthōsis* that refers to the process of "restoring the sinner to an upright position from his fallen state, the believer who has fallen back into sin and guilt."[40] After a believer has been reproved, the Scriptures "bind up, plant the seed, and build the foundation for righteousness by correcting."[41] Such biblical correction provides the foundation for changing ungodly behavior and challenging the desires of the heart. It carries the idea of moving from error to truth.

The final function of the Word of God in this passage is training. This Greek word, *paideia*, is related to instruction, training, teaching, and even discipline for changing behavior.[42] Lenski explains, "As a child is educated, trained, and disciplined in all righteous living . . . only the Scripture that is inspired of God is able to train and to educate so as to secure the favorable verdict of God."[43] Adams explains the importance of this element:

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[39]Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 237.

[40]Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles*, 846.

[41]Jay Edward Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 95.

[42]Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*, s.v. "παιδεία."

[43]Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles*, 847.

There is no question that much counseling fails because of the neglect of discipline. . . . It is not enough to know what God requires, that one has failed to meet those requirements, and how to recoup when he does so. It is of the greatest importance to learn to live in such a way that he does not continually fall back into those old ways again. Training in righteousness, therefore, must not be neglected.[44]

This passage demonstrates each of four critical elements in the process of biblical counseling. The same elements are seen in all models of counseling, secular or biblical. In any model, there must be an understanding of what is wrong, the biblical equivalent of reproof, a goal of what is right or correction, and finally how to change or correct the behavior, analogous to teaching or training. For the Bible to claim to be profitable for each of these counseling elements is the equivalent to saying the Bible is sufficient for counseling.[45] These four elements present a well-balanced explanation of true biblical counseling. Adams states,

Not only do [the Scriptures] tell us what God requires, how we have failed and what we can do to get right with God again; they also provide all that is necessary to enable us to learn how to live a new way of life. We do not have to be everlastingly working on the same problem. By God's grace we can make progress; we can move on to the next.[46]

Paul concludes that Timothy, or any other minister, who uses the Word of God in ministry will be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:17 AV).

God Gives Believers All They Need for Living a Godly Life: 2 Peter 1:3-4

In 2 Peter 1:3-4, Peter demonstrates three principles to encourage and equip a Christian in his own personal growth as well as the personal ministry of the Word.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

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[44]Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, 212.

[45]Heath Lambert, *Introduction to Counseling the Hard Cases*, 10-12.

[46]Jay E. Adams, "The Use of the Scriptures in Counseling, Part IV: Scriptural Counseling Is Spiritual," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131, no. 524 (1974): 302.

The first principle described is the power of Jesus Christ. God has provided everything the believer needs for living a godly life that is pleasing to God, through the knowledge of God. Secondly, Peter explains that through this power he had "granted to us his precious and very great promises," each of which assists the believer in living a life that honors God. The third truth Peter explains is that through this process believers become partakers in God's divine nature.[47]

Most Christians have attempted to live a godly life in the strength of their flesh. In this passage of Scripture Peter declares that the source of strength to live the Christian life does not come from human beings, but from God Himself: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." Peter states that "His divine power" stands in sharp contrast to the strength of the flesh or of our own volition, is the source for living a life in a way that glorifies God. Calvin points out that the believer, by the very nature of salvation, has already experienced the infinite goodness of God, but Peter desires for the reader of the Word to more fully understand and utilize this power in his personal life and in the process of sanctification. For continued growth "God then truly gives us life, when he renews us unto the obedience of righteousness."[48]

John MacArthur points to the sufficiency of the Scriptures in relation to this passage in 2 Peter when he states,

> Because of their constant sins and failures as Christians, many find it hard not to think that even after salvation something is missing in the sanctification process. . . . Christians have received everything in the form of divine power necessary to equip them for sanctification—they have no lack at all.[49]

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[47]Kenneth O. Gangel, *2 Peter*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 864.

[48]John Calvin, *2 Peter: Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, electronic ed. (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998), 2 Pet 1:3.

[49]John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 27.

This power comes to the believer "through the knowledge of Him," as seen in verse 2 which refers to a believer's knowledge of Christ at salvation and a growing obedient relationship with Him. For it is only by growth in the knowledge of Christ through His Word that one begins to understand and appropriate His power and grace to grow spiritually.[50]

Secondly, God "has granted to us his precious and very great promises." Such promises include all of God's promises to His people in both testaments. MacArthur lists the promises that this would include: spiritual life, resurrection life, the Holy Spirit, abundant grace, joy, strength, guidance, help, instruction, and wisdom.[51] Each of these promises should be counted as assets for living a God-honoring life and assisting a believer in discipleship and biblical counseling.

Finally, each of these promises were given "so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." Each believer before salvation was an enemy to God, a slave to sin, and subject to the wrath of God. Paul explains that before salvation man was spiritually dead and separated from God's love and grace. Paul continues, "Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph 2:3).

The believer has a new nature but still struggles with the flesh. At the root of the struggle are the sinful desires of the heart (Jas 4:1-4). These fleshly desires are diametrically opposed to the desires of the Spirit (Gal 5:17). These desires also reveal the spiritual idolatry of the heart and reveal areas that are not committed to God. These are

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[50]David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 109.

[51]MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 30. See Rom 8:9-13; John 11:25; 1 Cor 15:21-23; Acts 2:33; Eph 1:13; John 10:10; Rom 5:15, 20; Eph 1:7; Ps 132:16; Gal 5:22; Ps 18:32; Isa 40:31; John 16:13; Isa 41:10, 13-14; Ps 32:8; John 14:26; Prov 2:6-8; Eph 1:17-18; Jas 1:5, 3:17.

potential areas of spiritual change and growth. Many biblical counselors have correctly stated, "We do what we do because we want what we want."[52] The Bible is not merely about changing behavior, but about changing the heart of man to desire what God desires (Gal 5:16).

The Pharisees demonstrated a need for a heart change. They were oblivious to their own motives of the heart, "greed and self-indulgence." Their focus was solely on their external appearance, as man saw them. Jesus, repulsed by their hypocrisy, pointed to their need to change the "inside of the cup and the plate." His focus was on the heart or motive, not the external (see Matt 23:25-26). This spiritual blindness to their own internal sin blinded them to their need for a Savior. For the believer, the Bible promises the power of God so they "may become partakers of the divine nature." MacArthur points out that this phrase should not be understood as a "future possibility, but as a present certainty."[53] However, this present theological certainty becomes practical reality in the life of a believer as he progressively becomes more like God and less like the world. He becomes practically what he became positionally at salvation. Gangel explains that this divine nature is nothing less than the believer becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ.[54] Walls and Anders further explain,

> That is, we are able to move closer to God and further away from the sinful culture. Participating in the divine nature simply means that as believers, through the power of the Spirit, we begin to change positively and demonstrate more and more of the character of God in our lives. At the same time, we demonstrate less and less of the character of the culture. As a result, we escape the internal decay or rottenness that accompanies so much of the evil desires of the world.[55]

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[52]For an excellent discussion of how desire expresses the motives of the heart, see David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 145-62.

[53]MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 30.

[54]Gangel, *2 Peter*, 865.

[55]Walls and Anders, *I & II Peter*, 109.

This God-enabled potential for change is a source of practical encouragement to biblical counselors as they assist, challenge, and encourage a counselee to obey the Word of God in the power provided by God. Through encouragement, the counselor challenges the counselee to embrace, understand, and utilize God's power for overcoming sin or enduring suffering. God has given the power necessary, not only to live, but also to thrive in spiritual growth. His plan is that every believer would be conformed to the image of Christ for His glory.

**Biblical Change Beginning with
the Heart: Luke 6:43-45**

Change is the goal of every counseling approach. This change may include repenting of a sinful habit, altering an undesirable behavior, or learning how to respond to suffering in a more godly way. With biblical counseling, this change begins at the heart level and then the heart affects the outer man or behavior. To understand biblical change, one must begin with the recognition of the heart of man as the source of sin. The heart also influences how one responds to his circumstances. Behavior and speech reveal the motives of the heart.

> For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:43-45)

One of the primary differences between biblical counseling and other models is the distinct focus on the heart of man by biblical counselors. Sin originates from within, out of the heart of man. The heart affects how one responds to circumstances, to being sinned against, and to suffering. In Jesus's sermon on the plain, He is teaching his disciples. His emphasis is on teaching believers, although others are present and listening, and contrasting living life with an exclusive focus on the present versus living life with an eternal perspective. The Lord uses the image of an orchard's fruit trees to illustrate the sinful

nature of man.[56] Man, by his very nature, is sinful and in need of redemption from a perfectly good and holy God.

The Lord illustrates man's need for redemption by stating, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Beneath the false religious exterior of the religious leaders of Jesus' day was a sinful self-centered heart driven by selfish desires. Jesus uses an illustration from the area of agriculture with trees bearing fruit that is consistent with the nature of the tree: good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit. Their exterior, a self-righteous façade that was more concerned with appearance than a love for God and others, was the dominating drive of their life. MacArthur explains,

> Just as trees produce fruit in keeping with their nature, so also do people. The hearts of the righteous, having been transformed by the regenerating work of salvation (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 26:25-27; John 3:5; Titus 3:5), hold good treasure; the hearts of the unregenerate hold evil treasure. Just as what the fruit trees bear reveals their nature, so also what people say reveals the nature of their heart, since the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart (cf. Prov. 10:32; Matt. 15:18). How people speak most clearly reveals what is in their heart.[57]

The dividing line between good and evil does not run between the religious and the pagan, but through the heart of every man. The area of focus for the biblical counselor is assisting believers to become more like Christ by applying biblical truth to their life and changing their heart's desire to match the desires consistent with the Word of God.

Behavior and attitudes reveal the heart's desires. In my first biblical counseling class several years ago, the professor, David Powlison, demonstrated this principle in a way that was easy to understand. Standing in front of the class, he took a new bottle of water and removed the top. He instructed the class to watch closely. He then struck the

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[56]Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 92.

[57]John MacArthur, *Luke 6-10*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 117.

bottle with his other hand, and water splashed out of the top of the bottle onto the floor. He asked, "Why did water come out of the bottle?" Most of my classmates answered with the obvious answer that he had struck the bottle. However, he gently corrected the class: "The reason the water came out is because there was water in the bottle." In life it is not necessarily the external circumstances that influence what flows from one's life, but many times circumstances reveal the sinful desires of the heart. God uses circumstances in the life of a believer to change the believer into the image of Christ. This process of change begins at the heart level when a believer understands his own sinful desires are in conflict with the desires of God.

A person's actions, attitudes, and speech provide a mirror into his own heart. One discovers areas of life that are not surrendered to the lordship of Christ as the heart is probed.[58] One's selfish desires are revealed, love for God is challenged, and the soul comes under the conviction of the resident Holy Spirit.

Finally, change within the context of a Christian's life comes about by the fruit of the Holy Spirit working through the Word. Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). The goal of biblical counseling is the glory of God.[59] Adams comments,

> Counseling—Christian and non-Christian—has one goal in view: to change people. Everybody who counsels believes that people need to be changed. The hope is to change people's lives. But the first and most significant difference between Christian and non-Christian counseling lies in the kind of change that other systems have in view. All non-Christian systems, regardless of what they say, are really changing people on a superficial level. *All* unbiblical systems, even when they speak of doing "depth" counseling, change people at a surface level. No unbiblical method of counseling can really get down into the heart of a human being and change him at that level. But that's exactly what a Christian system must do, to be truly Christian.[60]

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[58]Butler, *Luke*, 94.

[59]John Piper, "God's Glory Is the Goal of Biblical Counseling," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 2 (2002): 8.

[60]Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 309-10.

Biblical counseling, to be truly biblical, must involve one believer coming beside another person and, in cooperation with the active ministry of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work, assist the counselee to live a life that glorifies God.[61] Apart from this work of the Holy Spirit, any counseling is superficial at best.

Conclusion

The Scriptures boldly proclaim their sufficiency for the soul care of God's people. Each of the passages mentioned in this chapter in their own way proclaim the same truth. The Word of God is totally sufficient for the soul care of God's people today. Jesus, as He concluded the Sermon on the Mount, contrasted the wise man who builds his life upon the wisdom of the Word of God and the foolish man who builds his house on the unstable sand of today's earthly wisdom. The first endures adversity and the later crumbles (Matt 7:24-27). Today there is an urgent need for the church to return to the solid rock of the Word of God and to reject the shifting sand of the day. As Jesus finished his message, the audience was amazed because "he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt 7:28–29). The day has come to stand upon the authority of the Word of God. Standing upon the Word of God is the only way to see godly change in the life of believers and the only way to present the truth of the Gospel to the lost. Adams rightly concludes,

> It is the Word, ministered to counselees that brings about spiritual change (2 Tim. 3:15–17) and growth (1 Pet. 2:2). Spiritual change and growth takes place through preaching and teaching, through mutual fellowship and encouragement and (because sanctification is a process, not an act) through one or more (often several) counseling sessions.[62]

The pastor or any properly equipped Christian with a functional understanding of the Word of God is a competent and capable minister of God's Word. There is no need for

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[61]Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 20.

[62]Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 234.

psychological training and education to supplement the Word of God (Rom 15:14; 2 Tim 3:16-17). The Word of God is truly not only sufficient, but superior to anything the world has to offer. John Calvin agrees, "Thus he who knows how to use the Scriptures properly, is in want of nothing for salvation, or for a Holy life."[63] Today, like all others since Satan's temptation of Eve in the Garden, competing voices challenge the Word of God. The time has come for Christians to stand up for the sufficiency of the Scriptures based upon their own claim of sufficiency and use them to live lives that honor God and to minister to others as we have opportunity.

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[63]John Calvin, *2 Timothy*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, electronic ed. (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998), 2 Tim 3:16.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING
AND THE SHIFT AWAY FROM THE CHURCH WITH
THE MODERN PSYCHOLOGIZED VIEW OF SIN

Introduction

I vividly remember sitting on the side of Highway 9 in Norman, Oklahoma during the summer of 1984. I was a young police officer running radar on a slow night and reading Jay Adams's *Competent to Counsel*.[1] Because of the influence of Adams's book, and a growing desire in my own heart to utilize God's Word to assist people with the problems and issues of life, I approached my pastor with my desire to become a biblical counselor. Because he had no concept of biblical counseling, he wanted me to be a "preacher boy" in a local Independent Bible Baptist College. His understanding of ministry did not entail a ministry of the Word beyond the pulpit, other than teaching classes on the Bible and doctrine. My desire to be a biblical counselor motivated me to leave my career in law enforcement to pursue full-time ministry as a pastor and biblical counselor.

