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PROMOTING THE VALUE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING  
THROUGH TRAINING MEMBERS OF PALMETTO  
BAPTIST CHURCH, EASLEY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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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  
Joshua David Stephens  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

PROMOTING THE VALUE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING  
THROUGH TRAINING MEMBERS OF PALMETTO  
BAPTIST CHURCH, EASLEY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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## PREFACE

I am thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to have studied in the Doctor of Ministry program at Southern Seminary. During my ministry and schooling, many individuals have contributed in a variety of ways to allow me to pursue becoming more proficient in biblical counseling.

First, I would like to thank my previous church family at Community Baptist Church for the opportunity of being their shepherd in the faith for seventeen years. They not only allowed me the privilege of shepherding, but also encouraged counseling ministry in the church and community, and the pursuit of further education to strengthen the counseling ministry. I am thankful for both the financial and spiritual support that I received from the congregation over the years. Now that God has called me to a new ministry, I look back with thankfulness for the many years God gave me to contribute to the body of believers at Community Baptist Church.

Second, I am forever grateful to the Lord for my friend and mentor Dr. Tom Zempel, who has now gone to be with the Lord. My first exposure to biblical counseling came because of his faithful service of promoting a biblical counseling/discipleship ministry. I am thankful for his grace and kindness as he instructed me to become a more effective biblical counselor. It was through Dr. Zempel's influence that I was exposed to biblical counseling and gained an appreciation of how the Scripture spoke to all the challenges one faces on earth.

Third, I want to thank the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professors for the quality of their teaching. Having had the opportunity to be ministered to in class by Dr. Stuart Scott, Dr. Jeremy Pierre, and Dr. Robert Jones was a special delight during my education. Each of them contributed in different ways to the sharpening of both my

understanding and practice of biblical counseling. I especially want to say thank you to Dr. Jeremy Pierre for being doctoral supervisor for my project and for the time he spent encouraging me.

Fourth, I want to say a special thank you to the regional board of the Biblical Counseling Alliance. Each of these members not only spent time evaluating the project material, but also gave critiques month to month for the curriculum to be sharpened further.

Fifth, I want to thank our children, Autumn, Micah, Alees, Anika, and Malachi, for being so gracious to allow their father the engage in the process of further education. Many times they wanted me to be home with them but demonstrated kindness and patience through the process.

Sixth, I would also like to say a special thank you to the leadership and congregation of Palmetto Baptist Church, who have been so gracious in the process of ministry transition. I thank the Lord for the opportunity to serve this church and contribute to the care of its members.

The seventh and most important individual I desire to thank is my wife, Michelle. The countless hours of encouragement, patience, and love she has shown to me is something I could ever repay. I have thanked the Lord repeatedly for the godly companion he has given to me. She sacrificed in countless ways for me and our family, and we are forever grateful to the Lord for her. Without her sacrifice, the degree and this project would not have been accomplished. I cannot thank her enough for her support and encouragement.

Josh Stephens

Easley, South Carolina

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Biblical Counseling Alliance (BCA) is to promote biblical sufficiency, assist toward certification, facilitate training opportunities, and develop interactive focus groups to strengthen churches, individuals, and parachurch ministries in the Upper Midwest.<sup>1</sup> The BCA is seeking to equip its members using interactive focus groups that emphasize the importance of biblical counseling. Living in a highly psychologized culture, churches and individuals often direct people to integrational or secular orientated help for their problems. Since the Bible affirms man's need for truth and continued guidance in the midst of a fallen world people should be directed to find help in the Scripture (Rom 3:10-12, Eph 4:15-24). Because the Bible is sufficient for counseling, the BCA desires to equip its members for more effective biblical counseling within their ministry contexts.

#### **Context**

The BCA officially became an organization in January 2016, as a result of the efforts of three local churches committed to biblical counseling. As the group of pastors, laypeople, and biblical counselors began to meet and discuss the necessity of biblical counseling, a common concern arose: a lack of exposure and equipping toward biblical counseling within our region in Minnesota as well as some churches in the Upper Midwest. Each of the ministries within the group were facing the challenge of helping people amidst a psychologized culture and not everyone in the group would be going back to a church

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<sup>1</sup> Biblical Counseling Alliance, "Purpose Statement," accessed June 8, 2016, <https://www.biblicalcounselingalliance.org/purpose-corevalues.html>.

that understood biblical counseling. As a result of these gatherings, a core group of leaders began to think about how to address the lack of equipping within many of the churches in the area of biblical counseling. The conversations led to the formation of an organization and an agenda was created to assist the deficit found in the area of biblical counseling. The BCA decided that one of the mechanisms it would use to equip its members in the area of biblical counseling would be the creation of interactive focus groups. The interactive focus groups consisted of members of the BCA who desired to be more thoroughly equipped to counsel/disciple others within their respective ministries. As part of this project, an introductory biblical counseling curriculum was created to equip the members of the BCA for biblical counseling/discipleship. The BCA currently has four supporting churches with fifteen members from each and five individual members. Membership to the association continues to be promoted and BCA board of directors hopes to see increased membership over the upcoming year in order to equip even more pastors, laypeople, and counselors in biblical counseling.

### **Concern 1**

Secular psychology has become commonplace in the life of Christians and churches. The psychological well-being of people in the culture is now equally as important as the physical well-being. From mainstream media to public education, nearly everyone has been affected by the many psychological principles that are unscriptural in nature. Parents are often faced with having to decide whether a problem is spiritual or physiological with their children. Depression, bipolar, panic attacks, and other mental disorders continually appear in the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM)* of disorders every year.<sup>2</sup> A chemical imbalance has become an all too common diagnosis resulting in

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<sup>2</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV-TR* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

a highly medicated culture.<sup>3</sup> The BCA sought to equip its members to a more biblical evaluation of these issues and the foundations they are built upon by equipping them through the interactive focus groups.

## **Concern 2**

The BCA also desires to equip Christian counselors with a growing ability to discern between secular and biblical counsel. Believers face a unique time in which many have integrated secular psychology with the Bible.<sup>4</sup> This integration has resulted in Christian counselors that are Christian in name, but secular in ideology and methodology.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, many Christians inside and outside the church see the title of Christian counseling and assume that the philosophy and methodology come from the Bible. Even some pastors continue to embrace an integrational model of counseling. Some pastors will even send their congregants out to a secular professional counselor because they do not feel adequately trained for such a task. This has resulted in a lack of shepherding to people concerning issues the Bible speaks about clearly. It has also produced a lack of equipping of lay people for the task of counseling/discipleship by the pastors because they believe this is a job for the professional. The BCA desires to equip its members to reduce this concern by teaching and instructing with content that consistently reflects Scriptures authority and sufficiency.

## **Concern 3**

The BCA desires to equip its members with a biblical process of change. Along with the discipleship process, there is confusion regarding a biblical methodology

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence C. Rubin, *Psychotropic Drugs and Popular Culture: Essays on Medicine, Mental Health and the Media* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 2.

<sup>4</sup> David Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 24-34.

<sup>5</sup> Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," 24.

in helping people replace sinful habits with godly ones. Often, ministry leaders seek to help bring lasting change without targeting the heart motivation that drives different behaviors.<sup>6</sup> As a result, biblical repentance is often misdirected on the heart level or the behavioral level. The BCA sought to correct this misunderstanding of biblical change in order that they might become more effective counselors for God's glory.

#### **Concern 4**

The BCA desires to equip its members so that they will be able help develop a community of counselors within their ministries.<sup>7</sup> Biblical counsel is usually given on two different levels within a community of believers. The first level is the informal level. This level concerns normal relationships that are continually being fostered in the body. It can take place at coffee shops, home meetings, phone calls, and other opportunities. Then, there is the formal level. This level usually occurs as congregants are actively involved in counseling others in the body or outside the body who are seeking to address very specific challenges in their life and need a more intensive form of discipleship. Even if Christians are not counseling at the formal level of counseling, they are likely counseling on the informal level. The BCA has taken into consideration these concerns and is seeking to address them through the creation of curriculum to equip the members of the BCA toward more effective biblical counseling.

#### **Rationale**

The concerns mentioned highlight the difficulties facing the members of the BCA that come from both outside and inside the church. By developing lessons that address these concerns, the BCA partnered with Palmetto Baptist Church to help increase

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<sup>6</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 59, Kindle.

<sup>7</sup> Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson, eds., *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 121-35.

the knowledge and appreciation of biblical counseling at Palmetto Baptist Church. The lessons provided opportunity for the BCA to help Palmetto Baptist Church members increase their understanding of the Bible and value its sufficiency for all of life's challenges.<sup>8</sup> The teaching sought to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the importance of biblical counseling to the members of Palmetto Baptist Church and increase their confidence in the Scripture's ability to speak to life's challenges.

The lessons developed for the project included the following topics: the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, the heart as the target and focus of worship, the goal of biblical change in discipleship/counseling, the biblical process of change, understanding biblical forgiveness, and applying biblical forgiveness. The lessons addressed introductory issues to help increase knowledge and awareness of biblical counseling principles in the Scripture.

The content of the lessons was given in lecture format during the adult class hour at Palmetto Baptist Church. The BCA helped increase the knowledge and appreciation of biblical counseling for the members of Palmetto Baptist Church.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture in biblical counseling within a local church context by training members of Palmetto Baptist Church to value God's Word as a sufficient source for moving others toward Christlikeness.

### **Goals**

The following three goals reflect the essential stages by which the purpose of this project was accomplished.

1. The first goal was to assess the current level of understanding of biblical counseling within the members at Palmetto Baptist Church.

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<sup>8</sup> Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," 24-34.

2. The second goal of this project was to develop a six-week biblical counseling curriculum for the members at Palmetto Baptist Church.
3. The third goal of this project was to raise the knowledge of biblical counseling among members at Palmetto Baptist Church by implementing the six-week curriculum.

Decisive research methodology measured when these three goals were accomplished. The following section details the method of measuring the success of each goal.<sup>9</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

The three goals mentioned determined the effectiveness of the strategy proposed in this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of understanding of biblical counseling within the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. This was measured by administering a Counseling Knowledge and Practice Assessment (CKPA) that determined the level of knowledge and practice of using Scripture in counseling/discipleship.<sup>10</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when 25 members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church adult class complete the CKPA pre-assessment survey and it has been analyzed yielding a better picture of the members' knowledge and practice of using Scripture in counseling/discipleship.

The second goal of this project was to develop an introductory biblical counseling curriculum for the members of Palmetto Baptist Church. This goal was measured by a panel that consisted of the board of directors of the BCA. They evaluated the effectiveness of the guide using a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered

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<sup>9</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>10</sup> See appendix 1.

successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal of this project was to raise the knowledge of biblical counseling among members of Palmetto Baptist Church by implementing the six-week curriculum. This goal was measured by administering a CKPA pre- and post-survey which was used to measure the change in the knowledge of biblical counseling.<sup>11</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post survey scores.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

To help the reader's comprehension of the subject, the following definitions will guide the reader concerning the terms used throughout the project.