Little did I realize as I read Adams's book that the modern biblical counseling movement had begun just fourteen years earlier and had started with the book I was reading. Today, the movement has progressed and grown. It has crossed continents and denominational lines. It has matured and continues to mature. Today, biblical counselors stand on the shoulders of many who led the way to return personal ministry to the domain of the local church and the Bible as the source of authority.

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[1]Jay Edward Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1986).

When Christians today consider the subject of counseling, many would be quick to assume that counseling began in the 1800s with Sigmund Freud or Carl Jung. Many believers do not realize that the church has a rich history of personal ministry that dates to the early church. Throughout the history of the church, it has been the practice of pastors have ministered the Word of God to individuals in dealing with their sin, their suffering, and how to live godly lives. The Puritans called this ministry soul care. Today the church calls it biblical counseling, soul care, personal ministry, or simply discipleship. From the beginning of the early church, one can see that the apostle Paul understood personal ministry beyond the pulpit. While in Ephesus, he describes how he declared the whole counsel of the Word of God to them. He not only taught publicly in the local assembly, but also individually, "house to house" (Acts 20:20-27). The apostle Paul understood the necessity of ministry beyond the pulpit. He would have never called personal ministry biblical counseling, but he understood this aspect of the ministry of the Word. This type of personal ministry is necessary if pastors are to be "teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28).

This chapter discusses some of the high points from the history of the resurgence of biblical counseling in the church. What was understood to be the domain of the early church was challenged with the advent of psychology. The chapter begins with the influence of the doctrine and pastoral practice of the reformers. Then it discusses the practical wisdom the Puritans displayed in their personal ministry and the resurgence of biblical counseling beginning with Adams and continuing until the present day. Finally, this chapter deals with the intrusion of the secular counseling and psychologized mindset into the domain of the church and the need for the continued reformation that Adams began.

The Reformers

The Reformers held a high view of Scripture that fueled their departure from the Roman Church, but it also affected their view of personal ministry. They viewed the

Scriptures as inerrant and infallible and used the Word to minister to their congregations, not just from the pulpit, but also on a personal or individual basis. These men were biblical exegetes. They spent time in the study of the Word and allowed the Word to affect their personal lives as well as their ministry. Adams explains,

> The Reformers were not merely public ministers of the Word, as they are erroneously depicted; they took seriously the dual task of ministering that Word privately as well as publicly, just as the apostle Paul did. How far from this biblical practice some men today have wandered! There are preachers who will tell you that they are preachers, "Not counselors." Others declare that there is no need for a private counseling ministry so long as they preach effectively. Presumably, if such men are correct, Paul and Calvin both failed in their public ministry of preaching! Still others will tell you that they have no time to do counseling. Well, if that is true, then either they are doing too many inconsequential things and neglecting the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2) or they have put a higher priority on other things.[2]

In 1483, Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This act marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Of particular interest to biblical counselors is the very first item listed on this document. Luther stated, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent,' He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."[3] The Christian life is intricately tied to repentance, not only at salvation, but also throughout life.

This "life of repentance" appears somewhat negative at first glance. It seems that Luther is stating that progress in the Christian life is not possible. However, when properly understood, Luther's point is that repentance in the Christian life is the way of progress and a sign of spiritual growth and maturity in the life of a believer. It demonstrates the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the life of a believer and bringing about the conviction of sin. Helping a person see their sin and their need for repentance is the

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[2]Jay E. Adams, "Balance in the Ministry of the Word," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 6, no. 2 (1983): 1.

[3]Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 7:160.

work of biblical counseling. However, the work of biblical counseling is not limited to this work alone. Heath Lambert states,

> This does not mean that one's own personal sin is the only issue on the table in counseling—people need counseling help for many more reasons than that. Personal sin, though, is at least one of the things on the table in counseling. And even when people are experiencing pain at the hands of someone else's sin or because of the presence of sin in a fallen world they will always need to learn what it means to turn—to repent in the most general sense—to Jesus Christ and find his mercy, comfort, and power. If the entire life of believers is about repentance, and if counseling is about the issues of life, then Martin Luther reminds us that counseling is one of the most fundamental realities of counseling.[4]

Luther understood not only the doctrine of repentance, but also the importance of personal ministry of the Word and the pastor's responsibility to attend to the spiritual needs of his congregation. Luther makes this point when he asks, "For what is a bishop who does not preach the gospel, or attend to the cure of souls, but an idol in the world, having the name and form of a bishop?"[5] The pastor enters the pulpit on Sunday morning and preaches the Word, but he has a responsibility to minister the Word individually as well. Luther addressed this matter when discussing the counseling case of a woman with an impotent husband: "Now suppose I counseled her to procure a divorce from her husband. . . . Then I would further counsel her."[6] The point of this reference is not to critique the specific contents of Luther's counsel, but to show that he believed that work to be important. Luther understood that the ministry of the Word was not limited to the pulpit.

John Calvin was another reformer who had a significant influence upon the biblical counseling movement. Calvin was a diligent exegete, a brilliant teacher, and a

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[4]Heath Lambert, "What Martin Luther Taught Me about Counseling," Association of Certified of Biblical Counseling, October 31, 2013, accessed March 18, 2015, http://www.biblicalcounseling.com/blog/what-martin-luther-taught-me-about-counseling-the-reformation-roots-of-bibl.

[5]Martin Luther, "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Three Treatises,* trans. Charles M. Jacobs, rev. James Akinson, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 219.

[6]Ibid., 233.

prolific writer. His understanding of God and man, and the inability of man to understand either apart from the other, has provided a framework for many in the Calvinistic tradition to think deeply about how to apply the Word of God to men's lives in a practical way.

Calvin understood that the whole of the Christian life was one of personal spiritual growth. This sound biblical thinking has had a profound influence as biblical counselors work with believers to apply the Word to their own lives and situations. David Powlison clearly explains,

> Calvin has an underlying influence in significant ways in which he gives shape and essential content . . . he had a way of approaching Scripture as such a careful Bible scholar and careful pastor . . . that the two horizons of biblical accuracy and contemporary influence merge . . . he was extremely clear that a true knowledge of the living God correlated systematically with a true self-knowledge . . . and he taught that the Christian life is a race of repentance.[7]

This combination of understanding the process of spiritual growth in the life of a believer and Calvin's sound biblical exegesis created a sound footing for the personal ministry of the Word. Calvin had a sound understanding of man based on the Word and how to apply the Word to the lives of believers.

Calvin also understood the importance of personal pastoral ministry beyond the pulpit. In his discussion of Acts 20, he comments that Paul

> did not only teach all men in the congregation, but also every one privately, as every man's necessity did require. For Christ hath not appointed pastors upon this condition, that they may only teach the Church in general in the open pulpit; but that they may take charge of every particular sheep.[8]

He harshly condemned the men who left off the ministry of the Word after the Sunday morning message. He continues, "Wherefore, the negligence of those men is inexcusable,

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[7]David Powlison, "Stay Informed," Westminster Theological Seminary, August 11, 2009, accessed July 27, 2015, http://www.wts.edu/stayinformed/view.html?id=507.

[8]John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 2:243-44.

who, having made one sermon, as if they had done their task, live all the rest of their time idly; as if their voice were shut up within the church walls."[9]

Finally, Calvin understood that attempting to understand man apart from his relationship with God was futile. Calvin began his *Institutes* with this understanding. Calvin rightly observed,

> Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.[10]

Calvin's observation is in sharp contrast with the secular wisdom of the world that attempts to understand man apart from God. Man is a created being living in God's creation and cannot be properly understood except through the eyes of his Creator.

The Puritans

The Puritans were a high point in the history of the church in the area of personal ministry or what they would call soul care. They had great biblical insight in dealing with the spiritual issues of life. They knew how to deal with sin and suffering from a biblical perspective. They became known as the "physicians of the soul."[11] It would be impossible to consider the history of soul care without an understanding of the Puritans. Today, they deserve special attention by those who would attempt to develop a purely biblical approach to biblical counseling because, as Tim Keller writes, "They were the first Protestant school of Biblical Counseling."[12] The Puritans' influence continues today in the modern biblical

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[9]Calvin and Beveridge, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, 244.

[10]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), 18.

[11]Timothy J. Keller, "Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988): 11.

[12]Ibid.

counseling movement. The following section examines five areas through which the Puritans shaped and influenced the modern biblical counseling movement.

First is the understanding that the ministry of the Word is not limited to public ministry, but also includes a private or personal ministry. Today, in many American mega-churches, the senior pastor secludes himself for the ministry of the study of the Word and prayer and may be difficult to access. He either allows other church staff to fulfill the role of counselor or refers such needs beyond the local church to Christian counselors or secular mental health workers. In contrast, the Puritan pastor understood and embraced his responsibility to minister to the individual and pursued this responsibility "with the utmost vigour."[13] Following Calvin, the Puritans made the same point about the importance of the personal ministry of the Word.

In his chapter on the duty of pastors of churches, John Owen describes the pastoral responsibility of biblical counseling as belonging to pastors as part of their pastoral duties. He states that the pastor is "to be ready, willing, and able, to comfort, relieve, and refresh, those that are tempted, tossed, wearied with fears and grounds of disconsolation, in times of trial and desertion."[14] Owen continues his discussion and lists three responsibilities related to the pastoral ministry of counseling. The pastor must be "able rightly to understand the various cases that will occur . . . [to have] the tongue of the learned, to know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." [15] This responsibility would involve the pastor having the

> skill, understanding, and experience, in the whole nature of the work of the Spirit of God on the souls of men, of the conflict that is between the flesh and the Spirit, of the methods and wiles of Satan, of the wiles of principalities and powers or wicked

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[13]Daniel Webber, "The Puritan Pastor as Counselor," in *The Office and Work of the Minister* (Stoke-on-Trent, England: Tentmaker, 1986), 80.

[14]John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, n.d.), 16:85.

[15]Ibid., 16:86.

spirits in high places, of the nature, and effects, and ends of divine desertions, with wisdom to make application out of such principles, or fit medicines and remedies unto every sore and distemper, are required hereunto.[16]

Owen understood this ministry not as an interruption to the pastor's larger task, but a vital part of it. He explains the pastor must also be "ready and willing to attend unto the especial cases that may be brought unto them, and not to look on them as unnecessary diversions, whereas a due application unto them is a principal part of their office and duty."[17] He not only dealt with the cases presented to him as a pastor, but also took a much more active pastoral role than generally seen today. Owen continues, "Yea, it is their duty to hearken after them who may be so exercised, to seek them out, and to give them their counsel and direction on all occasions."[18] Owen also recognized the need for patience with those to which he ministered. He states the pastor is to "bear patiently and tenderly with the weakness, ignorance, dullness, slowness to believe and receive satisfaction, yea, it may be, impertinencies, in them that are so tempted." [19]

Richard Baxter also understood that, like today, many parishioners are unacquainted with this aspect of pastoral ministry. They see the pastor in the pulpit on Sunday morning, but do not see the hours he spends each week in personal ministry. Baxter charges pastors to

acquaint them with it, and publicly to press them to come to us for advice about the great concerns of their souls. We must not only be willing to take the trouble, but should draw it upon ourselves, by inviting them to come. . . . And, doubtless much might be done in it, if we did our duty.[20]

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[16]Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 16:86.

[17]Ibid., 16:87.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Richard Baxter, quoted in Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Counsel, Classic Pastoral Care* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 74.

Baxter did not see this as an optional ministry of the local church, but the duty of every pastor.

Finally, recognizing the importance of personal ministry or biblical counseling, Owen states, "There is not anything or duty that is of more importance, nor wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is more concerned, nor more eminently suited unto the nature of the office itself, than this is."[21]

The second area informing the Puritans' understanding of biblical counseling was their view of man. They understood that the ministry of counseling was related to the sanctification of a believer, not the modification of behavior or dealing with some psychological problem. This view of man is seen in their approach in the counseling process. Their first task in the counseling process was to determine if the counselee was indeed a believer. They were far less concerned about the counselee remembering the exact moment or the circumstances of their salvation, as they were the counselee's current awareness and conviction of sin and a true and growing love for God.[22] Their apparent lack of concern for the details of salvation does not mean that they were not concerned about the how and when of salvation, but their emphasis was on a sovereign God who was working in the life of a believer.

The Puritan view of man also called men to take responsibility and action in affecting their own cure. Their approach was more directive than most counseling today. The Puritans view of man's responsibility and call to action produced a balanced understanding of God working in "us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13 KJV), and our responsibility to act. For example, Joseph Symonds explains, "You must set your hands to the work. It is in vain to expect that God should help you if you

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[21]Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 1687.

[22]Webber, "The Puritan Pastor as Counselor," 84.

will not help yourselves."[23] He also recognized that without God's help, all effort is useless. He concludes by stating, "Therefore, if you put forth yourselves to doing what you are able, and as far as your power extends, God will draw near to you."[24] Putting forth effort is most difficult when believers do not feel as if they have the strength to resist. Richard Sibbes explains the importance of not surrendering ground in the spiritual battle: "It is as in rowing against the tide, one stroke neglected will not be gained in three; and therefore it is good to keep our hearts close to duty, and not to hearken unto the excuses they are ready to frame."[25]

The third area of distinction for the Puritans was a high view and reverence for the Scriptures. The Puritans were known for their love and commitment to the Word of God. They received the Bible as the most cherished possession one could enjoy in this world. They equated a reverence for God with a reverence for the Scriptures. To serve God was to obey the Scriptures, and to disregard or disobey the Word was to dishonor God. Packer explains, "To his mind, therefore, no greater insult could be offered to the Creator than to neglect his written word; and, conversely, there could be no truer act of homage to him than to prize it and pore over it, and then to live out and give out its teaching."[26]

The Puritan pastor understood that to respond wisely and biblically to the counseling cases would require a solid understanding of the Word and an in-depth

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[23]Joseph Symonds, *The Case and Cure of a Deserted Soul: A Treatise Concerning the Nature, Kinds, Degrees, Symptoms, Causes, Cure of, and Mistakes about Spiritual Desertions,* ed. Gerald Mick (Edinburgh, 1642; repr., Westfield, IN; Digital Puritan, 2012), 196.