*Biblical counseling.* This project relied on a more particular definition given by Faith Biblical Counseling Ministry in Lafayette, Indiana: "Biblical Counseling is the process where the Bible, God's Word, is related individually to a person or persons who are struggling under the weight of personal sin and/or the difficulties with suffering, so that he or she might genuinely change in the inner person to be pleasing to God."<sup>12</sup>

*Integrationist counseling.* This project relied on David Powlison's definition, which states,

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<sup>11</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>12</sup> Faith Biblical Counseling, "What Is Biblical Counseling," accessed October 12, 2019, [www.faithlafayette.org/counseling/what-is-biblical-counseling](http://www.faithlafayette.org/counseling/what-is-biblical-counseling). Other helpful definitions include David Powlison, "Affirmations and Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 19, no. 1 (2000): 22; and John F. MacArthur, Jr., Wayne A. Mack, and The Master's College Faculty, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling*, electronic ed. (Dallas: Word, 1997), 56. See also Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundation of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), where he begins by giving lengthy discussion on what counseling is. Definition of biblical counseling from Biblical Counseling Coalition, "The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition," accessed October 12, 2019, [www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/confessional-statement](http://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/confessional-statement).

Integrationists attempt to wed secular psychology to conservative Christianity because they believe that Scripture is not comprehensively sufficient. Scripture, the Word of the Holy Spirit, is in some essential way deficient for understanding and changing people. The church, therefore, needs systematic and constitutive input from the social sciences in order to know what is true and to enable effective, loving counseling ministry. Integrationists aim to import the intellectual contents and psychotherapeutic practices of psychology into the church in a way that is consistent with biblical faith.<sup>13</sup>

*Sufficiency of Scripture.* This project relied on the statement on sufficiency given by Paul Tautges and Steve Viars: “The authoritative revelation of God in the Scripture is sufficient to lead us to Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Redeemer, and train us in all things pertaining to life and godliness.”<sup>14</sup>

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, each participant must be a member of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. Second, the project was confined to a six-week teaching schedule. Although this provides opportunity to instruct BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church toward affective biblical counseling, it recognizes training and instruction continued afterward for further knowledge and practice in biblical counseling.

### **Conclusion**

Serving in a time filled with psychological diagnosis and secular approaches to caring for people, ministry can certainly be challenging. However, even in the middle of a culture like this, God’s Word is sufficient and can bring clarity amidst confusion. The BCA desires to equip ministry leaders for more affective biblical counseling within their ministry setting. By helping equip these leaders, the BCA hopes to aid in the development of a community of biblical counselors at Palmetto Baptist Church in Easley, South Carolina, who are prepared to provide effective soul care for those in need as they speak the truth in love.

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<sup>13</sup> David Powlison, “Critiquing Modern Integrationist,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 11, no 3 (1993) 24.

<sup>14</sup> Steve Viars, “Sufficient for Life and Godliness,” in *Scripture and Counseling: God’s Word for Life in A Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 60.



## CHAPTER 2

### SUFFICIENT FOR LIFE AND GODLINESS

#### **Introduction**

Christians today live in a complex culture. This culture is constantly offering levels of counsel to anyone willing to listen. It is offering advice on purpose and meaning for living. It is offering advice on parenting, relationships, sex, marriage, and the list could go on. Christians are in a constant state of evaluating the advice being offered to them on these topics in an ongoing effort to align themselves with God's agenda. Christians desiring to align themselves with what God thinks on particular matters can be comforted by the clarity and counsel from which the Scripture speaks to these topics. Christians should be confident that Scripture is a sufficient source of wisdom to the people of God to navigate the problems of their lives. This project intends to increase the competence of God's people in their ability to use Scripture to help others with a variety of problems. The authority and sufficiency of God's written word implies that it is the most effective tool to move Christians toward spiritual maturity in Christ.

This chapter will focus on four texts of Scripture that reinforce the implication that Scripture is the most effective tool in moving Christians to spiritual maturity. The first, Romans 1:18-32, highlights a biblical presupposition of the need for authoritative revelation from God. The second, Psalm 19:7-11, focuses on the sufficiency and quality of this revelation. The third, 2 Timothy 3:15-16, highlights how inspiration brings the authority necessary for instruction on biblical change. The fourth, 2 Peter 1:3, supports the biblical claim of the Scriptures' sufficiency to handle any and every complexity that can be found in humanity. These passages support man's need for God's divine

instruction as well as the authority, quality, and sufficiency of the instruction of an all-wise and loving God.

### **The Presupposition of Man's Need for Revelation: Romans 1:18-32**

#### **Theme: Justification for All**

One could include a long list of people in history past and present who have appreciated God's work through the apostle Paul in writing the book of Romans. Martin Luther would likely be one of those most notable names on the list.<sup>1</sup> Along with many others, Luther would agree that one of Paul's major emphases of the book of Romans is "justification by faith."<sup>2</sup> Whether this theme comprises the central idea to the book of Romans will be up for debate, but there is certainly an important emphasis on the power of the gospel (Rom 1:16). Only by embracing this gospel can all humanity be justified by faith and live by faith (Rom 1:17). Schreiner writes, "One can grasp the greatness of God's salvation, however, only when one understands the devastation introduced into the world by human beings—both Gentiles and Jews."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the gospel of salvation should look even more appealing because the predicament humanity finds themselves in is so desperate. The need for justification is clearly in view when Paul says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). It is precisely this need for salvation that places humanity in such desperate need of God's revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: Justification by Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 1:119-20.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 89.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 77.

## Key Phrases Demonstrating the Need for Instruction

**“Suppress the truth by their unrighteousness.”** The first phrase demonstrating man’s need for God’s revelation can be seen in the willfulness of the unrighteous to “suppress the truth” (Rom 1:18). Paul declares that this suppression of truth is the reason God’s wrath is against humanity for disregarding his revelation. Hendriksen and Kistemaker state, “Elsewhere too, Scripture teaches that the wicked make an attempt to suppress the truth. The fool is constantly trying to convince himself that ‘there is no God’ (Ps. 14:1; 53:1; 73:11; Rom. 2:15).”<sup>4</sup> Paul uses a present active participle to describe the current ongoing and deliberate nature to their suppression that is consistent with their ungodliness. The idea of suppression conveys that idea of holding something back or restraining oneself from something.<sup>5</sup> Morris states, “Paul is speaking of what sinners’ attempt, not of what they succeed in doing.”<sup>6</sup> The mental picture is drawn of an individual seeking to hold pressure back from overtaking them. The object of their suppression is “the truth” (Rom 1:18).

It is interesting to note that Paul holds these individuals personally responsible for suppressing the truth. Mounce states, “To turn willfully against God is to move from light into darkness. The blindness that follows is self-imposed.”<sup>7</sup> These individuals will stand accountable for the choices that led to their judgment. It is also important to recognize the connection of the preposition “in or by” their “unrighteousness.” From the grammatical construction, it appears that Paul demonstrates that a suppression of the truth

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<sup>4</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary, vols. 12-13 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 68.

<sup>5</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 532.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 78.

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 77.

never remains internal, but is expressed or acted upon as a way to live out what a person believes. Morris states, “By repeating the word *wickedness* Paul brings out that their sinfulness leads to their deeds. It is not possible to have a general attitude of unrighteousness without this finding expression in deeds opposed to God’s purposes.”<sup>8</sup> This behavioral wickedness certainly finds a similar expression in Jesus comment in Luke 6:45-48 where Jesus speaks of good trees bearing good fruit and bad trees bearing bad fruit. What is in the heart will come out.

Sinful humanity finds themselves condemned by the very thing they seek to suppress. However, it is not the abstract idea of truth they hate, it is the God of truth they despise. Mankind’s fall into sin disrupted man’s ability to think rightly, love rightly, and obey rightly. Boice refers to R. C. Sproul’s statement that “atheism has nothing to do with man’s supposed ignorance of God – since all people know God, according to Romans 1, but rather with mankind’s dislike of him. People don’t ‘know’ God, because they do not want to know him.”<sup>9</sup> Mankind has always needed revelation from the one in whose image they were created. Nevertheless, Romans 1:18-32 demonstrates the essential need of the revelation of the gospel because sinful people were never created independent, but dependent on God for everything. The only way an individual has the ability to not “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” is to accept the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and be justified by faith.

**“They exchanged the glory and truth of God for a lie.”** Not only does mankind suppress the truth, but they are also willing to exchange the truth for a lie. The decision to determine truth over lies can be seen in the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen 3). The serpent’s sneaky tactics of “Did God really say?” force Adam and Eve to determine the difference between who was telling the truth (Gen 3:1). Just as

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<sup>8</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Boice, *Romans*, 1:145.

Adam and Eve were willing to exchange truth for error, their progeny would also be willing to make a similar exchange. Romans 1:21 points out that “although they knew God” they refused to honor Him. The deliberate suppression of accepting God on His terms resulted in a downward spiral that affected their ability to determine genuine truth and wisdom (Rom 1:22). Their thinking became futile at the same time their hearts were darkened (Rom 1: 21). A great exchange resulted from such deliberate rebellion. Douglas Moo expresses each exchange by describing how “human beings put their own ‘god’ or sin in place of the truth God has revealed to them. God reacts by ‘handing them over’ to the consequences of the choice they have made.”<sup>10</sup> Truth-filled revelation was available, but a refusal to embrace the truthfulness of the instruction was devastating.

The exchange generated an immense need for humanity to listen to God’s truth and heed His instruction for salvation. Francis Schafer explains,

How do we reach this lost world? Paul warns us that they will in their consider our message foolish. Yet he calls us to take this foolishness into their midst. . . . Proclaiming this gospel to rebellious mankind can of course, seem foolish at times. . . . Yet thankfully, God has given us only three things to do and then our responsibility is closed. The first is to preach the gospel as clearly as possible, answering all questions as clearly as we can to present the truth about the universe, man, and our dilemma. The second is to pray for each individual who hears it. And the third is, by the grace of God, through faith in the finished work of Christ to live a life that in some poor fashion will commend the gospel we have preached.<sup>11</sup>

While unsaved man may mock and ridicule the truth of God’s Word, its revelation is the only way a person can be reconciled to a right relationship with God. The need for God’s instruction is no less necessary just because an unbelieving world is prone to reject its value.

Paul uses the active voice of the word “exchange” to highlight the deliberate and willful action as he did with the word “to suppress.” The context of the passage

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<sup>10</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 60-61.