[24]Symonds, *The Case and Cure of a Deserted Soul*, 196.

[25]Richard Sibbes, *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart (Edinburgh: James Nichol; London: James Nisbet and Co; Dublin: W. Robertson, 1862), 1:66.

[26]J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 98.

understanding of man. Such knowledge was only available through the Scriptures themselves and not from the wisdom of man. Owen's explains,

> The proper ways whereby pastors and teachers must obtain this skill and understanding are, by diligent study of the Scriptures, meditation thereon, fervent prayer, experience of spiritual things, and temptations in their own souls, with a prudent observation of the manner of God's dealing with others, and the ways of the opposition made to the work of his grace in them. Without these things, all pretenses unto this ability and duty of the pastoral office are vain; whence it is that the whole work of it is much neglected.[27]

Since Adams's publication of *Competent to Counsel* in 1970,[28] the emphasis on the sufficiency of the Scriptures has become known in the modern biblical counseling movement. The emphasis on the sufficiency of the Scriptures was not a new commitment, just a rediscovered truth. The Puritans were firmly committed to the Scriptures as not only adequate for dealing with the soul care of God's people, but superior to the wisdom of the world.

The fourth area of distinction of the Puritans was a high view of God and a commitment to living for the glory of God. When the Westminster Assembly penned the first question of the Shorter Catechism, "What is the chief end of man?," they clearly demonstrated not only what it is to live for the glory of God, but also the priority of God in a believer's life. Their answer was twofold. First, believers are to glorify God in their lives. Believers do this by living for the glory of God as opposed to living for their own glory. This priority in life closely aligns with our Lord's great commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt 22:37). Watson points out the believer's inability to love God adequately:

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[27]Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 16:86.

[28]Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 18, states, "The thesis of this book is that qualified Christian counselors properly trained in the Scriptures are competent to counsel-more competent than psychiatrists or anyone else."

You may over-love the creature.—You may love wine too much, and silver too much; but you cannot love God too much. If it were possible to exceed, excess here were a virtue; but it is our sin, that we cannot love God enough. "How weak is thy heart!" Ezek. 16:30. So it may be said, How weak is our love to God! It is like water of the last drawing from the still, which has less spirit in it. If we could love God far more than we do, yet it were not proportionable to his worth; so that there is no danger of excess in our love to God.[29]

The second part of the answer commands the believer to enjoy Him, which involves keeping God at the center of their life, loving God, and growing in the grace of obedience to Him (see John 14:21). The Puritans model for the biblical counselor of today models what it means for the counselor to grow in their delight of God, to live for His glory, and to call our counselees to walk with us.

Watson demonstrates that the glory of God is essential to who God is:

The creature's honour is not essential to his being; a king is a man without his regal ornaments, when his crown and royal robe are taken away, but God's glory is such an essential part of his being, that he cannot be God without it; God's very life lies in his glory.[30]

To deny God's glory or fail to honor Him is to fail the Christian life. Believers have a duty to glorify God in their bodies whether in life or in death and are to do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 6:20; Phil 1:20; 1 Cor 10:31).

Finally, the Puritans had a solid biblical understanding of suffering. They knew that the Scriptures not only explain suffering, but that the Scriptures also teach how to properly respond to and how to have hope during suffering. John Flavel, a great Puritan expositor of the Scriptures and known for his theology of suffering through personal experience, states, "The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of

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[29]Thomas Watson, *A Divine Cordial; The Saint's Spiritual Delight; The Holy Eucharist; and Other Treatises*, The Writings of the Doctrinal Puritans and Divines of the Seventeenth Century (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1846), 103.

[30]Thomas Watson, *The Select Works of the Rev. Thomas Watson, Comprising His Celebrated Body of Divinity, in a Series of Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, and Various Sermons and Treatises* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 8-9.

suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying."[31] The whole life theology is seen in

his understanding of God's purposes in suffering. Flavel understood suffering to have the

potential for benefiting the believer in at least eight different ways. Next are three of

these purposes or benefits.[32]

Flavel's first response to why God permits suffering is "to reveal, deter, and

mortify sin."[33] Flavel recognized that suffering in this life reveals true sinful motives:

"Afflictions are searchers, and put the soul upon searching and trying its ways, Lam. 3:14.

When our sin finds us out by affliction, happy are we, if, by the light of affliction we find

out sin."[34] Such revelation is motivation to turn from sin and an opportunity to mortify

sin. Second, after sin is identified and mortified, it needs to be replaced by things that are

God-honoring.[35] Flavel recognized God allows suffering to produce spiritual fruit and

encourage a believer to grow in godliness: "The power of godliness did never thrive better

than in affliction and never ran lower than in times of greatest prosperity (Zeph. 3:12)."[36]

Finally, Flavel recognized suffering as a tool of God to encourage a growing intimacy with

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[31]Joel R. Beeke, "Reading the Puritans," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3, no. 2 (2011): 201-2.

[32]Brian H. Cosby, "Why God Allows His People to Suffer: According to the Puritans," *Modern Reformation*, 23, no 2 (March/April 2014): 28-33, identifies eight benefits the believer can experience as a result of suffering or eight purposes for suffering. I discuss three due to their pertinence to this discussion; the remaining five are "To Reveal More of the Character of God," "To Relinquish the Temporal for the Eternal," "To Produce a Sincere Faith, Devoid of Hypocrisy," "To Bear Witness to the World," and "To Cultivate Communion with Christ, the Greatest Sufferer"

[33]Cosby, "Why God Allows His People to Suffer," 30.

[34]John Flavel, *The Whole Works of the Reverend John Flavel* (London: W. Baynes and Son; Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes; Dublin: M. Keene, 1820), 5:606.

[35]Cosby, "Why God Allows His People to Suffer," 30.

[36]John Flavel, "An Honest, Well Experienced Heart: The Piety of John Flavel," in *Profiles in Reformed Spirituality*, ed. Adam Embry, Joel R. Beeke, and Michael A. G. Haykin (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 78.

God.[37] Suffering calls believers to cling to Christ and their previous profession of faith. Flavel states, "But now affliction makes us more spiritual, and then it is nothing. It drives them nearer to God, makes them see the necessity of the life of faith, with multitudes of other benefits."[38]

The Church's Surrender of Soul Care

The Scriptures were the sole basis for understanding man for the first 1,900 years of the church's existence. The Word of God was the basis for understanding man's problems, his need for God, and the need to glorify God in his life. The problems of life were considered to be spiritual in nature and belonged exclusively to the domain of the church and her leaders. The answers to life's problems were rooted in the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. A radical departure from this understanding occurred with the advent of secular psychology, beginning with Sigmund Freud in the late 1800s. A biblical understanding of man and his spiritual problems were replaced with secular labels of mental illness. The result was a removal of God from the world He had made. The new psychological approach of dealing with the issues of life was devoid of God, the mention of sin, the need for a Savior, redemption, or hope of eternal life. The answers for man's problems were no longer understood to be found in the Word of God, but were already present within the heart of man. Conservative seminaries continued to teach sound theology in the areas of homiletics and theology, but instruction in pastoral care and counseling from the Bible were no longer needed.[39]

The result today is overwhelming. Culture, as well as the evangelical church, has been inundated by a psychological worldview that seeks answers apart from the

[37]Cosby, "Why God Allows His People to Suffer," 31.

[38]Flavel, *The Whole Works*, 252.

[39]Tim Lane, "CCEF History, Theological Foundations and Counseling Model," accessed July 14, 2014, www.ccef.org/sites/default/files/pdf/lane_ccef-history-and-model.pdf.

church and apart from the Word of God. People no longer believe that Scripture holds the authority for helping people, even within the church. Many Christians also assume that secular wisdom should be embraced by the church to make the church wiser in how to deal with people and their problems. However, the Scriptures warn about integrating the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8).

The common approach by secular counselors, and unfortunately adapted by many Christian counselors, is to deal with the issues of a man's soul apart from his Creator. They make such artificial distinctions by calling what is a spiritual issue a mental health issue or disease. Such methodology is futile at best and destructive at worse. The biblical counselor understands these are inseparable, and to understand man rightly, he must be understood in light of his relationship with God.

Powlison observes this secular influence from the culture that has permeated the thinking and practice of ministry in today:

> But a mental health system that knows no Christ dominates the counseling landscape and shapes the mind and practices of the culture. Even the 'Christian' counseling field has largely taken its cues from the secular psychologies, as if Scripture did not really have much to say beyond religiosity and morality. [40]

However, the Scriptures do speak with a wisdom that is for the issues of today. Powlison continues,

> But as we look more closely at life, it becomes clearer and clearer that Scripture is about counseling: diagnostic categories, causal explanations of behavior and emotion, interpretation of external sufferings and influences, definitions of workable solutions, character of the counselor, goals for the counseling process, configuring the professional counseling structures, critique of competing models. These are all matters to which God speaks directly, specifically, and frequently. He calls us to listen attentively, to think hard and well, and to develop our practical theology of conversational ministry.[41]

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[40]David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2005), 169.

[41]Ibid., 169-70.

Today, many godly pastors, as well as mainline pastoral theologians, are calling the church back to the biblical ministry of the Word. Andrew Purves, a professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, states,

> In modern times, some kind of a rift has opened up between being a pastor and being a theologian, as if a person could be one without the other. While recognizing the danger of generalization, I detect today lack of confidence among pastors in the efficacy of the Word. . . . My conviction is that the basic reconstitutive task for pastoral theology today is to establish once again the fundamental connection between the Christian doctrines of God, redemption, and hope, and the pastoral ministry of the church.[42]

Thomas Oden, a retired theology and ethics professor from Drew University, makes a similar observation: "Pastoral theology as a unifying discipline was flourishing a century ago and remained robust until the beginning of this century, yet it has largely faded into such hazy memory that none of its best representatives is still in print."[43] Such a dark time in the history of pastoral theology sets the stage for the biblical counseling movement started by Adams in the 1970s.

A modern example of the church adopting the world's wisdom is found in the life of Pastor Steven J. Cole. In the fall of 1990, Cole was reading Henry Cloud's *When Your World Makes No Sense* with a fellow elder as an assignment of his elder board. This book was proposed to be used for a recovery group in his church. As Cole read the book, he discovered Cloud took the position that standard Christian answers, such as faith in Christ, reading of Scriptures, and time in prayer, were not effective with hurting people and was much like the counsel of Job's friends, "worthless medicine." The other elder, whose wife had come from a "dysfunctional background," agreed with Cloud. He stated that his wife had never been able to receive the message of grace from the pulpit. Therefore, Cole questioned her salvation, which greatly offended the other elder. At the

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[42]Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 2-4.

[43]Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), xii.

same time, Cole was also reading Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.[44] The contrast between the two authors was stark. God used this situation to allow Cole to realize he had drifted from a sound biblical understanding of God, man, and salvation. He found within the *Institutes* five areas of biblical theology in direct conflict with his understanding of Christian psychology. These areas were used to assist Cole in re-establishing a biblical framework for personal ministry. The Christian psychology movement is built on an inadequate view of salvation. It focuses people on self, not on God and His glory; denies the sufficiency of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit; it undermines the sufficiency and authority of God's Word; and finally, it minimizes the biblical view of sin and personal responsibility.[45]

Jay Adams and the Birth of the Modern Biblical Counseling Movement

The modern biblical counseling movement began with the outcry of Adams in the 1970s. Adams challenged the psychological counseling of his day based upon a threefold claim. His first claim was the lack of sound theology or the presence of bad theology in use by the "Christian" counselors or the secular counselors of the day. Each failed to understand people biblically, nor did they offer biblical solutions to the problems of life. Second, the professional counselor displaced the pastor and his role as shepherd and his responsibilities to his flock. In effect, a counterfeit pastorate or a secular priest was created. Finally, Adams believed the Scriptures were totally sufficient to equip pastors and layman alike to minister to the soul needs of God's people in doing the work of a biblical counselor.[46]

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[44]Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

[45]Steven J. Cole, "How John Calvin Led Me to Repent of Christian Psychology," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 31-39.

[46]David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2010), xvii.

Adams's first success was with the publication of *Competent to Counsel.* Adams was a godly Presbyterian pastor and a Westminster Theological Seminary professor. His book was written primarily for pastors and seminary students, as well as lay people and mental health professionals. He challenged the dominance of the secular mental health professional's intrusion into the domain of the local church on three grounds.[47]

Adams's first challenge to the existing system of counseling was based upon his understanding of man's need for a right and growing relationship with God: "Man's greatest need is forgiveness."[48] He believed the basic Christian message of forgiveness through faith in Christ and understood this to be man's greatest need, not only at salvation but as part of the Christian life. Apart from a biblical understanding of sin and forgiveness, the counselor errs by failing to recognize the need for forgiveness or errs by offering a secular substitute. Such biblical forgiveness is impossible to understand apart from the Bible. This biblical understanding of man and man's relationship to his Creator makes Adams a truly "gospel-centered" counselor. He gave practical biblical exhortations that some outside the biblical counseling movement considered moralistic. Lambert defends Adams in this regard comparing him with the apostle Paul. The imperatives of the first eleven chapters of Romans are the basis for the rest of the epistle. The same is true for Colossians as well as Ephesians; the early chapters build the biblical and theological basis for the instructions in the second half of the books.[49]

Second, Adams challenged the counseling model of his day with the question of how to measure the effectiveness of counseling. He observed an absence of a final authority or even a consensus of what the counselor was to change the counselee into. He

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[47]Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 1.

[48]Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 184.

[49]Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 121.

rejected society standards, pragmatism, or even the individual standard of the counselor. Adams rejected the secular model of "normal" as established by observation of what is common among man. The biblical model was to call the counselee to moral and righteous standards. He challenged the counselee to conform to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect standard.[50]

In the fall of 1977, Adams addressed a large group of students and faculty at the University Psychiatric Clinic in Vienna. There, he challenged the right of a counselor on his or her own to make value judgments for a counselee:

> Why do we need a standard, a yardstick, a rule? Because we are dealing with the problem of changing human lives. What man has the right or the ability to say to another, "I know how you shall live?" What man will take it upon himself to say, "This is wrong in your life, this is right in your life, and this is how I want to change you?" Some think they can divorce themselves from the ethical issues. They think that value can be cast aside. But you can't; you continually get involved in the realm of values when you deal with people and their lives.[51]

Value judgments are unavoidable in dealing with the lives of people and the issues they face, even if some counselors claim neutrality. Adams was quick to point out that such a claim is, itself, a moral judgement.