<sup>11</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer and Udo W. Middelman, *The Finished Work of Christ: The Truth of Romans 1-8* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 37.

reveals the degree of exchange unsaved man is willing to make. The choice was made to replace the greater for the lesser. Schaeffer says,

“The infinite, personal God, was there with all His wonderful attributes, and man deliberately exchanged this and made God the corruptible image of mankind or birds or beasts. He exchanged the infinite for the finite. He exchanged great wealth and truth for poverty, for sorrow, and for ignorance.”<sup>12</sup>

A similar exchange is commented on in Psalm 106:20, with an allusion to the worship of golden calf.<sup>13</sup> Lenski states, “The ‘glory’ of God is the sum total of his attributes as these constitutes his essence, the sum of the perfections of his being” that reveals God to humanity.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, God’s glory is not the only element sinners are willing to exchange. As lustful unbelieving hearts continually engaged in rebellion, Paul records the willingness to exchange the truth of God for a lie. What does Paul mean by the phrase “truth of God? Leon Morris discusses how this question highlights three ways this phrase could be taken.

There are three ways to understand the truth of God. (1) Taking the abstract for the concrete, we might understand it as “the true God” (as NEB) (Hendriksen sees the genitive as one of apposition and renders, “God, [who is] the truth”, which is much the same). (2) It may mean the truth God has made known, or, as Cranfield puts it, “the reality consisting of God Himself and His self-revelation”. 3) Some (like RSV and Kertelge) see the expression as meaning “the truth about God”. The second view has the most to be said for it. For Paul, truth is an important concept, something not known to us naturally but only as God has revealed it. It is usually connected with God himself.<sup>15</sup>

The exchange of the “truth of God” is the unwillingness to embrace God for who He is, but also to reject the revelation He has given about Himself. The rejection leaves

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<sup>12</sup> Schaeffer and Middelman, *The Finished Work of Christ*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Mounce, *Romans*, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle of the Romans 1-7* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 105.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 90.

unbelievers culpable of the wrath that is currently upon them from God and again demonstrates their need for the gospel which is able to save (Rom 1:16). The outcome of such an action is reflected in their choices. When a person is unwilling to accept the creator for who He claims to be, then it only makes sense that the same people have no need to embrace His instruction for life. To their own demise they believe they are the “captain of their own ship” and the “master of their own destiny.” Paul’s theology points to the reality that those who reject God and His revelation are under his wrath and deserving of punishment. It is precisely this reason that Paul’s theology conveys the hope of salvation through justification by faith in Christ.

Having rejected the God of Truth and his revelation, humanity is left to the demise of their own rebellious hearts. With no objective truth to formulate moral propositions, individuals are left to act as god’s themselves, determining their own standards to guide them. These people no longer have respect for God’s design of male and female who were created in His image (Gen 1:26). They were willing to “exchange” natural created order for an earthly order (Rom 1:26). Out of a heart of rebellion against God and His instruction, humanity, with no desire to honor God, produced fruit in line with their own sinful passion (Rom 1:29-31).<sup>16</sup>

**“They give approval to lawlessness.”** In Romans 1:32, Paul states that “they know God’s righteous decree” and the punishment of it, but continue in their lawlessness. After suppressing the truth, exchanging His Glory and Truth for a lie, unbelieving humanity demonstrates their desire for rebellion. Paul records that they do not just rebel in their own individual hearts, but they encourage others to do likewise (Rom 1:32).<sup>17</sup> Who is worse, the individual who practices evil or encourages evil? The answer is both.

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<sup>16</sup> Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 82.

<sup>17</sup> Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 82.

Paul appears to be demonstrating how debased sinful humanity has come in their rebellion against God. They are not content with just the evil they can do but seek to “heap up vice beyond their own power,” enlisting others practice evil with them.<sup>18</sup>

Romans 1:18-32 reveals sinful humanities’ rejection of God and His revelation. Paul has given a clear picture of man’s condition to emphasize their need for God and His truth. Henriksen and Kistemaker explain,

Paul’s real purpose in writing was to show that man’s wickedness is so great that only God is able to rescue him. Only when man accepts the divinely appointed way of salvation, namely, that of embracing God by faith, can he be saved. To God alone be the glory!<sup>19</sup>

Man is in a desperate condition still today and must turn to God and His Word to find instruction about how they can be justified. Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

### **A Picture of the Quality of God’s Revelation: Psalm 19:7-11**

The Scripture not only records man’s predisposition for the need of instruction, it also declares itself as the authoritative and sufficient material by which this need can be fulfilled. In God’s wisdom, he designed humanity as dependent creatures. Dependent creatures ask themselves questions such as “Who am I?” and “What is my purpose?” These important questions and many others can be answered because God’s Word is a sufficient for guiding a believer in this life. Once a person has been drawn by the Spirit of God and given eternal hope through the gospel, he recognizes more than ever his need for the truth in his life, and for the lives of people he cares about. Psalm 19:7-11 describes both the quality and sufficiency that culminate into a source of indispensable value for discipleship/counseling.

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<sup>18</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 100.

<sup>19</sup> Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 82.



Psalm 19:1-6 begins by declaring the glory of God through how general revelation communicates truth about a divine designer. As the Psalm continues, the author demonstrates the value of God’s special revelation (vv. 7-11). These descriptions of God’s Word express the Scripture’s quality and sufficiency for living as a dependent creature under God.

### **Different Names and Descriptions for God’s Special Revelation**

**“The Law of the Lord is perfect” (19:7a).** One of the noticeable shifts occurring in this section has to do with the use of the name of God; a transition from the focus on God (אלהים) as creator, to a focus on the Lord (יהוה) as personal law giver.<sup>20</sup> Allen Ross states, “The attention shifts from the splendor of God's creation to the value of the word of the LORD. Natural revelation declares a good deal about the power and majesty of God, but it cannot communicate the details specific revelation reveals.”<sup>21</sup> Knight writes, “Israel, as the Covenant People of God, is privileged to possess a *Special Word* that has been delivered to her alone. It is the *Torah*, the Law of Moses, as much of it as was available and complete by the poet’s day. So now the poet adds a whole new psalm to the one he has inherited, to sing the praise of God’s *Special Revelation*.”<sup>22</sup> Like David, believers should also celebrate God’s inspired revelation. Not only is the law a product of God’s divine will but is described as “perfect.” Ross explains, “It is flawless. It is without error. There is no misleading or unnecessary instruction. It is sound, consistent, unimpaired, and genuine. In other words, the law of the LORD has divine integrity.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Allen Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 1-41* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 477-88.

<sup>21</sup> Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 1-41*, 478.

<sup>22</sup> George Angus Fulton Knight, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Daily Study Bible Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 96.

<sup>23</sup> Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 1-41*, 478.

**“The Testimony of the Lord is sure” (19:7b).** The second name chosen by David to describe the written revelation of God is a word that has connections with the idea of being a witness. Derek Kidner writes, “The semantic development apparently is that a witness is one, who by reiteration, emphatically affirms his testimony. The word is at home in the language of the court.”<sup>24</sup> The Word of God is described as an entity standing as a witness before God holding people accountable to God’s ways. The application of this description gives the reader an appreciation for God’s truth among the false ideologies of the world. God will hold his people accountable to remember the testimonies he has written concerning himself and his ways. Written revelation will never act as a false witness saying something that is not true, but always stands as confirmation that what God says is trustworthy (cf. 1 John 5:9).

**“The Precepts of the Lord are right. . . . The commandment of the Lord is pure” (19:8).** The third and fourth words used to describe God’s Word bear the idea that God’s Word is a book filled with life-giving instruction. Just as David honored God’s written Word, so each believer today must value it as he did. This description prohibits the Word of God from being limited to educational purposes, but recognizes its transformational purposes. James 1:22-25 describes the person who is told to be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only. This person is an individual who is blessed for what he does. Knowledge of the Lord influences theology, theology influences passions, and both knowledge and passions shape the choices believers make. God’s Word shapes a believer’s thinking, which in turn affects behavioral choices. Franz Delitzsch says, “The Law divides into precepts or declarations concerning man’s obligation; straight or upright because they proceed from the upright, absolutely good will of God, they lead along a

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<sup>24</sup> Carl Schultz, “1576 עֵוֶד,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 648.

straight way in the right track.”<sup>25</sup> The Psalmist declares that God’s Word provides a normalcy to what the believer does. Believers never have to wonder if they are on the right track. Discouragement resulting from disobedience can be alleviated if one trusts and obeys God’s Word. Instead of experiencing discouragement, an individual will experience joy from believing rightly and obeying. David also uses the word “commandments” to express the importance of what a person must obey.<sup>26</sup> In this text, David declares God’s divine declarations as right and pure. Using these adjectives, he declares that God’s Word is free from imperfections or contaminations, making it valuable for guidance in a world corrupted by sin. Plumer states, “The doctrines of Scripture show us what we must believe; the precepts, what we must do; the threatening’s, what we must shun; the promises, what we must hope for; and so far, as these are necessary to our salvation they are wonderfully clear.”<sup>27</sup>

**“The Fear of the Lord is Clean” (19:9).** A straight forward reading of this phrase may leave one confused as to what being clean has to do with the law. David appears to have enlisted the use of metonymy to convey another component about God’s Word.<sup>28</sup> Delitzsch comments on this phrase,

In this chain of names for the Law, *יִרְאָת ה'* is not the fear of God as an act performed, but as a precept, it is what God’s revelation demands, effects, and maintains; so that it is the revealed way in which God is to be feared (Ps. 34:12)—in short, it is the religion of Jahve (cf. Prov. 15:33 with Deut. 17:19).<sup>29</sup>

Solomon appears to reiterate a similar notion of the fear of the Lord as true wisdom throughout Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Solomon clearly indicates this idea when he says

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<sup>25</sup> Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 5:179.

<sup>26</sup> Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 1-41*, 480.

<sup>27</sup> William S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Chelsea, MI: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 259.

<sup>28</sup> Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 1-41*, 480.

<sup>29</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 5:179.

that the whole duty of man is to “fear the Lord and keep his commandments” (Eccl 12:13). The reverence for the God of the Law is “clean,” which means it is acceptable in the sight of God. Plumer says that a reverence of the God of the Law will ensure “no corrupt thoughts, emotions, words or deeds.”<sup>30</sup> The person who fears the God of the law will find themselves enjoying the sweet communion that comes with knowing God and obeying him fully so that he says “well done my good and faithful servant.”

**“The rules of the Lord are true” (19:9b).** The word translated “rules” is the Hebrew word for “judgments.” This word can be translated as rules, decisions, ordinances, measures, or claims.”<sup>31</sup> The description finalizes David’s description of the law. He effectively communicates the idea that God reserves the right to judge the world and bring order to the chaos through His good law, which will always be true.<sup>32</sup> Kidner expresses the idea of these rules as God’s judicial decisions to be carried out in human situations.<sup>33</sup> It is wonderful to appreciate God’s good judicial laws which are both authoritative and sufficient to communicate what is right and wrong.