Finally, because Adams believed in the sufficiency of the Scriptures and understood counseling requires sound theological underpinning, he believed the primary location for counseling was in the local church done by pastors and skilled laymen. In an interview, Adams explains, "Early on, the decision was made that we're fundamentally going to use counseling as a means of teaching. Teaching is first because we want to train people to get counseling back into the local churches."[52]

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[50]Jay E. Adams, "Change Them? . . . into What?" *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 15.

[51]Ibid.

[52]David Powlison, "25 Years of Biblical Counseling: An Interview with Jay Adams and John Bettler," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 10.

To assist local churches and pastors in the counseling ministry, Adams founded the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF) to train pastors in counseling based upon the Scriptures.[53] CCEF incorporated in 1968, and began training pastors. The office was located in a small, often unheated, room in the White Oak Ridge Chapel in Short Hills, New Jersey. This training of pastors was ground-breaking because no one had attempted to teach counseling built upon the systematic application of biblical truths in recent history. CCEF grew and relocated close to the Westminster Theological Seminary where Adams taught and continues to have an influence upon the seminary. The need was realized for a professional organization to train and certify biblical counselors. In a board meeting of CCEF, on September 19, 1974, the decision was made to form such an organization. Two years later, the details were worked out and the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC) was born.[54] In October 2013, in an annual meeting of NANC in Montgomery, Alabama, the name was changed to the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC).[55]

The Growth of Biblical Counseling after Adams

Adams will always be recognized as the patriarch of the biblical counseling resurgence that began in the 1970s and continues to this day. He laid a foundation that continues to influence the thinking of biblical counselors. Everyone doing biblical counseling owes a great debt of gratitude for what the Lord accomplished through Adams's counseling and teaching ministry. Lambert states,

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[53]Jay Adams, "Behind the Study Door," *Presbyterian Guardian*, April 1968, accessed January 15, 2017, https://www.opc.org/cfh/guardian/Volume_37/1968-04.pdf.

[54]John F. Bettler, "CCEF: The Beginning," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988): 45.

[55]Heath Lambert, "NANC's Proposal for a Name Change," accessed October 25, 2016, https://vimeo.com/74480893.

I believe Adams has been one of the most consequential men in church history in the last 150 years. His work revolutionized the way thousands of people do ministry. In the last forty years everyone who ministers the Scriptures or has had the Scriptures ministered to them according to the principles of biblical counseling has Jay Adams to thank. God has used him mightily to recalibrate the church's thinking about how to help hurting and struggling people.[56]

Adams, however, recognizes that he was only beginning a monumental work and that additional work needed to be done. In his humility and vision for the biblical counseling movement's growth, he encouraged others to come along and develop what he had begun. Adams writes,

Truly, the situation is complex (I almost wrote "horrendous"). You can understand, then, why I am begging for volumes to be written, and why I make no claims about doing more than making a beginning at discussing the many matters of anthropology that confront the Christian counselor who wants to be thoroughly biblical. It is hard enough to know where to begin my sketch, let alone to attempt anything more ambitious.[57]

Others have subsequently developed biblical counseling beyond Adams's foundational work. Lambert refers to these as the next generation of biblical counselors. Lambert uses the familial language of generations to demonstrate the likeness within a family from one generation to the next, while at the same time recognizing that growth and change has occurred. He is also quick to express his gratefulness and respect for the first generation whose commitment to the sufficiency of the Scriptures and their call for the church to return to personal ministry has not changed. The foundational understanding of recognizing man's utter dependence upon God to live a life that glorifies Him, the Word of God, and the indwelling Holy Spirit as the true change agent, and the effects of sin upon man, either as sinner or one who is sinned against, also remains the same.[58]

The second generation of biblical counselors has made significant advances in three key areas. Next, I discuss these three areas of growth and their effect upon the

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[56]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 46-47.

[57]Jay Edward Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 97.

[58]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement,* 46-48.

biblical counseling movement. The first of the three areas are how biblical counselors think about biblical counseling or their conception of what it means to think biblically in counseling. The second area is methodology or the process of doing counseling. Finally, the third area is the biblical counselors apologetics or how they discuss, defend, or explain our position to others.[59]

Conceptually, the second generation has grown in their understanding of how to approach and understand suffering. They have a growing understanding of suffering and have an enlarged capacity for compassion. They understand that the cause of suffering is not always the result of the sin of the counselee. Many times, such circumstances are far beyond the control of the counselee. Such circumstances, such as a death in the family, an incurable disease, or some other circumstance, creates opportunities for growing in grace and an understanding of the Christian life. Powlison explains a balanced approach well:

> Often the biggest problem for any sufferer is not "the problem." It is the spiritual challenge the problem presents: "How are you doing in the midst of what you are going through? What are you learning? Where are you failing? Where do you need encouragement? Will you learn to live well and wisely within pain, limitation, weakness, and loss? Will suffering define you? Will faith and love grow, or will you shrivel up?"[60]

Powlison points to the loving compassion of a biblical counselor standing with a sufferer and being able to say to that counselee, "I am with you."[61]

In addition, the second generation's conception of motivation has expanded. Adams understood the need for counselees to change behavior and understood the cause of bad or sinful behavior as habits developed from responding sinfully to the situations of life. Adams equated the biblical term "flesh" with sinful habits. Adams explains,

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[59]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 47.

[60]David Powlison, "God's Grace and Your Sufferings," in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God,* ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 157.

[61]Ibid.

Sinners, perverted from birth, will begin to develop sinful response patterns from the beginning of their lives (they cannot do otherwise before regeneration). Because of the great importance of habit in our daily lives, these patterns set up formidable barriers to growth in Christian living, with which counselees struggle, and with which counselors must deal. It is, therefore, of great importance for counselors to understand the biblical teaching concerning habit and what must be done about it.[62]

Adams based this understanding upon such passages as the "put off" and "put on" of Ephesians 4:17-29 and Colossians 3:5-17. He understood this as the process of sanctification, which was extremely practical in the counseling process; however, it focused on the behavior. Adam's books do not explain the significance of the heart as the provenance of motive. To probe the motives of the counselee with "why" was to remove responsibility from the counselee for sinful behavior.[63]

The second generation was much more sensitive to questioning the counselee's motivation by asking the "why" questions. Powlison recognized the need of examining human motivation biblically and incorporating such an understanding into the biblical counseling model, which was consistent with Adams calling the counselee to obedience. Powlison writes,

Nouthetic counseling has comprehended uniquely that the goal of counseling should be nothing less than visible obedience to the Lord. . . . The Bible itself tells us behavior has "reasons." Behavior flows "from within, out of men's hearts" (Mark 7:21), as we all know and affirm. But both our theory and practice have not given this area the attention it needs. We must become as familiar with the practical, everyday details of "faith and idolatry" as we are with the details of those acts of sin and righteousness which flow from our hearts.[64]

Powlison understood that the "why" questions, when used properly, would expose the counselee's motives, patterns of living, and ultimately their functional theology.[65]

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[62]Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (1986), 161.

[63]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement,* 67-70.

[64]David A. Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988): 56-57.

[65]David A. Powlison, "X-Ray Questions: Drawing Out the Whys and Wherefores of Human Behavior," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 2-3.

The second area of growth for the second generation of biblical counselors was in methodology. Though much remains consistent from the first generation, Lambert lists six areas of significant growth. I discuss two of them next.[66]

The second generation has grown in their understanding of the relationship between the counselor and the counselee. Adams, standing in stark contrast to the Rogerians of his day, understood the authority of the Word of God and rightly saw himself as a minister of the Word. Adams states, "The same nouthetic methods were used when God, through Nathan, confronted David and when God, in Christ, confronted Peter after his denial."[67] Adams understood a failure of counseling often occurred because of a lack of biblical authority in the counseling session. Adams writes, "Probably the chief reason why nouthetic counselors fail is because they sometimes become too sympathetic to the complaints and excuses of the counselee."[68] Powlison understood the same danger Adams did, the possibility of a lack of sound biblical authority, but also had a desire to see biblical counseling grow in compassion. Powlison expressed his concern well in a review of Adams's commentary on the book of James. Powlison desired that Adams, and by extension every biblical counselor, occasionally shift from the proclaimer of biblical truth to the receiver of truth, to stand as a fellow sinner and sufferer alongside a counselee, and to always remember that the counselor is first a counselee.[69] Powlison used 1 Thessalonians 5:14 as a biblical foundation for understanding that the relationship between counselee and counselor is more than professional, but personal and familial in nature:

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[66]In addition to the areas discussed in the text, Lambert lists counseling that is sacrificial, counseling that is person oriented rather than problem oriented, and counseling that views the counselee as a fellow sufferer. Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement,* 89-99.

[67]Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 56.

[68]Ibid., 58.

[69]David Powlison, review of *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude*, by Jay E. Adams, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 15, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 63-64.

As we listen to 1 Thessalonians as a whole, it becomes clear that the letter portrays—and calls for—a familial paradigm for understanding the "counselor-counselee" relationship. Older children help younger. Because the needy ones come with different sorts of problems, the wiser ones must be highly adaptable in their love.[70]

The second generation of biblical counselors has also grown methodologically in the area of affection. Again, Powlison observed a roughness in Adams's style and desired the biblical counseling movement to grow in this area. Powlison states, "First, to my ears Adams sounds more tough than tender, more the voice of imperatives than the voice of promises, more the call to immediate change than the offer of patient understanding."[71] Powlison and others saw a need for the biblical counselor to demonstrate a much gentler and affectionate posture when dealing with counselees, modeling "speaking the truth in love." Lambert concludes, "Love is important in counseling. Love needs to be apparent if counseling instruction is to bear fruit."[72]

The third area of growth of the second generation of biblical counselors is related to the area of apologetics—how the biblical counseling movement engages those outside the movement. The interactions in the early days of the movement were somewhat limited and not very well received by those outside of the biblical counseling movement, especially Christian counselors. Adams's demeanor was abrasive and he did not intentionally interact outside the biblical counseling community and those conservative evangelicals who supported the movement. He made clear his goal on several occasions. In the introduction of his *Christian Counselor's Manual*, he writes, "After all, I am writing this book for my friends; for those who so enthusiastically responded to my

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[70]David Powlison, "Familial Counseling: The Paradigm for Counselor-Counselee Relationships in 1 Thessalonians 5," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 2.

[71]Powlison, review of *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude*, 63.

[72]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 92.

previous efforts. I am not trying to sell anyone here. . . . The apologetic and polemic

notes, therefore, largely will be absent."[73] Powlison explains,

> Nouthetic counseling rarely had borders to contest outside of the conservative
> Protestant community because it made no professional claims on the larger culture,
> seeking instead to create a separate counter-culture. . . . Nouthetic counseling
> would become increasingly isolated from the cultural centers: seminaries, colleges,
> universities, professional associations, book publishing, and journals where
> counseling ideas were debated and became influential.[74]

The result was a lack of influence upon the greater Christian community, something the

second generation of biblical counselors want to change.

Powlison has led the way in engaging those who care for souls outside the

biblical counseling camp. He has established "three epistemological priorities" for a

biblical counselor's approach to understanding counseling that is truly biblical and how

to glean from the insights of secular psychology. Lambert summarizes Powlison's

priorities as "construct, confront, and consider." To construct is to develop a robust

system of soul care from the Scriptures. This priority is built upon the recognition that the

Scriptures in and of themselves are sufficient for such a task. Then, the next priority is to

confront secular models that fail to understand people biblically or point sufferers to

Christ. Finally, the last priority is to consider other models and learn from them.[75]

The significance of such an approach to engaging secular and integrational

counselors cannot be overstated. Now biblical counselors have an approach to engage

constructively the secular counseling community, challenge them with biblical truth, and

grow by learning from their observations. Lambert rightly states, "Powlison's contribution

is an important one because, as he is engaging in apologetics, he provides an apologetic

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[73]Jay Edward Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), xiii.

[74]Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 193.

[75]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 115-16.

approach; that is, for the first time biblical counselors had been given a method with which to process and engage alternative models."[76]

Conclusions

Recent history has seen the evangelical church remove sound biblical theology from the ministry of counseling and turn the ministry of counseling over to secular professionals who neither understand nor appreciate a biblical view of man, a biblical view of God, or understand the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The church has reduced the role of a pastor to that of a preacher, removed him from the personal ministry of the Word, and isolated him from the very people God has ordained him to serve. The church has also reduced the Bible from God's all-encompassing wealth of wisdom for every area of life to a few steps about how to be saved.

With the revival of biblical counseling that began with Adams in the 1970s, the recovery of biblical counseling is alive and well today. The second and third generation of biblical counselors, standing on the shoulders of their predecessors, are continuing to bring the Scriptures to bear in the lives of people. There is growth in biblical thinking and understanding of biblical ministry as well as a growth in methodology. The local church is rediscovering her role in personal ministry, the role of the pastor is growing to include personal ministry, and the church is awakening to see the beauty of the whole counsel of God!

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[76]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 116.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY
RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

In the summer of 2017, Shawnee Bible Church (SBC) offered a course in the introduction of biblical counseling. This chapter describes the methodology used in the course, the scope of material that was covered, and the implementation of this project. The selection process for the participants, the pre- and post-training survey, and the content of each lesson are stated and briefly explained.

SBC is a church plant that began with a counseling ministry to the community six months prior to beginning a Sunday worship service. The uniqueness of this church plant cultivates as part of the makeup an understanding of biblical counseling and the sufficiency of the Scriptures for personal ministry of the Word. Several members came by way of the counseling ministry and are now serving in the fellowship.

The development of this course and the counseling ministry of SBC, Grace Biblical Counseling (GBC), was motivated by the conviction that the Scriptures are sufficient for counseling and the belief that the local church was not equipping the saints for the full orbed work of the ministry that includes biblical counseling or intensive discipleship.