Each of the different words used by the Psalmist as well as the adjectives that describe God’s special revelation as both authoritative and sufficient. Having a Scripture of such qualitative worth is intended for more than personal admiration. The fact that God’s Word is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true give assurance that it is also sufficient to guide someone with its principles and commands effectively. Besides these four words and adjectives used to describe God’s Word, David also gives four benefits resulting from such an authoritatively sufficient Word.

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<sup>30</sup> Plumer, *Psalms*, 258.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 1048.

<sup>32</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyrburn, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 193.

<sup>33</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (repr., Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 98.

## **Benefits of Scriptures Authority and Sufficiency**

One of the significant values of recognizing and embracing God's Word is that it is of great personal benefit. Special revelation from God brings humanity guidance about God and his way that would otherwise be unknown. This gesture of God's goodness in giving humanity a perfect map to guide Christians through life is reiterated in the text. The first benefit of God's Word is that it "refreshes or revives the soul" (Ps 19:7). Like a dehydrated individual who loses energy and strength because of a lack of water is the person who has the perfect life giving Word, but does not drink of it. The remedy brought for the parched soul is to drink from the well of water of the God's Word and be refreshed. VanGemen writes, "God's Word 'revives.' Its restorative quality gives healing to the whole person by assuring forgiveness and cleansing and by giving life to the godly."<sup>34</sup> Paul declares that for the life-giving effect of the truth to take root people must first hear it (Rom 10:14). Only then can it begin to regenerate the soul by conversion. Plumer also says that "God's Word is not the agent but only the instrument in the renewal of the soul. It is a fit instrument, and as such is honored of God."<sup>35</sup>

The second benefit a person receives from God's Word is that it can make the simple, wise (Ps 19:7). One can hear David's son Solomon echo these very concepts in the book of Proverbs when he says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom" (Prov 1:7). Once a person is refreshed by the instruction of the Lord it is important that he desire continued refreshment so he no longer lives in their foolishness. Ross says, "The simpleton desperately needs wisdom, which is the skill to live a life that is disciplined and productive, bringing honor to the community, the family, and to God."<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup> Willem A. VanGemen, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 217.

<sup>35</sup> Plumer, *Psalms*, 257.

<sup>36</sup> Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 1-41*, 479.

causative agent of change that moves one from being classified as naïve to being classified as being wise, is the Word.

The third benefit received from God’s Word is that it brings “rejoicing in the heart” (Ps 19:8). God’s revelation can bring a joy that permeates the whole person. It appears that the word “heart” is enlisted to describe the depth of the joy that is experienced. Proverbs 4:23 describes the heart as the control center that must be guarded because all the issues of life flow from it. Heart is used here to refer to an individual’s whole person experience of joy.<sup>37</sup> This means that joy is experienced in the intellect, affections, and the will. When a person has the Word of God, he has a source that can fully satisfy at the deepest levels of who God designed him to be. It is where he will find himself filled with the most joy. This benefit is extremely attractive in how the Scripture can change lives.

The fourth benefit of God’s Word is that it “enlightens the eyes” (Ps 19:9). The profit comes because of illumination of the mind (cf. 1 Cor 2:14).<sup>38</sup> Bullock explains that to enlighten the eyes means that God’s Word “illuminates one’s understanding ‘the eyes’ just as the sun illuminates the world.”<sup>39</sup> The Word of God can give people those moments where they say, “I just had a light bulb moment.” Meaning, they now understand something they previously did not understand. When a person respects the value and integrity of the Scriptures he can have many illuminating moments of understanding who God is and what God desires. As Psalm 119:105 says, “The word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path.”

Through the Psalm, David highlights the benefits of God’s special revelation. The Word is perfect and therefore authoritative. It reveals what is right according to

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<sup>37</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 524.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983).

<sup>39</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, Mark Strauss, and John Walton, *Psalms 1-72*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 140.

God's standards serving as a sufficient instrument to inform and enlighten one's understanding of God and the world. It also helps to inform moral understanding in the world. David is declaring that truth originates with God and not with humanity so the truth must be defined by His guidance instead of being defined by sinful people. For this very reason, David ends the section proclaiming the value of God's "laws" by stating it is far more valuable than riches and sweeter to the soul than honey to the taste buds. Scripture can "warn" believers from going against God's ways in order that one may experience the long-term benefit of trusting God's Word and obeying. Kidner writes, "The practical purpose of revelation, to bring God's will to bear on the hearer and evoke intelligent reverence, well-founded trust, and detailed obedience."<sup>40</sup> Psalm 19:7-11 communicates the value of God's revelation by highlighting its authority and sufficiency for knowing God and following his commands and principles.

### **Sufficiency and Authority: 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Mankind is in desperate need for guidance and instruction throughout his life. As seen from Psalm 19:7-11, David valued the authority of the Word of God and desired to live by it. The apostle Paul in the New Testament also describes the value of God's Word as authoritative and sufficient for his life and those he disciplined/counseled. At the end of his life of ministry, Paul writes to his young apprentice Timothy and gives some pointed instruction about the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God (2 Tim 3:13-14). Carson writes, "The transmission of truth from one person to another, from one generation to another, produces disciples. The relevancy of the content to daily living makes this process so vital to the discipleship process."<sup>41</sup> The matter of sufficiency and authority is important because Scripture is the only source by which a person can know

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<sup>40</sup> Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> Bob Kellemen and R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 36.

God and obey his commands so that He is glorified. Eyrich explains, “The Christian faith sits on the pillars of basic truth claims. Without these basic truths, there is no basis for claiming that what we believe really matter.”<sup>42</sup> It for this reason that 2 Timothy 3:16-17 stands as one of the key texts that articulate the authority and sufficiency of God’s Word to life.

### **Scriptures Origination: “Inspiration”**

Paul encourages Timothy to continue learning from the “sacred writings” from which he had been taught as a child, because they can make him wise (2 Tim 3:15).<sup>43</sup> He continues his instruction with a declaration concerning the Scripture themselves.

Impressing on Timothy once again their divine origination. Paul declares, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16). Theologians often describe this as the passage where the inspiration of Scripture is described.<sup>44</sup> Knight states, “Paul appears to be saying, therefore, that all scripture has as its source God’s breath and that this is its essential characteristic. This is another way of saying that scripture is God’s word.”<sup>45</sup>

Another important point to reinforce about this expression is that the Scripture themselves were the product of what God breathed out. It was not the authors who were inspired, although they were moved by the Holy Spirit—it was the Scripture alone that received recognition as God’s inspired Word.<sup>46</sup> By declaring the divine origin of the

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<sup>42</sup> Ed Hindson and Howard Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counseling* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004), 266.

<sup>43</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 74.

<sup>44</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 227.

<sup>45</sup> George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1992), 447.

<sup>46</sup> Kellemen and Mohler, *Scripture and Counseling*, 53.



Scripture, Paul is equally declaring its authoritative quality.<sup>47</sup> Paul pointed Timothy to trust in the written revelation he possessed through the Scriptures; believers today can also be pointed to trust in all of God’s written revelation as he did. Paul immediately moves from the divine origination and authority of Scripture to its profitability for humanity. Marshall communicates four ways in which the Scripture is sufficiently useful because “whatever is divinely inspired is therefore useful.”<sup>48</sup>

**Sufficient for Transformation: “Teaching, Reproof, Correction, and Training in Righteousness”**

“**For teaching.**” Since Scripture has been “breathed out by God,” by extension of its authority it is sufficient in teaching. Paul encourages Timothy that the effectiveness and strength of his ministry would be sourced in the Scripture. Although Paul’s ministry was ending, Timothy’s ministry would continue. The strength of the ministry could be measured by the devotion to and usefulness of the Scripture to everyday ministry life. Paul begins by instructing his protégé that the Scripture is useful for teaching, which would have been one of Timothy’s predominant functions in the church.<sup>49</sup> God has given people who minister the Word a trustworthy source of instruction that is sufficient to articulate God’s standards of morality (cf. 1 Tim 4:6, 13, 16; 6:3). Lea and Griffin explain, “Because of the prominence of heresy among his readers, Paul emphasized the importance of sound teaching.”<sup>50</sup> One’s ability to teach the content of God’s instruction is

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<sup>47</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 302.

<sup>48</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2000), 795.

<sup>49</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary, 7th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 279.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 236.

foundational to the remaining benefits “reproof, correction, and training” (2 Tim 3:16).<sup>51</sup>

**“For reproof.”** It appears that Satan has forever been in the business of distorting God’s Word. From the beginning of Genesis to the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, he seeks to distort, dismantle, and destroy God’s truth. After the fall, humanity continues to seek independence from God’s truth by creating their own truth to live by as seen in Romans 1:18-33. Timothy would be instructed that the Word of God is useful for fighting against the error of false doctrine.<sup>52</sup> Arichea writes, “*Reproof* represents the apologetic function, or defending the faith from error or false doctrines; the word is derived from a verb that means to reproach someone for doing something wrong. This is aimed primarily at the false teachers and their erroneous teachings.”<sup>53</sup> The Scripture’s point out error in the life of the world and any false standard created that is not consistent with it. Scripture not only declares what is right, it also declares what is wrong.

**“For correction.”** Scripture is sufficient in differentiating between truth and error, but it is also successful in helping believers make course corrections. One of the key components of biblical discipleship/counseling is change. Whether the course correction is the choice of turning to Christ or changing to be more like Christ, it is adequate for the task. The word chosen by Paul connotes the idea of restoration or improvement.<sup>54</sup> John MacArthur writes, “As with reproof, godly believers, especially pastors and teachers, are often the channel through which the Word brings correction.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, 303.

<sup>52</sup> Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, 303.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 236.

<sup>54</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 359.

<sup>55</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Timothy*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 160.

Believers must welcome the correction of God’s Word into their lives and welcome others who will use it to correct them from error or ungodly living (Gal 6:1; Matt 18:15-20). Truth is critical for correction. Paul instructs Timothy earlier that correction ought to be done with a manner of gentleness (2 Tim 2:25). Speaking the truth in love with gentleness promotes Christian compassion and encourages genuine repentance before God and others. Scripture is essential for Christians because of its ability to help them “be Holy as God is Holy” (1 Pet 1:16). The emphasis here is on correction that pleases God.