A benefit of this project, in addition to meeting the five goals, is for GBC to begin training members and pastors from other churches in the area to counsel using the Scriptures and to grow in their understanding of the Word as well as to grow in their confidence in the power of Scripture to change lives. The intention should spark an interest in others to attend future classes offered by GBC and for the ministry of GBC to

grow in its influence within the community. Another desire is for GBC to become a certified training center for the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). If this happens, GBC would be the only training center in Oklahoma. The closest training center to this location is in Texas and is a three-hour drive. This course provided an opportunity for me to grow in my ability to teach biblical counseling and engage with those who want to learn as well as those who do not yet believe in the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

Weekly Project Description

The length of this project was fifteen weeks. The first week involved selection of participants, thirteen weeks of weekly classroom teaching, and a final week of evaluating the effectiveness of the class. The training consisted of thirteen sessions. The class met weekly on Thursday evenings for approximately an hour and a half each night. The class began with 16 people and finished with 12. The overall participation level and growing interest of those who completed the course was encouraging.

Each session had more material than could be covered in an hour and a half. In most sessions, additional resources were mentioned for students that wanted to do additional study. These sessions will be lengthened to three hours in the future to allow more material to be covered and to meet ACBC minimum hour requirements for certification as biblical counselors.

Selecting and Screening Participants

In preparation for the class, invitations were sent to area pastors, key laypeople, and former counselees in week 1. Each participant was asked to answer a series of questions designed to determine the participant's commitment to the sufficiency of the Scriptures for dealing with common counseling issues or their preference for sending people with problems to the mental health professionals. The survey was also an

indication of how each participant understood common problems, either as spiritual issues or mental health problems. The results of those surveys are discussed in chapter 5.

**Class Session 1: What Makes
Biblical Counseling Biblical?**

The first session began by recognizing that many well-intentioned Christians refer to counseling models as biblical, that are not truly biblical. For a student to begin a course of biblical counseling, biblical counseling must be properly defined and well understood. The Bible, and the Bible alone, must be foundational for what the church believes, how to understand man, how to understand sin, and how to understand salvation and the process of sanctification. This approach was contrasted with the idea of taking worldly wisdom and supporting secular views with proof texts. The difference in approach from a worldly system or an integrated approach with a biblical approach was demonstrated and explained by using a simplified version of the theological pyramid.[1] The pyramid was used to explain the necessary biblical foundation for counseling and to begin building the students' understanding of the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

For biblical counseling to be truly biblical, the counselor and the counselee need to understand behavior biblically. The outer man is easily observable, but real change cannot focus on the externals of behavior. Those who think biblically understand that external behavior reflects what is in the heart of man. This understanding led to a discussion and explanation that for true biblical change to occur, the change must happen on the heart level of the counselee. The students were encouraged to recognize that all decisions, behavior, and feelings flow from an active heart. True biblical change of the heart flows from a growing relationship with the Lord through faith and repentance. This

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[1]The theological pyramid used was adapted from Steve Viars, *What Makes Biblical Counseling Biblical*? audio resource from the *Biblical Counseling Training Conference* (Lafayette, IN: Faith Baptist Church, 2012).

type of growth in a counselee's relationship with the Lord is always the ultimate goal of biblical counseling.

**Class Session 2: The Goals of Counseling
and Qualifications of Counselors**

In session 2, the class discussed that the goal of biblical counseling is the same as any personal ministry: it is to call people to live for the glory of God rather than their own glory. For the biblical counselor, there is a unique opportunity to challenge a counselee during a difficult time of sin or suffering to use the opportunity for spiritual growth and maturity. This challenge for spiritual growth involves the counselee searching his own heart for motives that are not pleasing to God. As in the previous week, the class continued to develop the understanding that behavior and attitudes flow from an active heart, where real change must occur. To illustrate this, it was pointed out that good goals can also be idolatrous. Good goals or desires become idolatrous when a person is willing to sin to get them or sin when the person does not get them. Finally, the class discussed the responsibility of all believers to counsel one another (Rom 15:14).

**Class Sessions 3 and 4: Key Elements
of Biblical Counseling**

Sessions 3 and 4 began with discussing that counseling is not restricted to dealing with sin, but includes dealing with suffering. The nature of God's sovereignty working in the lives of people and through their circumstances is to grow each of us in the likeness of Christ (Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28-29). The class also briefly discussed Paul's model of compassion in personal ministry when he admonished "everyone with tears" (Acts 20:31). Then the class discussed the seven key elements of biblical counseling.

The first element is to build the relationship between the counselor and the counselee. In many instances, the first appointment is the first time the counselee has met the counselor. Biblical counseling is built upon a relationship between two Christians, not two strangers. In *Leading with Love*, Alexander Staurch states, "It's true that people don't

care how much you know until they know how much you care. A leader will not have much of a ministry if people do not know that he or she truly cares about them."[2] This truth is not just for leaders, but for counselors and anyone in ministry. This is a key topic in the Scriptures and is modeled by the Lord Himself (Heb 2:14-18). The apostle Paul also modeled this type of ministry to the Ephesian elders when he departed from Ephesus (Acts 20:30). Paul also models a caring ministry in the description of his ministry in Thessalonica: "But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children (1 Thess 2:7-9).

The second element involves the counselor getting facts from the counselee or data gathering. For the pastor who is accustomed to speaking, and many other counselors as well, this is a skill in listening along with learning to ask good questions. It is important to understand the issue as well as to communicate a willingness to the counselee that, as a counselor, you care enough to hear their story and to get to know them (Prov 18:13; 1 Cor 13:4).

The third element is for the counselor to generate biblical hope in the life of the counselee. God has called each believer to a "living hope" and given us examples from the Scriptures that "we might have hope" (1 Pet 1:3; Rom 15:4). Counselees need to be encouraged to believe that the Bible has answers to their problems and the counseling room is a place to receive encouragement, not only from the Word, but also from the counselor. The class was also cautioned about giving too much hope in the early stages thereby discouraging the counselee by communicating a lack of understanding of the problem presented.

The fourth element is to evaluate the problem biblically. The counselor must understand the situation from a biblical perspective. Is the problem one of suffering, sin, or some combination? How does the counselee understand the problem? And finally,

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[2]Alexander Strauch, *Leading with Love* (Colorado Springs: Lewis & Roth, 2006), 109.

how can the counselee grow in understanding the problem biblically and grow in understanding their own heart and desires?

The fifth element is to teach and apply biblical truth. The teaching of biblical truth is the cornerstone of biblical counseling since the Word is the authority of the counselor. Failure of the counselee to learn and apply Scripture to their lives is a failure of the counseling process. The counselor must constantly turn to and grow in the usage of the Word to be an effective counselor and to continue to grow as an individual.

The sixth element is to provide some accountability. Accountability is accomplished by assigning sanctification projects (formerly called homework). This process is helpful to move a counselee toward a growing relationship with the Lord through the Scriptures. Such projects normally involve reading, memorizing, and meditation on particular passages or verses selected in advance by the counselor. It is through the Word that God brings about a change in the life of a believer (John 17:17). Sanctification projects are also an opportunity for the counselor to gather additional data, such as a questionnaire about the counseling topic. For example, a counselee responds to questions about an incident of anger that occurred between sessions.

The seventh and final key element is to plan your ministry. Such planning involves praying for wisdom before a session begins, as well as between sessions. It involves a counselor remembering that biblical counseling is simply graciously applying biblical truth to a difficult situation in the counselee's life. The counselor should prepare his own heart and mind by growing in his own relationship with the Lord and praying for himself and his counselee. The class also discussed when to conclude a counseling session: when a counselee biblically understands the problem and how to biblically deal with the problem, when the counselee has embraced new responses to old sin patterns

and has experienced a change of heart and developed an understanding of the problem, and the new thinking and responses are becoming more automatic.[3]

**Class Session 5: Understanding the Heart
and Progressive Sanctification**

Session 5 began to deal with the motivation of man, which Scripture teaches originates within the human heart. I contrasted a popular understanding of a passive heart with a biblical understanding of an active heart. This active heart shapes behavior, speech, thinking, and attitudes. The class also discussed the idolatry of the heart being when a person is willing sin to get what he wants, or is willing to sin if he does not get the object of his desire. These desires come to mean more to a person than his love for God. Such idolatrous desires represent what the Bible calls spiritual adultery (Ezel 14:1-3; Jas 1:1-4). God created each of us to worship Him and Him alone. Each of us are to delight in, love, and please Him (Mattt 22:37; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:9). This biblical understanding of an active heart is essential for the biblical counselor to understand and to be capable of explaining to a counselee. True biblical change must begin at the heart level.

In this session, I also introduced the doctrine of progressive sanctification. Progressive sanctification is synonymous with Christian growth or spiritual growth. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of a believer that purifies and cleanses the believer from sin and renews the believer in the image of God.[4] At salvation, a believer is declared righteous or justified in the eyes of God. Believers are to grow in practical righteousness, which is sanctification. God's people are to be sanctified throughout their lives. The tool the Lord uses is His Word (John 17:17). The use of the Word is often a neglected

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[3]Wayne Mack, "Implementing Biblical Instruction," in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, by John MacArthur and Wayne Mack (Dallas: Word, 1994), 296.

[4]John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, n.d.), 3:386.

doctrine in the local church; however, it is normal and expected to be a part of the Christian life. Believers glorifies God in their growth and as they grow in their love and service to others.

Class Session 6: Four Rules of Biblical Communication

In session 6, biblical communication was discussed. This is an important topic for the believer. Man was the only part of God's creation with which God chose to communicate. God also gave mankind the ability to communicate with each other. God's communication with man came in the form of a command that was also counsel, demonstrating that man is to live under the rule and instruction of a Holy God. Like all good gifts from God, mankind can honor and glorify Him with speech or can dishonor Him with misuse of this wonderful gift. One's words reveal one's heart and demonstrates potential areas for spiritual growth. Our words can be used to edify, build up or destroy others. In this session, the four rules of communication from Ephesians 4:25-32 were discussed to demonstrate a godly pattern of communication.

The first rule requires each of us to be honest with one another. Ephesians 4:25 says, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." Speaking the truth is more than just being honest, it is avoiding misleading statements, exaggeration, and outright deceit. In Ephesians 4:15, we are also commanded to be "speaking the truth in love." Truth can be brutal and damaging. To speak in love demands that we speak with other's welfare in mind (Col 4:6).

The second rule of communication is to stay current. This principle is taught in Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." Failure to deal with issues in a timely manner is an opening for bitterness and resentment and leaves us guilty.

The third rule for communication is to attack the problem, not the person. This principle is also taught in Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be angry and do not sin." To attack the person is not to speak with grace and fails to reach out to the individual in love. It leaves us using "corrupting talk" rather than "building up" and ministering grace (Eph 4:29). Dealing with the problem is focused on serving the real needs of others and helping them.

The fourth rule is to act rather than react. The final two verses of this chapter contrast ungodly reactions and godly actions. Reaction is described as actions and attitudes that need to be put off, including bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. They are to be replaced with godly actions that include being kind, being tenderhearted, and forgiving (Eph 4:31-32).

Class Session 7: Forgiveness
and Suffering

In this session, I began with a discussion of biblical forgiveness. This topic is one of the most important not only for counseling but also for the Christian life. John MacArthur once stated, "Early in my pastoral ministry I noticed an interesting fact: nearly all the personal problems that drive people to seek pastoral counsel are related in some way to the issue of forgiveness."[5] The area of forgiveness is important because it is impossible for any relationship to exist for any length of time without it. Forgiveness is made more difficult in our culture since the subject is often misunderstood. For example, some say we are to forgive and forget. This is a misunderstanding of forgiveness from Jeremiah 31:34. God states He will no longer remember our sins. Since God is omniscient, this passage should be understood as God choosing not to remember sins, not God forgetting or ceasing to know something.

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[5]John F. MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 7.

To properly understand forgiveness, we began with a definition. Chris Brauns defines forgiveness as "a commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated."[6] Jay Adams clearly explains that forgiveness involves making three promises to the one forgiven: not to use the offense against them in the future, not to bring the offense up with others, and not to dwell on the past offense myself.[7]

The Scriptures command believers to forgive as God has forgiven them in Christ (Eph 4:32). Forgiving others flows from the forgiveness each believer has experienced from God (Matt 18:21-35). It was also discussed how to approach a situation where there is an unwillingness to repent or an unwillingness to forgive (Matt 18:15-17). This section concluded with common questions about forgiveness.

In this session, suffering and trials and how God uses both in the life of a believer was discussed. The counselor must be careful to recognize each counselee is different and each counselee has different needs. Some counselees are disobedient needing correction and reproof, some are discouraged and need encouragement, and some are spiritually weak and need help, and all need patience (1 Thess 5:14).

In suffering, God calls each of us to live honestly and open with Him. The psalmist gives a beautiful example from Psalm 13. When suffering, we are to turn to the Lord with our struggles and receive grace and strength from Him (2 Cor 12:8-9). The counselee must learn to trust that God is sovereignly working to bring about good and using the circumstances to grow each of us in the likeness of His Son (Hab 3:17-19; Rom 8:28-19). Every sufferer needs a biblical view of God and an understanding of his own position in Christ.

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[6]Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 55.

[7]Jay Adams, *What Do You Do When Your Marriage Goes Sour?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1975).

Class Session 8: Marriage

Session 8 included a discussion about marriage, God's design for marriage, and how to encourage those whose marriages are not flourishing. Marriage was created and ordained by God. Marriage is not man's design. Properly understanding marriage requires going to the creation account and seeing marriage in its infancy (Gen 2:18, 2:23-25). It was also discussed how a good marriage is a worthy goal for the believer but it can also become idolatry when our marriages begin to mean more to us than our relationship with the Lord. Paul Tripp states, "A marriage of love, unity, and understanding will flow out of a daily worship of God as Creator."[8] Marriage is designed to help each spouse grow in the likeness of Christ in holiness and in love (Eph 5:1).

Marriage is important for the church's message of the gospel to an unbelieving world. In marriage, the world sees how Christ loved the church and sacrificially gave Himself for her through the actions and love of a husband toward his wife. The world also sees how the church loves and honors the Lord through the godliness of the wife toward her husband (Eph 5:22-33). God established marriage to be a lifelong covenant relationship between one man and one woman that is ended by death (Mal 2:10-17; 1 Tim 3:2). I discussed the concept of leaving and cleaving (Gen 2:24) and the importance of making the marriage the primary relationship above all others. I also discussed how to encourage a person who is suffering because of their spouse's behavior or decisions.