**“For training in righteousness.”** The fourth useful element Paul declares about the Scripture is its usability in training. Paul declares not only the ability of the Scripture to tell humanity what is right from what is wrong and to make course correction toward Christlikeness, but it also aids an individual in maintaining this change for the future. As Paul writes in Romans 15:4, the Scriptures were designed with both an element of instruction as well as an element of encouragement by its message of hope.<sup>56</sup> The focus of this useful characteristic emphasizes how the Scripture helps believers maintain the course corrections they have made. The training mentioned here is the disciplined lifestyle guided by God’s inspired Word toward righteousness.<sup>57</sup> The importance of this kind of training is significant to Paul. The goal for Timothy does not revolve around setting his agenda to please human standards, but to please God’s standards. Therefore, his teaching ought to be characterized as one that is moving his people toward God. This active pursuit is often encouraged by the apostle Paul in his writings (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; Rom 6:13; 9:20a; 14:17; Eph 5:9). Whether it is a pastor or a lay person ministering the truth of God’s Word, the aim should be to help others consistently maintain Christian conduct. John Stott writes, “Do we hope, either in our own lives or in our teaching

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<sup>56</sup> Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 790.

<sup>57</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

ministry, to overcome error and grow in truth, to overcome evil and grow in holiness? Then it is to Scripture that we must . . . turn, for Scripture is ‘profitable’ for these things.”<sup>58</sup> Paul ends his declaration on the origination of Scripture and its sufficient ability for discipleship/counseling by stating the purpose of an inspired Word of God.<sup>59</sup> Paul says, “So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (1 Tim 3:17). Knight says, “The sense of the passage is that scripture is given to enable any ‘person of God’ to meet the demands that God places on that person and in particular to equip Timothy the Christian leader for the particular demands made on him (cf. 4:2).”<sup>60</sup> The foundation of good biblical discipleship/counseling rests on the Scriptures’ inspiration, therefore giving it authority. It also rests on the Scriptures’ sufficiency for transformation, therefore giving it priority over all other man made philosophies of change.

### **Scripture’s Sufficiency for Counseling: 2 Peter 1:3, 20-21**

In the letter of first and second Peter, the apostle writes to the Christians who were scattered abroad in the northwest part of Asia minor (1 Pet 1:1). Peter writes with the focus of standing firm in the truth (1 Pet 5:12). Jobes writes, “Peter’s readers were experiencing various kinds of trials that were causing them varying degrees of grief and suffering. Their Christian faith was being slandered and maligned. Their social status, family relationships, and possibly even their livelihood were threatened.”<sup>61</sup> The second letter the apostle Peter pens also focuses on maintaining a Christian walk amidst false

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<sup>58</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 450.

<sup>59</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 570.

<sup>60</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 450.

<sup>61</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 42.

teachers who would rise from the community of faith (2 Pet 2:1; 3:1). Peter describes these false teachers by saying, “They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed” (2 Pet 13-14). The false teachers communicated a different gospel that could be ultimately seen in how they behave. In the midst of this context Peter encourages his readers that a Christian is given “everything they need for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us” (2 Pet 1:3). Davids says, “In other words, there is no excuse for not living a godly life, for believers have already received everything that is necessary to do so.”<sup>62</sup>

Peter points his readers to the divine source from which people are given divine resources. First, it is important to understand the source from which a believer receives everything needed to be godly. The nearest antecedent to the pronoun (His) is Christ.<sup>63</sup> Peter recalls for his readers the importance of what has been given to them by God through Jesus Christ. He also reiterates this connection with Jesus and his equal standing with God a few verses later (1 Pet 1:16). Bauckham writes, “here it must indicate, not that Christ possesses a divine or godlike power of his own, as though he were a second god, but that he shares in God’s own power. It is the same power which will be manifested at the Parousia of Christ.”<sup>64</sup> The false teachers took aim at Jesus claim as God’s Son. Peter dispels these myths by recalling to his readers how he had made known to them both the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:16). Peter

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<sup>62</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 168.

<sup>63</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 26.

<sup>64</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Dallas: Word, 1983), 177.

was an eyewitness to the majesty at the transfiguration when he heard God's voice declare, "This is my beloved Son" (1 Pet 1:17; cf. Matt 17:5). The myths of the false teachers included challenging the return of Jesus (2 Pet 3:4).<sup>65</sup> In the opening verses of this letter Peter highlights the "divine power" from which they receive life, both now and in the future. The readers' spiritual vitality exists as a result of God's willingness to provide the Son for them to have life and grow in godliness.

As a result of this divine resource, Peter explains that the believer has been "granted all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). Peter uses the perfect passive participle "has granted" to indicate an event in the past with continuing results in the present.<sup>66</sup> This divine source has granted "everything for life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). Peter's expression about "life and godliness" is likely to be understood to refer to one idea, "godly living."<sup>67</sup> What has been granted has significant importance because Christians will never be able to excuse themselves or accuse God of not giving substantial knowledge or resources necessary to live as he intended.<sup>68</sup> As such, he would never leave Christians without necessary tools for godly living and then judge them as if they had them. He gives believers exactly what is needed to accomplish the task. Even though believers live in a world filled with sin and suffering, they have been granted everything needed to grow and respond in a way that pleases God. Biblical counseling/discipleship is successful only because the Word of God gives counselors the assurance that it contains "all things pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3).

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<sup>65</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 201.

<sup>66</sup> MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 27.

<sup>67</sup> Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Letter from Jude and the Second Letter from Peter*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 74.

<sup>68</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 168.

Peter moves from identifying for his readers the divine power of their sanctification to a divine declaration of what has been granted in the process of sanctification. In the last part of this verse he demonstrates the means by which a believer has all things pertaining to life and godliness. It is found specifically “through the knowledge of Jesus” (2 Pet 1:3). Moo says that the “‘knowledge’ Peter is speaking of here refers to the intimate and informed relationship that is the product of conversion to the gospel.”<sup>69</sup> The phrase “who called us” in the text reveals who initiated the relationship.<sup>70</sup> God’s work of revealing the Son is the mechanism that draws people to himself and grants them resources for godly living. If God saw fit to grant the believer access through Christ “everything that pertains to life and godliness,” then there must be a source that authoritatively and sufficiently gives truth about Jesus and his teaching. A source that tells the believer of the “precious and very great promises” is found in Jesus (2 Pet 1:4); a source that moves the believer toward godliness and away from “sinful desires” (2 Pet 1:4). Peter is so confident of God’s precious promises and principles that he tells the recipients of the letter to “make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge” (2 Pet 1:5-6). Bauckham says that the word for knowledge “γνῶσις here is the wisdom and discernment which the Christian needs for a virtuous life and which is progressively acquired. It is practical rather than purely speculative wisdom (cf. Phil 1:9).”<sup>71</sup> Peter knows that the truths of Jesus are not merely for informational purposes, the truths of Jesus must be applied. The truths of Jesus and his teaching produce godly transformation.

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<sup>69</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, The NIV Application Commentary (repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 42.

<sup>70</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 170.

<sup>71</sup> Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 186.

Peter is warning his readers against false teaching that existed and would potentially arise in the future (2 Pet 2:1-4). He declares to his readers that the apostles' teaching was not mythical. The apostles were eyewitness to the power and majesty of Jesus (2 Pet 1:16; cf. Matt 17:1, 2, 6; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28, 29; John 1:14). The phrase "we have a prophetic word" refers to the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>72</sup> The emphasis in Peter's writing is on the written revelation of the Old Testament, which is like a "lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Pet 1:19; Ps 119:105). Kistemaker says,

All the prophets of the Old Testament era from Moses to the last of the minor prophets speak with one voice (compare 1 Peter 1:10–12). Furthermore, the expression *the word of the prophets* "is comprehensive enough to include, beside the predictions concerning Christ's Second Coming, all the numerous prophecies fulfilled in connection with His earthly life." Peter urges his readers to pay close attention to the context of this prophetic word.<sup>73</sup>

Because he is so confident in the revelation that was given, Peter writes, "knowing this first of all, that no prophecy comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20-21). Peter lays out his defense of Jesus and his teachings both by his own experience as an eyewitness, and also through the Spirit's work in providing Scripture. He lays out the impossibility of the prophecy of Scripture being of human origin. Bauckham says, "The reason why scriptural prophecy is not simply a product of human interpretation is that its authors did not speak of their own volition but under the inspiration of God. The weight of emphasis falls on v 21b as the basis for v 20."<sup>74</sup> Peter argues that both the origination and interpretation of revelation came from God (2 Pet 1:21). Peter's message concerning Jesus and his teaching are consistent with and validated by the Old Testament Scripture. The message about the

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<sup>72</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 207.

<sup>73</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 16 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 269-70.

<sup>74</sup> Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 232-33



origination of the Scriptures is consistent with Paul's perspective already mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:16. Although Peter's recipients did not have a completed cannon of all that would be included in Scripture, they did have an authoritative and sufficient source that provided everything needed to live a godly life. The source of such authority is none other than the inspired truth that had been revealed in the Old Testament as well as what Peter and Paul continued to write (2 Pet 3:14-16). Peter encourages them to trust in God's divine revelation as the authoritative source from which they have everything needed for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 Tim 3:16). Today, believers can be similarly encouraged to trust in the authority of God's written revelation, which is a sufficient source for everything needed for life and godliness. Because the Scripture is both an authoritative and sufficient source from God, it is the most important tool to be used in counseling/discipling others to live a life pleasing to God.

### **Summary**

Christians today are like foreigners living in a land that is not their home (Heb 11:13). They long for the day when they will depart this earth and enter their real home that Jesus is preparing for them (John 14:3). God has not left his children without an authoritative and sufficient guide for living in this foreign land. It is clear from Romans that mankind is in desperate need of an authoritative revelation. Without a divine Scripture from the Lord, people would be left with no hope for ever having a right relationship with him. God has given a Scripture that is completely divine, authoritative, and sufficient. David declares that God's Word is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true (Ps 19:7-11). Because of these qualities, God's Word refreshes the soul and makes the simple, wise. It is far more valuable than money and sweeter than honey because it guides believers into a right relationship with God.