**Class Session 9: Roles of
Husband and Wife**

In session 9, the biblical roles of marriage, why it is important in our day, and how these tend to get distorted in our culture was taught. I began with a reminder that our ways are not God's ways and the Word calls us to be transformed, not conformed (Isa 55:8-9; Rom 12:2). We began our study with the creation account to begin to understand God's design for marriage and the individual roles of husband and wife. I also discussed

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[8]Paul Tripp, *What Did You Expect?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 36.

how the roles of husband and wife were grossly distorted by the fall of mankind (Gen 3:16).

The discussion of the role of husbands focused on three key areas. The first and foremost is the husband is to be a lover. This is a sacrificial love a man has for his wife that is modeled by the Lord's sacrificial love demonstrated from the cross of Calvary. Just as Christ initiated his love for the church so must the man be the initiator of love in the marriage. He must do this regardless of rejection by the wife and despite the faults of the wife. Second, the husband must be a student or learner of his wife (1 Pet 3:7). To live with a wife according to knowledge or in an understanding way involves learning how to encourage and comfort her daily. And finally, a husband must become a godly leader in his marriage. The biblical model is based upon the servanthood of Christ and is the opposite of a dictator. John Piper wisely states, "Headship is not a right to control or to abuse or to neglect (Christ's sacrifice is the pattern). Rather, it's the responsibility to love Christ in leading and protecting and providing for our wives and families."[9]

I also discussed the role of a godly wife. Just as with the roles of the husband, the role of the wife has also been distorted by the fall and by culture. The role of the wife was explained by discussing several biblical responsibilities for the wife. Carolyn Mahaney wisely states, "We don't look to our culture to find our feminine identity; we don't consult our feelings to discover our purpose. Everything that we are and everything that we do must be rooted in God."[10] The first responsibility for the wife is to complete her husband. This is an honorable position and is a term that often refers to God Himself (Pss 54:4, 30:10; 1 Sam 7:12; Heb 13:6). Biblical femininity is best pictured by a godly

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[9]John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 80.

[10]Carolyn Mahaney, "Femininity," in *Biblical Womanhood in the Home*, ed. Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 23.

wife standing beside her husband assisting him in the tasks God has given him to do.[11] The second responsibility for a wife is to follow her husband's leadership (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; Titus 3:5). The call to follow a husband's leadership is not a call for a wife to trust her husband, but to trust God to work through an imperfect husband (1 Pet 3:1-6). This type of submission is not unique to a wife, but is common for every believer as each one learns to submit to earthly authorities as well as the Lord. The ability, or inability, to submit reveals a person's spiritual maturity and character (John 14:15). Christ sets the perfect example of submission (John 6:38). And finally, a wife has a biblical command to honor her husband (Eph 5:33). Martha Peace explains, "This respect is not only an outward show, but also an inward heart's attitude of obedience to God."[12] Practical aspects of such respect and honor were also discussed.

Class Session 10: Pre-Marital Counseling
and Living with an Ungodly Spouse

In session 10, the topic was pre-marital counseling. Pre-marital counseling is different than regular marriage counseling because it is focused on prevention of problems rather than dealing with a specific problem. It is also different because couples in pre-marital counseling are not as open with their problems and in counseling just because they want to get married.

The goal of pre-marital counseling is to challenge the young couple to purpose to live for the glory of God, not only while they are single, but also in marriage (1 Cor 10:31). The counselor calls the young couple to a commitment to moral purity, personal holiness, and spiritual openness. The counselees are also challenged to see marriage as an opportunity for greater service for God and an opportunity for growing in maturity and faith in Christ.

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[11]Mahaney, "Femininity," 23.

[12]Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 1999), 109.

The topic of how to counsel someone living with an ungodly or a difficult spouse was also discussed. The key point for the counselee to understand is that God alone meets our deepest spiritual needs and each of us is complete in Him (Phil 4:11-13). When anyone gets their worth, value, significance, or acceptance apart from Christ, they are set up for spiritual defeat. The difficult spouse can be a non-believer or a believer not committed to living for the glory of God. Either way, the goal of the spouse is the same, to live for God's glory and to embrace the situation as a gift from God for their good. The focus must be on Christ. Hope comes when one's delight is not tied to the temporal but on the eternal purposes of God and the confidence that God is working all things according to His will and for good, bringing the godly spouse into the likeness of Christ (Eph 1:22; Rom 8:28-29).

**Class Session 11: Biblical Parenting
for the Glory of God**

In session 11, I discussed biblical parenting for the glory of God. The first principle discussed was that godly parents must understand that each and every child is a gift from God and that each parent is a steward before God based on how they raise their child. Parents are under the headship of Christ and are not the final authority of the child. Parents are agents of God and must direct their child for their good and on God's behalf.[13] Parenting is a wonderful platform for making disciples. Failure to teach the next generation was seen in Judges 2. After Joshua's death, "there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel" (Judg 2:10). This was a failure of a generation to train up the next generation in the ways of the Lord (Deut 6:6-7; Eph 6:4). Paul Tripp explains this as a "failure of the family to do what God intended it to do."[14]

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[13]Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding Your Child's Heart,* 2nd ed. (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2005), xix.

[14]Paul Tripp, *The Age of Opportunity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 40-41.

Christian families tend to err in one of two ways. They tend to be a parent-centered home or a child-centered home rather than a gospel-centered home. The parent-centered home revolves around the parents and can be driven by the pride of the parents. They are always right, they tend to be busy, demand control, and tend to be self-centered. Lou Priolo describes the child-centered home as "one in which a child believes and is allowed to behave as though the entire household, parents, siblings, and even pets exist for one purpose—to please him."[15] The goal of each family should be to cultivate and develop a home that is committed to living for the glory of God. This Christ-centered or gospel-centered home builds upon the truths of God's Word and growing relationships that are redemptive in nature. It is a home that ministers grace, demonstrates patience, models love, and is built upon serving and loving others. This is a home where the parents humbly teach the truths of God's Word, family members can admit when they fail, and family members seek forgiveness from other family members as appropriate.

And finally, I discussed the need for churches to grow in their sensitivity for single parents. Single parents need the spiritual support, encouragement, mentoring, and love from a church family that too often forgets them. How the church deals with these functional widows and orphans is a test of true spiritually (Jas 1:27).

**Class Session 12: Worry Fear
and Depression**

In session 12, I began with a discussion of how to counsel biblically those struggling with fear and worry. Fear and worry are part of living in a fallen and sin-cursed world. Fear and worry become sinful when they keep a believer from fulfilling his biblical responsibilities or prevent him from loving God and others properly. A person counseling one who struggles with fear and worry must recognize that there is a proper place for concern, such as the salvation of friends as demonstrated by Christ (Matt 23:37-

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[15]Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger: Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1997), 24.

38). There is also a proper fear for God and a proper respect for real danger (Prov 1:7; Job 41:33). The Bible commands each of us not to be anxious but to seek God in prayer, allow peace to guard our hearts, and think on things that are true and worthy of praise (Phil 4:6). The counselee must also understand that one of the purposes that Christ came was to deliver us from the ultimate fear, the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15). An improper view of God not only reveals our heart but also may be the source of fear. Priolo states, "Fear is sinful when it attributes to God characteristics that are inconsistent with His nature. When Christians are afraid, it is almost certainly because they have a misperception of God."[16] A counselee must grow to understand and embrace that God loves us, He has a plan for each of us, and we can trust Him in His goodness and sovereignty. And finally, a counselee must have a proper understanding of himself and others.

Also in this session, it was discussed how to help those suffering with depression. We briefly discussed the short comings of a secular approach and diagnosis. Then I discussed the importance of understanding the counselee and the depth of their depression. The counselee needs to be allowed to express his frustrations and disappointments while a counselor demonstrates patience in data gathering. This type of counselee will normally require more time, patience, and prayer than other counseling situations. Hope and help for the depressed person can only come in a relationship with Christ. They must be offered hope in responding to the difficulties of life in a biblical manner as they learn to think like Christ and be empowered by Christ (Rom 6:11; Phil 4:8). The depressed person must also consider that his responses to his depression may be less than godly and may have complicated his situation. Examples of these ungodly responses include when worry dominates the thought life or when guilt is not resolved and becomes oppressive (Matt 6:33-34; Prov 28:13). And finally, the goal of a depressed

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[16]Lou Priolo, *Fear Breaking Its Grip* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 8.

person must not to be to feel better or become normal, but to live life for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

Class Session 13: Anger and Pride

In session 13, I discussed anger and how to counsel angry people biblically. This is a significant issue today as it effects marriages, parenting, harmony in the church, and every single relationship. In the local church, sinful anger is often excused and usually misunderstood, but the ultimate damage of anger is that is robs God of His glory (Num 20:9-12).

Robert Jones has wisely defined anger: "Our anger is our whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against perceived evil."[17] I discussed each element of his definition as well as the difference between sinful anger and righteous anger. The class also discussed God's righteous anger and Christ's anger as well.

To deal with sinful anger effectively, we must honestly acknowledge there is an emotional component. Confession and repentance of sinful anger must be followed by a crying out for God's mercy and empowering grace. A counselee must examine his own heart and motives and discern what he is really worshiping. There must also be a growing awareness of the sovereignty of God and a growing trust in God sovereignly working, even in the most difficult circumstances.

The sin of pride was also discussed. Pride is the essence of all sin and is the most serious sin of them all. When a person is prideful he is most like the devil himself, and experiences the resistance of God (Isa 12:12-14; 1 Pet 5:5). Charles Bridges states that pride "keeps back the heart from God. It lifts up the heart against him. It speaks, as if contending the supremacy with him."[18] In each of our hearts there exists pride, it is really

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[17]Robert D. Jones. *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2005) 15.

[18]Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of the Book of Proverbs* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1865), 199-200.

just a question of how much. Although pride has many forms, in the end it is ultimately about self-gratification (Jas 4:6). God's affection, however, is directed toward the humble and contrite of heart (Isa 66:2; Ps 51:16-17).

C. J. Mahaney defines humility as "honestly accessing ourselves in the light of God's holiness and our sinfulness."[19] A good place to start to grow in humility, and to assist a counselee as well, is by studying the attributes of God. As we grow in our understanding of God, His holiness and perfections, and our dependence upon Him for everything, we come to an honest evaluation of our own self. As a counselee grows in his understanding of the great spiritual distance between God's holiness and his performance, he begins to experience and express more humility.

Questionnaire and Evaluation

Weeks 14 and 15, the final two weeks of the project, consisted of the administration of the post-seminar questionnaire for each participant. This questionnaire was identical to the pre-seminar questionnaire except for the addition of three questions. The questions were:

1. What were the strengths of this class?

2. What are three things that could have been done better?

3. Were the notes helpful or a distraction? The results of the questionnaire and student evaluations will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusions

The class sessions began on Thursday June 1, 2017, and concluded on September 14, 2017, for a total of thirteen sessions. There were no classes between July 13 and July 27 to allow me to teach a biblical counseling class at Doane Baptist Seminary in Iloilo City, Iloilo, Philippines.

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[19]C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2005), 22.

The comments of the students were encouraging during the class sessions. There is a need in our community and surrounding area for this type of training for Christian lay leaders and pastors.

The following chapter contains a thorough evaluation of this project.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, AND REFLECTION
ON THE PROJECT

This chapter is an analysis and evaluation of this project as well as a personal

reflection. The assessment of this project covers six areas. First is an evaluation of the

purpose of this project and the need for an understanding of the sufficiency of the

Scriptures in personal ministry. Second, the goals of the project are evaluated. Third is an

evaluation and explanation of the research data. Fourth, the strengths and weaknesses of

the project are discussed. The fifth section discusses the theological reflections on what

was learned in the process of this project. And finally, are personal observations on this

project and the biblical counseling ministry of this church.

Evaluation of Project Purpose

Before the establishment of Grace Biblical Counseling in 2010, as a ministry

of Shawnee Bible Church, there were no certified biblical counselors in the area. There

were only five biblical counselors in the entire state. It seemed that lay people seeking

counseling wanted biblical counsel. However, it appeared that the leadership of the

Southern Baptists and local pastors were resistant to the concept of biblical counseling.

Oklahoma Baptist University, only three miles away, is owned by the Baptist General

Convention of Oklahoma and has taken a position against biblical counseling. They are

currently growing their counseling program and are in the process of building a new

facility just off the OBU campus.

The purpose of this project was to begin to restore a confidence in the

sufficiency of the Scriptures for the soul care of God's people in other churches,

specifically Southern Baptists, in this area. This project is the beginning of a bigger

vision of Grace Biblical Counseling becoming a certified training center for the purpose of equipping pastors and key leaders from churches in and around the area. Several local pastors were invited to be part of this project and four attended, two of which were Southern Baptist. Some seemed to have genuine conflicts, but I sensed most did not see their responsibility for this type of ministry. While frustrated, I understand. I, too, was initially one of these men.

It is abundantly clear that a biblical counseling class was needed and will be well received in the future. The pastors attending the class knew of friends in the ministry that would be interested in the future. There was also an excitement as I explained the plans to expand the training beyond this project. Several suggested Saturday workshops from time to time and to teach on specific counseling topics. This ministry will gain momentum as word spreads among the pastors in the area.

Evaluation of Project Goals

Five goals evaluated the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to challenge a group of pastors, denominational leaders, elders, deacons, and other key leaders of local Southern Baptist churches, to embrace the concept and basic principles of biblical counseling. Many of these men have been trained in seminaries that taught them to refer counseling cases to secular mental health professionals while focusing on the public ministry of the Word. They have never been challenged to embrace a full-orbed ministry of the Word, which includes not only public proclamation but also personal ministry. Through this project, the pastors were exposed to personal ministry beyond the pulpit. The key laymen involved grew in their understanding of the importance of building their lives and personal ministry around the wisdom of the Word of God. Both groups were exposed to the biblical principles of a counseling ministry as well as the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

The second goal was for the participants to learn the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and establish a confidence in the use of the Scriptures in counseling.

Most, if not all, of the Southern Baptist church leaders would whole-heartily embrace the inerrancy of the Scriptures but have not been challenged on the sufficiency of the Scriptures. In the training sessions, the Scriptures' own arguments for their sufficiency were explored. Both the pastors and key laymen developed a vision for their churches developing counseling ministries. Although it was disappointing to only have two Southern Baptist pastors, I see this as an important start in penetrating a resistant group in a positive way. Only time will tell what God will do with this group.

The third goal was that the participants reject the mixing of biblical truth with secular psychological theory as acceptable for God's people. The participants were challenged from the Scriptures to embrace the Scriptures, not only as an adequate source of counsel, but as a far superior source than that which the world has to offer. They were also challenged to reject the secular philosophies of the world that have crept into the church in the area of counseling. The third goal may have been the most difficult to achieve. It became obvious during some of the discussions that the current culture's love for the psychological understanding of man and man's behavior has permeated even the culture of the local churches. This goal was partially achieved as participants were taught from a biblical perspective on counseling topics that they previously understood as mainly psychological issues. The class began to see an active heart influencing behavior rather than some psychological anomaly.

The fourth goal was to promote the return of soul care to the domain of the local church from the secular psychological community and the Christian counselors who are integrating psychological error with biblical truth. Through the exposure of the counseling materials, it was hoped that participants would be convicted by the Word of God and return to their flocks with a greater commitment to deal with individuals who were previously ignored or referred outside the local church. Students in the class were called to embrace a two-fold ministry of the Word of God. The first involves the public proclamation of the Word and the second is the individual ministry of the Word that

87

would include discipleship and biblical counseling. The fourth goal was achieved as many in the class discovered that the Bible addresses many issues that they previously considered purely psychological in nature. Most, if not all, of the participants entered the project with an understanding of the inerrancy of the Scriptures but had never been challenged with the sufficiency of the Scriptures. They also began to understand that many times in culture, both inside and outside the church, biblical nomenclature changes to psychological labels. For example, drunkards become alcoholics.

The fifth goal was personal. I hoped as a counselor and a pastor to become more effective in teaching and defending biblical counseling with those who have had limited exposure to biblical counseling. Many committed Christians and church leaders do not understand the difference between biblical counseling and an integrational approach, nor do they understand the concept of the sufficiency of the Scriptures. This project was also an opportunity for me to grow in the areas of teaching ability, patience, and persuasiveness. I underestimated the preparation time required and sometimes wished I had had more time to prepare. I was also encouraged by the depth of things coming from my mouth during the lectures that came from the years of experience in the counseling room. Another area was also one of growth. I discovered I need to grow in my understanding of biblical counseling to graciously challenge its opponents. I am learning not to be argumentative and to grow in patience (2 Tim 2:24–26).

Evaluation of Research Data

The participants' pre-class and post-class questionnaire responses are recorded in appendix 3 and appendix 4.[1] Only the responses of those who completed the class were included. Each participant was asked to complete the pre-questionnaire on the first evening of class. The participants completed the post-questionnaire after the completion of the

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[1]Dr. John Nichols provided technical assistance in analyzing the data and generating the graphics.

course. Both questionnaires consisted of three sections with an additional section on the post-questionnaire.

The first section gathered general data. It asked for the participant's name, how long they have been a Christian, how long they have been in church leadership, and their age. This section was only given on the pre-questionnaire with the exception of the name of the participant.

Table 1. Section 1 questionnaire responses

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
Number of Years as Believer		1	1		10
Number of Years in Ministry	5			1	6
Age (Average)	47				

The second section asked each participant to select a pastor's four most important responsibilities from twelve duties listed. The analysis showed that there is no significant difference in the seminar members' opinions of the pastor's primary responsibilities when measured before the seminar and after the seminar. This is not surprising since the purpose of the seminar was not to inform the participants of the roles of a pastor, but rather to inform the participant about biblical counseling. The class was older, the average age was 47, and all had had some exposure to biblical counseling. For this reason, they had a better understanding of the role of a pastor than the average church member. The slight variations are displayed in figure 1.

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of fourteen questions that were posed to the class participants on a Likert scale concerning who they would refer a counselee to for counseling for fourteen different counseling situations. They were to choose between a professional mental health worker and a pastor or biblical counselor. Their answers were analyzed using a matched pair one-tailed t-test for an increase in their preference for referring to a biblical counselor. The average of each participant's responses

was examined and the change in pre-seminar and post-seminar for each individual were analyzed.

Figure 2 represents the sum of all the questions asked and demonstrates that there was a statistically significant increase in the participant's preference to refer to a biblical counselor. Specifically, (1) the minimal mean value increased from 3.21 to 4.00; (2) the first quartile value (the 25 percent value) increased from 3.965 to 4.465; (3) the median value (the 50 percent value) increased from 4.25 to 4.75; and (4) the third quartile value (the 75 percent value) increased from 4.75 to 4.86.

With a 1 percent significance level (99 percent confidence level), the data showed there was indeed a statistically significant increase in the desire to use a biblical counselor. Using a standard "before minus after" approach to the analysis, an increase in the desire to use a biblical counselor would be expressed as a negative value. This increase in the desire to use a biblical counselor is illustrated in figures 2 and 3, and table 2.
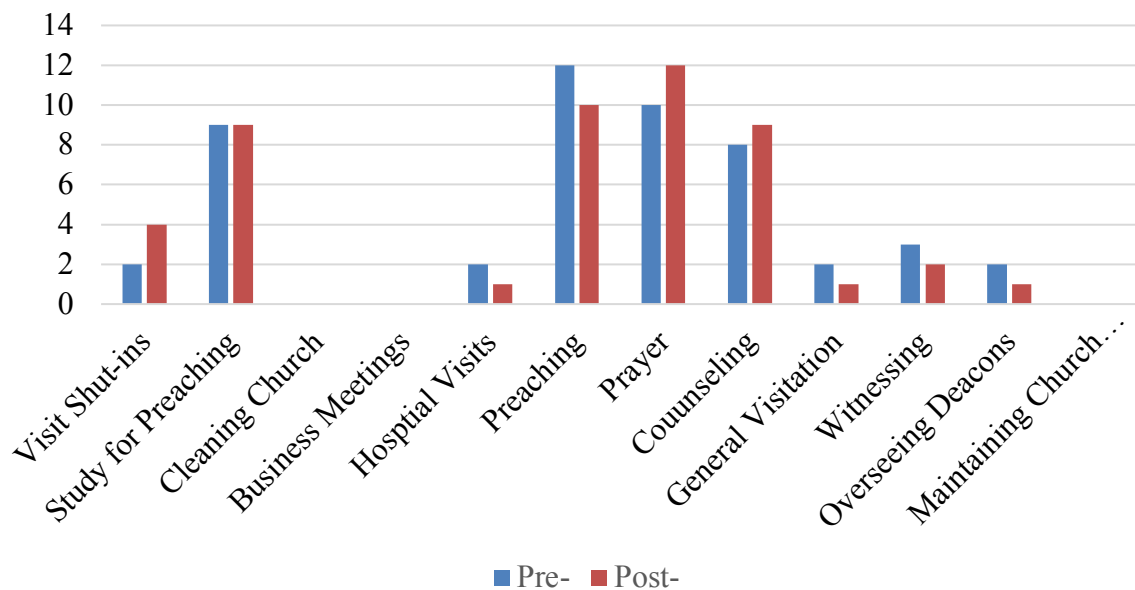
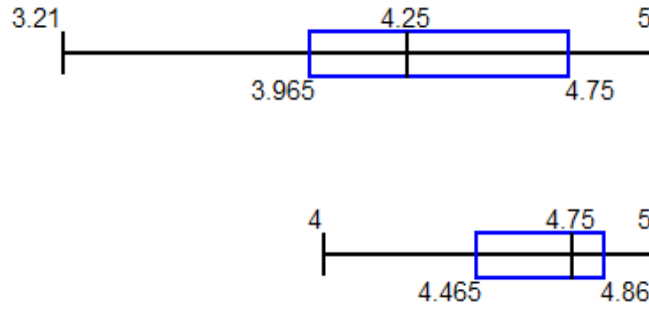

Figure 1. Pastor's primary responsibilities

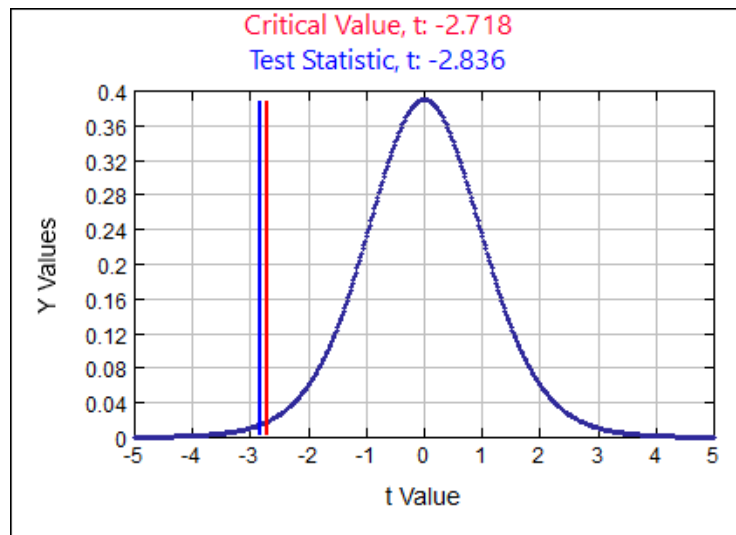Figure 2. Box plot for desire to use a biblical counselor

Figure 3. One tailed t-test for an increase in the desire to use a biblical counselor

Table 2. One tailed t-test data

Alternative Hypothesis, $\mu_d < 0$
Sample size, n = 12
Difference Mean, $d_{\bar{x}} = -0.405$
Difference St. Dev., $s_{\bar{x}} = 0.4946$
Test Statistic, t = −2.8364
Critical t = −2.7181
p-Value: p = 0.0081
98% Confidence interval: $-0.7931 < \mu_d < -0.0169$

As part of the analysis, box plots for the differences in the responses to each of the individual questions were prepared. These are illustrated in figures 4 and 5. Within figures 4 and 5, the differences in answers to questions 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 were so concentrated that the "quartiles box" was not meaningful. The rest of the questions showed a scattering of differences in answers that the "quartiles box" was meaningful. Also, the box plots show a strong increase in desire to use a biblical counselor.
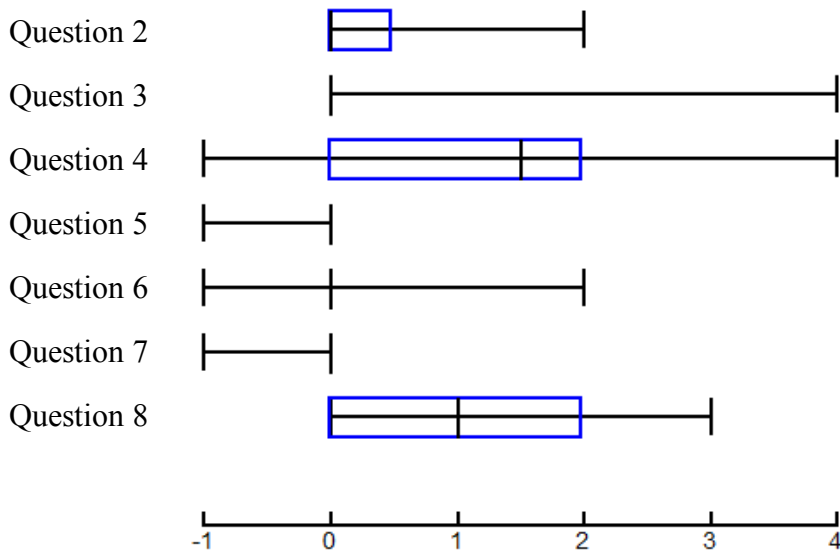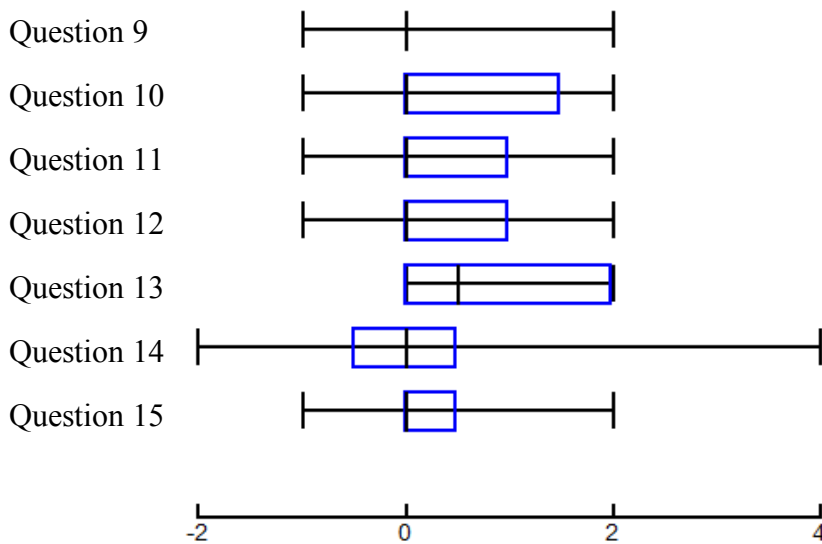

Figure 4. Box plots for questions 2-8

Figure 5. Box plots for questions 9-15

92

Males and females at times perceive reality different. The data was analyzed to determine the male-female bias. The class consisted of eight females and six males. The results of the data analysis are illustrated below in figure 6 and table 3. The blue test statistic line is well outside the critical area and well within the area of randomness, thus implying that male–female differences are merely due to the natural randomness of human opinions. Thus, with 5 percent significance (95 percent confidence), the conclusion is that there is not enough evidence to indicate a statistically significant male–female bias in referring individuals to a biblical counselor.
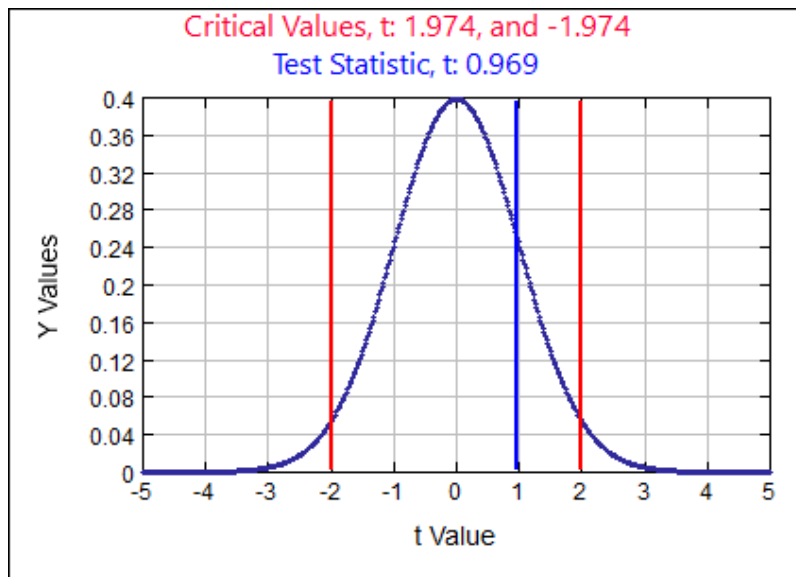