The apostle Paul also affirmed the authority and sufficiency of the Scripture. He tells Timothy to continue to allow himself to be led by the Scripture and to use it to instruct others because it is useful for "teaching, reproof, correction, and training in

righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). In other words, Scripture is sufficient for helping believers distinguish between what is right from what is wrong and helps them make course corrections and maintain those course corrections for living righteously. Scripture is given so that Christians may be thoroughly equipped for Christian living. Peter also supports this view of Scripture. He proclaims the truth that God has given everything one needs to live a godly life. David, Paul, and Peter each proclaim the value of the revelation of Scripture they possessed. Today, believers should also celebrate and value all Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, as God’s authoritative instruction toward living a life pleasing to God. Scripture assures the Christian that while they may be living in a place that is not their ultimate home, they do have an authoritative and sufficient source to guide them and others on their journey. Second Peter 3:7-18 reads, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

CHAPTER 3  
THE MILIEU, THE MODEL, AND THE METHOD  
OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

**Introduction**

In a day when it appears that individualism has reached new heights, the opportunity for the church to shine amid the darkness is imperative. The culture's tech savvy bravado has led to deeper relational divides. Young people appear to be glued to their social media through various devices. Their constant obsession with staying connected with their ever-growing group of online friends is normal. The older generation is often viewed as an old-fashioned rotary phone that cannot seem to relate to the new way of interaction. As a result, relationships for many have become superficial and shallow. Sayers writes,

The disappearance of a mode of church engagement characterized by commitment, resilience, and sacrifice among many Western believers. In its place, a new mode of disengaged Christian faith and church interaction is emerging. This new mode is characterized by sporadic engagement, passivity, commitment phobia, and a consumerist framework.<sup>1</sup>

As the author points out, the perception of the church for many in the culture has significantly shifted to a more relaxed association. Church is beneficial when it fits into an individual's schedule of activity rotation. The unfortunate reality for many is that church is only valuable when it fulfills a perceived need. However, the value of the church is divinely given because Jesus sacrificed himself for the church and cares for her (Eph 5:22-25). This divine appointment for the church to continue making disciples is an important task today. The importance of counseling/discipleship within a church's culture

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Sayers, *Disappearing Church: From Cultural Relevance to Gospel Resilience* (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 8.

seeks to correct superficiality with transparency, individualism with a Christ-centered community, and worldly philosophies with scriptural Truth. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that counseling functions best when it is local church based, Christ centered, and upholds a scriptural methodology for change.

### **Local Church Orientation**

Living in a culture that is predominantly self-oriented, it is probably not difficult to understand why the centrality of the local church is not popular. Joshua Harris says, “Today we live in an increasingly fragmented world. That mind-set has influenced the way we approach our relationship with God. Faith is a solo pursuit.”<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember that the church was designed to combat a self-centered approach to life by living in community, considering others more important than yourself (Phil 2:3-4). The church’s origination is divinely designed. Jesus declares, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). Therefore, the local church must be embraced as the environment where counseling/discipleship will have its maximum potential. The local church is God’s sovereignly designed support system for the benefit of believers. This divine organization has many elements that prove to be helpful in a good foundation for a ministry of biblical counseling.

#### **Element 1: Doctrinal Stability**

As Paul writes to Timothy at the end of his life, he makes an intriguing comment about the Church. He says, “If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Paul describes the church as the pillar of truth. Jesus has designed the local church to be truth driven. Whether it is the public or private ministry of the Word of counseling/discipling, the church is one of the entities God uses today to maintain the

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<sup>2</sup> Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating the Church! Fall in Love with the Family of God*, 2nd ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 16.

proclamation of the truth. Wayne Mack explains, “If the pillar of a building is removed, as Samson proved in his last act in the Philistine temple (Judges 16:29-30), the building will topple and the people inside will be injured or killed.”<sup>3</sup> The value of the church and the truth it upholds is paramount to the lives of believers. Paul understood this when he advised Timothy to instruct others not to teach a different doctrine or devote themselves to any other teaching than the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Tim 1:3). The apostle Paul had watched people “shipwreck their faith” when they did not live by the teaching of Jesus. The church is a needed environment in caring for God’s people.

## **Element 2: Local Church Membership**

A secondary element that is important to a biblical counseling/discipling ministry is the priority of local church membership. David Watson records the statement of a student during the Jesus Movement of the 1970s saying, “Jesus Yes! Church No!”<sup>4</sup> Individuals for quite some time have struggled with being desirous to connect with a particular local church. If local church ministry has been neglected, then membership is by default neglected. An individual will never become a member of something they do not see as valuable. However, local church membership is important to the life of a counseling ministry. The goal is to connect a person to God’s truth, God’s church, and God’s people because it is to the local church that has been given the command to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20), which is exactly what Luke reveals in the book of Acts. One reason church membership is important in counseling ministry is because the community of believers are commanded to look out for each other (Heb 10:19-25). First Corinthians 5 is an example of the importance of membership to counseling. A man in the local church at Corinth had been engaged in sexual immorality (1 Cor 5:1), and Paul indicts the church for not having

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne A. Mack and Dave Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House: A Member’s Guide to the Local Church*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 26.

<sup>4</sup> David C. K. Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 13.

already put him outside of their assembly for such unrepentant sin. Paul says, “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside” (1 Cor 5:12-13). The charge against the whole church was that they were neglecting to safeguard the members of the local church. By not addressing this individual, the testimony of the gospel was at stake as well as the purity of the church. Keven Bauder writes,

Clearly Paul believed that some people were inside the church at Corinth while others were outside it. Those inside were accountable to the whole congregation for their conduct. The congregation possessed the authority to expel anyone whose error was sufficiently grievous. This authority was mediated through the assembled church, not through private individuals or subgroups of the congregations.<sup>5</sup>

The early church knew they were responsible to care for the spiritual care of individuals and the congregation (Jas 1:27; Acts 1:44-45). The important element concerning local church membership and biblical counseling is that a church cannot help restore an individual to a community of which the person was never a member. Emphasizing membership in a local church helps a counselor identify whose flock an individual belongs and whose church has the main responsibility to aid in the restoration process. Counselors gathering initial information from those they are helping typically ask if the person belongs to a church and if it is okay to contact their pastor. The importance of membership does not limit a ministry from helping those outside the membership but is an opportunity; an opportunity for one congregation to train or strengthen another local church or connect someone to a local church.

The primary responsibility of the local church pastor is to shepherd the flock God has called him to oversee. An emphasis on local church membership allows a congregation to know who they are responsible to provide care and accountability. Counselors will experience moments where an individual is seeking to run and hide from their congregation. The counselor must work with the local church to call the individual

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<sup>5</sup> Keven Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012), 56.

toward restoration, if necessary. A biblical counseling ministry will also experience individuals who do not want to be transparent with someone in their own community of faith. It is for these reasons an emphasis on local church membership is an important element to a biblical counseling ministry.

### **Element 3: Preventative Care**

The local church is also a place where consistent preventative care among God's people should take place. The church is a fellowship of people who desire to continue to fight against sin in their life. This means that one will encounter people in the church who are in the process of sanctification (Rom 7), Spirit indwelt people fighting against various patterns of sin (Gal 5:16). The church is filled with people who are not perfect, but people in the process of being transformed into Christlikeness. The joy of helping each other amid suffering should be normal in the body. One of the benefits of a counseling emphasis in the local church is that the whole congregation can be trained to look out for those who are suffering. Jesus often targeted people who were suffering. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30).

The church is designed as the perfect support system. God designed the individual support of the church to include pastors and brothers and sisters in Christ who care for each other (Eph 4:11-12; Gal 6:6; Matt 18:15) Brad Bigney writes, "Ephesians 4:11 says that Christ gave the church some to be shepherds as well as teachers. Sadly, most seminaries focus almost exclusively on homiletics, exegesis, essential teaching functions, but they neglect the tasks of shepherding and equipping others in counseling and soul care."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Brad Bigley, "A Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 22.

The individual support for believers is carried out by the shepherds. Jay Adams states, “Thus, it is the task of every pastor to become competent to counsel, even if he has not received adequate training and even if he is not now adequate for the task.”<sup>7</sup> Pastoral care within the local church is one way God has gifted the local church with an individual who is appointed to watch over their soul (Heb 13:17).

The church is also designed with a community support system that encourages Christlike growth and activity (Matt 18:15-18; Eph 4; Acts 2:42-47). Mark Dever writes,

In a healthy church, private corrective discipline is happening all the time. People in the church sin. But growing Christians welcome other Christians into their lives for the purpose of confessing their sins to one another (James 5:16; 1 John 5:5-10). That is, in large part, how spiritual growth happens—by accepting biblical correction. You need to be modeling this kind of humble accountability as a pastor and encouraging it in other members.<sup>8</sup>

Preventative care through accountability is necessary in community life.

Without such preventative care the church’s effectiveness will be stunted by sinfulness.

The pastor is not the only protector of the community (1 Tim 4:16). Church members must protect one another from being drawn away from a life of faith in Christ (Heb 3:12).

Local church-based counseling allows the ministry to function under the authority of God’s divinely ordered church. A place where pastors and leaders in the church can safeguard not only the public ministry of the Word, but also the private ministry of the Word.

Bigney and Viars state, “Churches that are biblical counseling centers are constantly looking for ways to comfort those who are suffering and to confront and correct those who are sinning.”<sup>9</sup> Because of the preventative measures designed by God into the structure of the church, it is advantageous for a counseling ministry to come under the

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<sup>7</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding Gods Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 174, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel*, 2005 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 68.

<sup>9</sup> Brad Bigney and Steve Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 25.



authority of the church. Local church pastors are given to the church to help equip the members for one another ministry. Viars writes, “Ephesians 4:12 calls us to go further and equip those who have been mended to do ministry! Pastors should know that we are not looking for spectators, people to fill the pew.”<sup>10</sup> Preventative care in the local church is God’s sovereign support system. A system where both individual and community support is built into the design of the local church. Praise God for his wonderful plan!

#### **Element 4: Protective Care**

One of the last elements that makes the local church a perfect place for counseling ministry is the protective care one receives. Amid counseling/discipleship, one will have some people simply out to destroy the church. One such story involves a man who claimed he was a believer but decided that he would seek to destroy the church through gossip and slander. Because the congregation had been trained by their pastor on how to handle these situations, they protected one another from what one member described as an “attack from the evil one himself.” The church not only faces those who appear to be set on dismantling the church’s unity, but others who get caught up in enjoying their sin and need to repent. It is hard to imagine what the church would be like if there were no protective measures for purity designed into the plan. In His wisdom, God built protective mechanisms in the body to keep them from danger.

The gift of pastors into the local assembly are to act as shepherds who protect the sheep from danger (Eph 4:11-12). In Acts 20:28-32, Paul’s offers some departing words to the Ephesian elders:

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And

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<sup>10</sup> Bigney and Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” 24.

now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Paul instructs the elders to carefully attend to their own spiritual life. Pastors need to recognize that, like King David, they also could make foolish choices. He declares that upon his departure they will have to protect the flock of God from “fierce wolves”—people who will not care about the gospel or the sanctification of the flock. Paul also says that some of these attacks will come from within the assembly seeking to make disciples after themselves instead of Christ. One of the functions of the shepherd is to protect the sheep from false teaching and false teachers whose goal is to draw the congregation away from the truth.