Figure 6. One tailed t-test for male–female bias

Table 3. One tailed t-test data for male–female bias

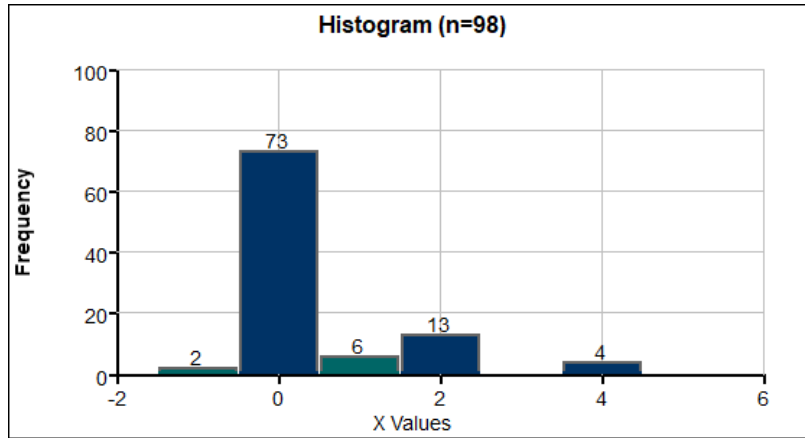| |
|---|
| Alternative Hypothesis, $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ |
| Test Statistic, $t = 0.9695$ |
| Critical $t = \pm 1.9744$ |
| p-Value $= 0.3337$ |
| Degrees of freedom $= 166$ |
| 95% Confidence Interval, $-0.1607 < \mu_1 - \mu_2 < 0.4709$ |

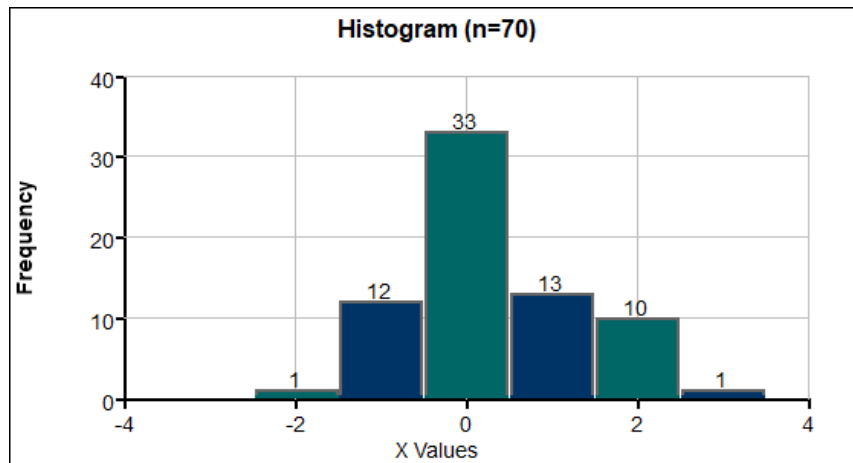Figure 7. Female distribution of changes in opinion

Figure 8. Male distribution of changes in opinion

The post-questionnaire was identical to the previous questionnaire with the addition of three questions in the third section. The first question was, "What do you see as the strengths of these presentations?" The most common answer given was related to the content of the lectures and the outlines provided. These comments included the helpfulness of the additional resources listed at the end of each section. There was also an appreciation for the emphasis on the Scriptures, good applicable illustrations from actual counseling cases, and an emphasis on the heart as the core of the problem. Several comments mentioned the sufficiency of the Scriptures to address the issues of life as well as the broad range of biblical counseling topics discussed.

The second question was, "What is the weakness of these presentations?" Several did not answer this question. Some stated not sure or simply fine. Almost a third of the participants suggested the classes be longer or allow for more time for each of the topics covered. One pointed out that the Power Points and the notes did not always match and one suggested the additional resources listed be available for them to examine or even purchase.

The third question was, "Were the notes helpful or a distraction?" Without exception, all stated the notes were helpful. Several commented they would refer back to the class notes to further consider or review the material. One responded that the notes helped move the class along. Following this question, many filled in additional positive comments and expressed appreciation for the class.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

The major strength of the project was the importance of personal ministry or biblical counseling to everyone in attendance. These committed believers have been serving in local churches and para-church ministries for many years. They came with an understanding of personal ministry and grew in an appreciation for the sufficiency of the Word of God and grew in their desire to learn more.

A second strength was the class handouts and PowerPoint presentations. It was clear from the first session that there was too much information to be covered in the time allotted. The handouts had additional resources for the participants if they desired additional information on any specific topic. Also, the handouts allowed the students to take notes with minimal effort, just filling in a blank here and there.

The third strength was a developing vision for many of the participants to take biblical counseling back to their local churches. Although most, if not all, of the participants had been previously exposed to biblical counseling, the training gave each a greater confidence in the Word of God. They were eager to learn and asked good questions.

Another strength of the project was the interaction in the class. The interaction was not limited to the class time because participants came early and lingered after class to discuss and ask questions. Their excitement was an encouragement for me to continue to grow and expand the teaching ministry of GBC. The excitement also renewed my vision to see biblical counseling expand in the area.

A final strength as expressed by a few of the students was an interest in pursuing certification through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). This was encouraging for a couple of reasons. Those who continue in their training will grow personally and in their ability to minister to hurting people. They will bring the sufficiency of the Scriptures to their local churches where it is desperately needed. Second, there is a shortage of biblical counselors in the state of Oklahoma, only seven according to the current ACBC website.[2] The need far exceeds the demand. It is not uncommon for this office to receive calls from across the state and discover the closest certified counselor is several hours away.

By far the greatest weakness in the project was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed for a class that had little previous exposure to biblical counseling and measuring their confidence in the Scriptures in counseling before and after the project. However, most of these students had previous exposure to biblical counseling. Two had attended seminary classes, six had been counselees, and a two had attended the annual Biblical Counseling Training Conference at Faith Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Due to their extensive past exposure to biblical counseling, the survey did not demonstrate the extreems that should have been present if the students did not have the previous exposure to biblical counseling.

The other weakness was the length of time for the sessions. The outline used for the class will be developed into a thirty-nine-hour course for the purpose of preparing

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[2]Association of Certified Biblical Counseling, "Counselors," accessed November 6, 2017, https://biblicalcounseling.com/counselors/.

counselors to pursue certification with ACBC. However, for this course, it was too much material to cover in thirteen sessions of an hour and half each week.

Theological Reflections

One of the reasons Christians seek out secular counselors or integrationists rather than their local pastor is because, unfortunately, many pastors are not competent to do biblical counseling. They have been taught, either formally or by culture, that counseling is not their responsibility. Rather than promoting the sufficiency of the Word of God, they promote the secular counselor as the one with the answers to life's problems. Also, as the only pastor in a small local church, I understand the limitations of time and the competing duties of teaching and sermon preparation. To be an effective biblical counselor requires the pastor to read, study, and adequately prepare for counseling. Also, in today's culture, many counselees with issues want quick answers and the prospect of working on a problem that requires spiritual growth is not appealing. There is a lack of desire to read, study, and memorize the Word of God by the counselee as sanctification projects. Due to the lack of commitment on the part of the couselee, it is easy for the pastor or biblical counselor to become discouraged and give up the counseling ministry. However, it is my firm conviction that there is not a more important aspect of the local church pastor than personal ministry. If a man cannot minister one-on-one, what business does he have in the pulpit?

The Scriptures should never be limited to the pulpit or the Sunday school class, but should be used in a mighty way in personal ministry. The apostle Paul affirmed this two-fold ministry when he stated, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). The local church must rediscover this use of the Word for spiritual growth and maturity of its members and the health of her ministry.

Personal Reflections

I remember in the late 1990s sitting in my study as a new pastor. I was struggling with how to help some of individuals in my church. I had a commitment to the sufficiency of the Scriptures and no idea how to help either of them. It is rewarding to teach the very principles I desired to learn not that many years ago. It is also humbling. The more I grow, the more I am aware of how little I really know. I have a growing awareness of my own inadequacies and my own need of God's grace in my own life. It delights my heart to see what God is doing in this work.

The more experience I have in counseling the more I recognize the blind spots that have hindered my marriage, personal relationships, and ministry. The subtle nature of my own sin becomes more and more apparent as I see similar issues in a counselee sitting across the counseling table. As the counselee grows in grace, so do I. To God be the glory for His work on both sides of the table.

Conclusions

The training in biblical counseling was conducted in the summer of 2017, after a considerable amount of training and personal preparation. In the previous sections, there was an attempt to measure the effect of the training on the participants in a quantitative way. The previous sections are also an attempt to personalize and summarize the impact of this project on my life and ministry as well as the lives of the participants. In many ways, only God really knows the long-term effects of this training on my life and in the lives of the participants. God's Word goes out and accomplishes what God purposes and succeeds in what He desires (Isa 55:11).

In my counseling ministry, I have had numerous opportunities to lead people to faith in Christ. I have had opportunities to share biblical truth to members of the community whom I have never met when they call our listing in the yellow pages as a counseling center. In the process, God has seen fit to save souls and bring men and women into His church.

It stirs my soul for God to allow me to see Him work in the life of a counselee through the ministry of the Word. It excites me to see our church becoming known in the community as a place they can receive biblical help. A good percentage of the current counselees have come by word of mouth from others who have received help in our church in the past. I cannot imagine a greater way to spend my life, than doing this work.

APPENDIX 1

PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR CLASS PARTICIPANTS

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate in is designed to measure your confidence in the sufficiency of the Scriptures for biblical counseling and your understanding in the role of the local church in the area of counseling. The research is being conducted by Mike Massey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will be asked to answer a series of questions before we begin training. 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.

The first section of this questionnaire will obtain some demographic information about the people taking this class.

1. Please write your name: _____

2. Circle the number of years since you came to faith in Christ:
    1-5 years   6-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   20+

3. Circle the number of years you have been in church leadership:
    1-5 years   6-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   20+

4. Your age: _____

Directions: The second section of this questionnaire is designed to gain your opinions about counseling and ministry. Please answer each question as honestly as you can.

1. From the list below, what are a pastor's four most important ministries? (Please choose only four)

    ☐ Visiting shut-ins   ☐ Hospital visits   ☐ General visitation
    ☐ Studying for preaching   ☐ Preaching   ☐ Witnessing
    ☐ Cleaning the church   ☐ Prayer   ☐ Overseeing deacons
    ☐ Business meetings   ☐ Counseling   ☐ Maintaining church
                                                            property

Using the following scale, please write the number that best corresponds to whom you would refer the individual described to. For example, if you would definitely refer the individual to a professional mental health worker such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or professional counselor your answer would be 1. If you would definitely refer this person to a pastor or biblical counselor you should choose 5. If you would be comfortable referring the individual to either one, you should choose 3. 2 and 4 show a preference.

1	2	3	4	5
Professional Mental Health Worker				Pastor or Biblical Counselor

___ 2. To whom would you refer a person who is considering suicide.

___ 3. To whom would you refer a member of your church to who is suffering from alcoholism?

___ 4. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with bi-polar disorder?

___ 5. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with depression?

___ 6. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with a sexual addiction?

___ 7. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with anger?

___ 8. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with anorexia and bulimia issues?

___ 9. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with drunkenness?

___ 10. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with anxiety disorder?

___ 11. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with obsessive-compulsive disorder?

___ 12. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with post-traumatic stress disorder?

___ 13. To whom would you refer a child to for help with A. D. H. D.?

___ 14. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with a drug addiction?

___ 15. To whom would you refer a Christian to for help with panic disorder?

APPENDIX 2

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the effectiveness of the instructor in teaching on the subject of biblical counseling. The research is being conducted by Mike Massey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project.

The following questions apply to each session since the last instructor evaluation. Your candid observations will be most helpful.

1. What do you see as the strengths of these presentations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What is the weakness of these presentations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What would you suggest change prior to these presentations being done again?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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ABSTRACT

RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN THE SUFFICIENCY OF
THE SCRIPTURES FOR THE SOUL CARE OF GOD'S
PEOPLE IN SELECTED SOUTHERN BAPTIST
CHURCHES IN SHAWNEE, OKLAHOMA

John Michael Massey, Sr., D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Heath B. Lambert

This project was designed to train key lay people and pastors from local Southern Baptist Churches in understanding the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and the basics of biblical counseling. It also exposed them to the basics of biblical counseling.

Chapter 2 is the biblical rational for the sufficiency of Scriptures. Several key passages were discussed.

Chapter 3 is a discussion of the history of biblical counseling from the Puritans to the present day. The drift from a biblical understanding of man to a psychologized view of man and sin was discussed.

Chapter 4 explains the implementation of the project. The training schedule is discussed session by session.

Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the impact on those participating in the training. The strengths and weaknesses of the class are discussed.

VITA

John Michael Massey, Sr.

EDUCATIONAL
        B.A., Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 1991
        M.Div., The Criswell College, 2000
        M.A.B.C., The Master's College, 2014

MINISTERIAL
        Pastor, Gatewood Baptist Church, Garland, Texas, 1998-2000
        Counselor, International Center of Biblical Counseling, Sioux City, Iowa, 2000-2001
        Pastor, Anchorage Bible Church, Anchorage, Alaska, 2002-2006
        Chaplain, Anchorage Police Department, Anchorage, Alaska, 2004-2007
        Pastor, Community Bible Church, Trafalgar, Indiana, 2007-2009
        Pastor, Shawnee Bible Church, Shawnee, Oklahoma, 2010-
        Director, Grace Biblical Counseling, Shawnee, Oklahoma, 2010-

ACADEMIC
        Adjunct Faculty, National Theological College and Graduate School, Cairo, Egypt, 2009
        Adjunct Faculty, National Theological College and Graduate School, Dhour Choueir, Lebanon, 2010

ORGANIZATIONAL
        Association of Certified Biblical Counselors
        International Association of Biblical Counselors
        American Academy of Biblical Counselors