Not only has God given pastors to protect the church, He has also connected the church as a family willing to protect one another through the process of church discipline. Al Mohler states,

The absence of church discipline is no longer remarkable—it is generally not even noticed. Regulative and restorative church discipline is, to many church members, no longer a meaningful category, or even a memory. The present generation of both ministers and church members is virtually without experience of biblical church discipline. . . . And yet without a recovery of functional church discipline—firmly established upon the principles revealed in the Bible—the church will continue its slide into moral dissolution and relativism. Evangelicals have long recognized discipline as the “third mark” of the authentic church.<sup>11</sup>

Local church congregants may cringe at the sound of the word *discipline*, however, they must remind themselves that God disciplines those he loves (Heb 12:6; Prov 12:6; Pss 94:12; 119:67, 75; Rev 3:19). God chastens believers not so they run further away, but so they turn around and come back to him. Jones and Cheong write,

If we don’t understand church discipline within the movement of God’s story, we will carry out church discipline in ways that will neither reflect His gospel nor accomplish His mission in the church and world. If we don’t see our life with God within this redemptive story line, we can overlook church discipline out of a lack of understanding or dismiss it out of fear or out of a wrong and hurtful experience.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Al Mohler, “Church Discipline: The Missing Mark,” in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, ed. Mark Dever (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 43.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Cheong and Robert Jones, “Biblical Counseling, the Church, and Church Discipline,” in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 157.

This is not discipline for the sake of discipline, but discipline for the sake of restoration. A ministry of biblical counseling in the local church will likely deal with individuals who are unwilling to repent and turn back to Christ. Therefore, the local church provides a mechanism designed by God to help draw believers back to the one who saved them. The Bible declares that Christians must seek to live pure and godly lives (1 Pet 2:11-12). The unfortunate reality is that some will choose not to follow Peter's advice. The process laid out in Matthew 18 provides biblical and restorative direction for the local church. A counseling ministry functioning under the authority of the local church can use this process to help its members seek restoration with God and others. Even if the individual is not a member of the congregation, a person may be able to help initiate God's divine rescue mission through their local church. Bauder explains, "Church discipline is an activity by which church members hold one another accountable for growing as disciples of Jesus."<sup>13</sup> One of the benefits of a biblical counseling ministry out of the local church is that they can enact this process of protection and restoration in the lives of those they are helping. This is one of the reasons why biblical counselors often insist on their counselees' connection to a local church. It is to their benefit to be under this kind of protection. Unfortunately, Christians may shy away from this protection because they have never seen anyone restored. However, restoration of the unrepentant individual is not only a marker of whether this kind of protection is beneficial. According to the situation found in 1 Corinthians 5, church discipline has multiple goals. Bauder describes the goal of church discipline with a fourfold purpose:<sup>14</sup>

1. To guard the gospel testimony of the church in the community.
2. To restore the offending member.
3. To halt the spread of sin among the believers.
4. To maintain gospel clarity and purity of fellowship with Christ.

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<sup>13</sup> Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, 63.

<sup>14</sup> Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, 66-67.

Even if restoration does not occur for the sinning brother or sister, the other goals of discipline still protect the church. A counseling ministry functioning under a local church willing to engage in these protective measures will significantly aid in the purity and unity of the body.

These four biblical elements of the local church provide a solid foundation upon which a counseling ministry can be placed. The local church is God's divinely structured environment whereby care and protection are offered and disciples continue to be made. The most advantageous setting for a biblical counseling ministry is none other than the local churches Jesus was willing to sacrifice himself to establish.

### **Christ-Centered Counseling**

A counseling ministry based out of the local church is significant because it is an integral part to God's plan for the spread of the gospel and the sanctification of the saints. The kind of counseling found in the church should be Christ centered. Christ-centered counseling/discipling has as its main goal transformation into his likeness. Matthew 28:19-20 recognizes that after an individual's salvation they must be taught and conformed to Christ's teaching. This process of change is not optional, but mandatory. A Christian's desire to change ought to be normal and active. A Christian who does not desire change is as abnormal as a zebra without stripes. If one saw a zebra without stripes, one would likely conclude that it was not a zebra at all. In the same way, if one sees a Christian who does not desire to grow in Christ-likeness, one would begin to wonder whether they are a Christian at all (Jas 2:14-26). Next are a few different reasons why biblical counseling must be Christ centered.

### **Jesus Christ Offers Restoration and Forgiveness**

The necessity of Christ to be at the center of the counseling process is because His death made provision for the whole world to be saved (Heb 9:22-28). Christ was willing to humble himself so that all would have the opportunity to repent and trust in

him (Phil 2:6-11; Eph 2:8-9). The only possibility of real change to begin according to the Scripture is when someone repents and turns to Christ. Change always begins with Christ work on behalf of the believer. Christ was willing to be the sacrifice so that those who were dead in their sins could be made alive in Christ (Eph 2:2-10; Rom 8:1). Living according to the Spirit is only possible because of Christ's work on the cross. Viars and Bigney write, "Good biblical counselors understand that we are doing more than just fixing a problem; we are making a disciple."<sup>15</sup> Making a disciple of Jesus is the goal of Christ centered counseling. Making disciples is impossible without the forgiveness offered by the work of Christ. Jesus is not only the starting point, but the perfect example every Christian should continually seek to be like.

### **Jesus Christ Is the Example**

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah as a "wonderful counselor" (Isa 9:6). Paying attention to how Jesus counseled, encouraged, and cared for people in the New Testament demonstrates that Jesus truly was the wonderful counselor. Baker and Holmes say,

Whenever we see Jesus in action, we should want to stop and pause. We should want to learn about what He is doing. We should want to see how He interacts with people. We should want to eavesdrop on the counseling session. How does He draw people out? What kinds of questions does He ask? How does He know when to stop, pause, and love? How does He balance grace and truth?<sup>16</sup>

Jesus' model of caring for people is the perfect example to follow. He is the only perfect person to ever walk the earth and, therefore, must be the primary model for believers in biblical counseling/discipleship.

Having Christ as the pattern to follow reminds the counselor of the goal of their instruction. The apostle John records the event of the Last Supper when Jesus knelt

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<sup>15</sup> Ernie Baker and Jonathan Holmes, "The Power of the Redeemer," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Stephen Viars, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), locs., 413-16, Kindle.

down and washed the disciple's feet. After washing their feet, Jesus said, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:13-15). Christ-centered care will be motivated by Christ-like love and humility so that others not only see Christ, but are directed to become like him (Eph 5:1; Phil 2:3-11).

### **Jesus Christ Relates to Suffering**

Another important reason that counseling must be Christ centered is because Jesus provides the perfect example of what it means to suffer in a way that brings glory to God. Living in a sin cursed world, suffering is normal. Therefore, the goal of handling such suffering will be to face it like Christ. When Jesus was faced with the most awful spiritual and physical suffering for sin, He responded by asking for God's will to be done and not his own (Luke 22:42-44). A Christian's response to suffering must be identical in order to bring glory to God in the midst of pain. One of the blessings of being committed to Christ-centered counseling is that Scripture says that Jesus can relate to suffering in every way. Hebrews 4:14-15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." One of the key phrases is that he could handle suffering and temptation "without sin." As people come for help, they are often praying for deliverance instead of conformity to Christlikeness. When this happens, the person may not realize they are seeking to handle a trial or temptation in a self-centered way. It is the counselors desire to help them realize that they can handle these moments without sinning. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God will be faithful to the sufferer and will provide a way of escape. This escape route includes the ability to handle suffering and temptation without sinning by clinging to the truths of Scripture. Jesus is the ultimate high priest who relates to suffering and temptations. As one seeks to handle life's difficult moments it is important to remember that Jesus relates to struggles and will help believers honor

the father as he did. One can do all this knowing that the Father in Heaven knows humanity's weaknesses and will respond with compassion because he knows the frailty of people (Ps 103:13-14).

### **Jesus Christ's Resurrection Power**

Christ not only relates to weaknesses and trials, he also provides the necessary strength to grow and change. The apostle Paul recognized this power at work within him to proclaim, admonish, and guide others to maturity in Christ (Col 1:28-29). However, for many people seeking to become more like Christ the process seems overwhelming.

Robert Jones says,

Counselees seeking biblical counseling can quickly become discouraged when they see the depth and breadth of the Bible. How can I possibly follow this Book? How can I grasp and implement the multitude of Bible commands? The Bible addresses so many areas of my life. There are so many principles, demands, and applications. I feel so overwhelmed.<sup>17</sup>

A biblical counselor can help a person recognize their need to depend on what Christ accomplished on their behalf. He has broken the power that sin previously had upon their life and has allowed people to become a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). The resurrection provides the power necessary for a believer to "walk in newness of life," free from the bondage of sins oppression (Rom 6:4). This freedom in Christ allows the Christian to consider himself "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11) by the power of the resurrected Christ.

It is precisely this strength that the apostle Paul refers to in his letter to the church in Philippi: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). Jones continues, "Rather than serving as an isolated verse plucked out of midair to promise extraordinary feats of miraculous power, verse 13 flows from the immediate context.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Jones, "The Christ-Centeredness of Biblical Counseling," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, by Bob Kelleman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 120, Kindle.

Jesus Christ gives Paul the power to walk contentedly with the Lord despite hardships.”<sup>18</sup> The believer has at his/her disposal the very power of the resurrection to grow and change. Biblical counselors rightly highlight the strength one has in Christ. It is important to explain that this is not of one’s efforts alone, but choices made in the wisdom and strength of Jesus Christ himself. This explanation should direct a believer to give honor and glory where it is due instead of being tempted to believe that they did it all on their own. A believer can be encouraged to pray for wisdom and strength when they are tempted to believe a situation appears hopeless. Biblical counseling will guide an individual to pray, meditate, and reflect through homework on Christ’s care for people who are suffering. The resurrected Christ not only offers strength in times of trouble, but offers hope amidst despair.

### **Jesus Christ Is Future Hope**

Believers who enter the counseling room often come with what could be described as a fog that has descended upon their life. It is not that they are unable to see anything as if they were in the dark completely, but they are unable to see clearly into the distance. The counselor helps guide them to their past, present, and future hope in Jesus Christ. Christ and Scripture can help lift the fog that has prohibited their ability to see clearly and rest in him. Consider those in Israel who awaited the promise of the future restoration of Israel. Hebrews 11 is often described as the “Hall of Faith,” which records certain moments of many in the Old Testament who expressed faith in God’s plan. The author says in Hebrews 11:13-16,

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. . . . But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

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<sup>18</sup> Jones, “The Christ-Centeredness of Biblical Counseling,” 120-21.



These individuals experienced varying levels of hardship in their life on earth. The common component between them is that they were determined to remember the future promises of God and live by faith. The author of Hebrews continues his Christ-centered perspective, calling his readers to look upon the risen Christ who ran with endurance the race set before him (Heb 12:1-2). He asks them to allow this to shape their perspective to be willing to persevere in faith without “growing weary or fainthearted” (Heb 12:3-4).

Jesus’ disciples also experienced some level of difficulty as they sought to understand Jesus’ teaching that he was going to die and would no longer be with them. John records Jesus hope filled instruction: “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:1-3). Jesus challenges them to trust in the very words he has told them. Jesus is saying to the disciples, “You can trust me!” Counselors provide care for those in need by reminding them that their trust and hope is in Christ. Hope is often lost when marriages go sour, illness overtakes the body of a family member, car accidents, depression, worry, etc. Kellemen explains,

When life is bad, Satan whispers or shouts that God is bad too. “He’s mad at you and getting back at you! He’s left you!” Our Divine Parakaletic Counselors dialogue with us, reminding us, “This world is not your home. We’re preparing a home for you. The Father is not getting back at you; he’s getting you back to himself. You are loved children and friends of God!” That’s hope.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus offers the hope of his continual presence through the Holy Spirit and his future return to gather them to the place he is preparing for them (John 14:3-4). Jesus displays his remarkable ability to guide others to the future hope of their salvation. Biblical counselors must encourage those in need with the truth of his return to help them persevere amid suffering for the glory of God. Giving hope is not just something one does in the early sessions of counseling, but something that should be happening during every session of counseling/discipling.

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<sup>19</sup> Robert W. Kellemen, *Gospel Conversations: How to Care Like Christ* (Grand Rapids Zondervan, 2015), 186, Kindle.

Believers possess a “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3). They await a time when sorrow and tears will be wiped away forever (Rev 21:4); a time when sin and its effects will be destroyed by Jesus Christ. A believer’s future hope in Christ must compel them to presently persevere until this future hope becomes a present reality. Peter says, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:13-21). Good biblical counseling will focus on the future hope of Christ and his return, which ought to motivate the believer to persevere in holiness even when the suffering is great. Suffering caused by sin will one day no longer be the reality one experiences. A day is coming where Jesus will return, suffering will be eliminated, and Jesus’ presence will be permanent.

### **Biblical Methodology of Sanctification**

Sanctification is both a work of Christ and the responsibility of every Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet 3:18). Ephesians 5:18 says, “Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.” In this verse, Paul is making a comparison about what controls a person. When a person is drunk, their ability to control their thoughts and actions are impaired. A person should not be controlled with anything except the holy Spirit. The command “to be filled” comes on the heels of another command, which is “to be careful how you walk” (Eph 5:15). Chafer writes, “To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit fulfilling in us all that God intended Him to do when God placed Him there.”<sup>20</sup> The process of sanctification is progressive in this life as one chooses to relinquish control of his own ideas of truth, desires, demands, and actions, and allows the Spirit to conform him to the image of Christ. Chafer continues,

To be filled is not the problem of getting *more* of the Spirit: it is rather the problem of the Spirit getting *more* of Christians. None shall ever have *more* of the Spirit than the anointing which every true Christian has received. On the other hand, the Spirit may get control of all of the believer and thus be able to manifest in him the life and

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 176.

character of Christ. A spiritual person, then, is one who experiences the divine purpose and plan in his daily life through the power of the indwelling Spirit. The character of that life will be such as to manifest Christ. The root cause of that life will be nothing less than the unhindered indwelling Spirit (Eph. 3:16–21; 2 Cor. 3:18).<sup>21</sup>

It is critical that every believer allow the Spirit to have more control over their life by yielding their intellect, affections, and volition to be informed by the Word of God so that they are conformed to the image of Christ. Any counseling that considers itself Christian must guide people to a method that is not focused on adjusting behavior only, but on the heart that motivates the behavior. A biblical counselor's methodology will reveal his/her theology. Bookman states,

The temptation today, even within the Christian community, is to do otherwise, to conduct counseling with a primary focus on someone or something other than God. But the biblical counselor must be committed to a preeminently Godward focus in counseling. Why? There are three basic reasons: (1) because God demands it; (2) because the natural exaltation of self is destructive; and (3) because the soul-satisfying life God intends for His children can only be found through Jesus' spiritual paradox: deny self and focus on God.<sup>22</sup>

Biblical counseling must have a methodology that matches its theological perspective.

Without such continuity there will be a disconnect in directing struggling people to their hope in God and his instruction.

Husbands, wives, parents, and individuals appear to have a similar desire when it comes to change. They wish it could go faster than what it usually does. Husbands and wives perhaps get frustrated with one another when one is changing faster than the other. One counselee said, "What do I do if I change faster than my spouse?" Another said, "How should I respond if my child doesn't appear to be making any progress in one week." It takes time for an individual to understand, reflect, and submit to the right course of action. This is a great opportunity for the counselor/discipler to exercise his ability to be patient. As one helps others, it is important to remember that some will change rather quickly and for others the process is longer.

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<sup>21</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 176.

<sup>22</sup> Doug Bookman, "The Godward Focus of Biblical Counseling," in *MacArthur Pastor's Library on Counseling*, ed. John F. MacArthur, Jr. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 51.

Understanding change as a process helps the counselor/discipler become more sensitive to the time it typically takes for a person to change. One of the frequent questions a counselee asks within the early stages of counseling refers to the subject of time. A counselee may ask, “So how long do you think counseling will be necessary.” If it was not for God’s incremental work in a Christian’s life, the Christian would not be where he is today. A counselor/discipler should be sensitive to this incremental work in those he is helping because it will be an encouragement to them and less frustrating for the counselor. Lambert explains,

Biblical counseling is about Christ-like obedience. We want people to grow in their love of Jesus and in obedience to his commands. We want them to grow in obeying the command to love God, to love others, to seek reconciliation, to grant forgiveness, to speak more kindly, to listen more intently, to stop hitting their spouse, to read the Bible, pray, go to church, and many other things. The doctrine of the Spirit gives us confidence that all of these, and more, are possible through the Holy Spirit, who empowers believers to know Christ and obey him.<sup>23</sup>

Progressive sanctification is all about one’s need to become more like Jesus Christ. The hope of the gospel lies in the power of the resurrected Christ through the work of the Spirit to conform Christians to the image of the Son. Believers awaiting Christ’s return will now view life through the lens of the gospel. Counselors/disciplers helping those in need must recognize they will address people who are saints, sufferers, and sinners all at the same time.<sup>24</sup>

Secular, integrational, and biblical counseling all desire the same result: change. However, how change is defined by each of these different groups is diverse. It should be assumed that none of these groups seek superficial change, but desire long-term sustainability. The element that sets biblical counseling/discipleship apart from secular and many integrationists is an emphasis on the end goal and the process that takes

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<sup>23</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 172, Kindle.

<sup>24</sup> Michael R. Emler, *CrossTalk: Where Life & Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009), 74, Kindle.

them there. The secular counselor usually emphasizes the individual's physiological problems. These physiological classifications include the person's mental health, which is as important as their physical health. Therefore, the long-term goal would be to help the individual to change to make them healthier physically and mentally. For both mental and physical problems, some form of medicine is usually involved as a corrective to help the person feel better. The challenge in this model of counseling is that feeling better is the goal and some medicinal substance is often the answer. For true physical problems, it is wise and beneficial to allow medicine to be used as a corrective. However, the secular model must grapple with the fact that people are far more intricate than a piece of matter or a makeup of chemical reactions. They are people that believe certain ideas, want certain things, and will behave according to these ideas and desires.

The integrationist counselor insists that Scripture alone is not enough. David Powlison, in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, states,

Integrationists attempt to wed secular psychology to conservative Christianity because they believe that Scripture is not comprehensively sufficient. Scripture, the Word of the Holy Spirit, is in some essential way deficient for understanding and changing people. The church, needs systematic and constitutive input from the social sciences in order to know what is true and to enable effective, loving counseling ministry. Integrationists aim to import the intellectual contents and psychotherapeutic practices of psychology into the church in a way that is consistent with biblical faith.<sup>25</sup>

Individuals holding this position appear to embrace more of the psychological movement and secular philosophies, believing that more is needed than what Scripture has to offer. Unfortunately, the process of change for many in this camp looks very similar to those in the secular camp, just with spiritual terminology.

True biblical counselors believe that Scripture alone is completely sufficient for helping believers change (2 Tim 3:16-17; Ps 119). Therefore, a process of change must be consistent with the scriptural teaching on how belief affects behavior. Change will always be difficult when the perceived advantages of a thought, feeling, or action

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<sup>25</sup> David Powlison, "Critiquing Modern Integrationists," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 24.

outweigh the perceived disadvantages. A biblical view of change will include a four-dimensional process: (1) recognition, (2) repentance, (3) refocus, and (4) replace.

### **Recognition**

Even believers are often behind the curve when it comes to identifying sin in their life. Every Christian has blind spots causing an inability to recognize some sins in their life. Jeremiah 17:9 states, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.” Thankfully, God knows a Christian’s heart better than anyone and has a significant advantage to help each person identify the sin in his lives. This work of recognition by the Holy Spirit is necessary for Christians to begin the process of change.

In John 16:7-8, 12-13, Jesus tells the disciples, “It is to your advantage that I go away, or the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement. . . . When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority.” The Holy Spirit who indwells the believer desires to continue the process He began at salvation and will complete the process (Phil. 1:6). A person will never change something they do not believe needs changing.

The Lord uses his Word to help believers recognize their sin, but he also sends people into their lives to help direct in the recognition of sin. Such was the case, when God used the prophet Nathan to draw out David’s heart after his sin with Bathsheba. Second Samuel 11:27 states that what David had done displeased the Lord. From Samuel’s standpoint, it apparently did not displease David as much as it did the Lord. Unfortunately, most believers can identify with this kind of response because Christians struggle even after salvation with being blinded to the significance of sinning against a Holy God. Christians can undervalue the severity of the separation sin causes and God can be more displeased with their sin than they are. In such cases, God works in gracious ways to help Christians see their sin from his vantage point.

God sent the prophet Nathan into David's life to help him see what he could not see. Perhaps God has sent a few "Nathan's" into a believer's life to help him consider the severity of his sin from God's point of view. What a blessing it is to have faithful people sent from the Lord to help one another consider their ways before Him to be drawn back to faithfulness to the living God. Proverbs 26:7 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, profuse are the kisses of an enemy."

At times, while Christians are counseling/discipling people they will become their "Nathan" sent from the Lord. Perhaps this person will recognize rather quickly that the individual sitting in front of them does not even appear to be bothered with their sin before God, or may not even see it all. It is at these moments that helping people becomes challenging. When the counselor is able see something they do not see, and he/she has to be the one to tell them something they may not like to hear. It is good to keep in mind at this point the necessity of Paul's instruction to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

God leads Nathan to help David recognize the real injustice of his adultery and murder. Nathan was directed to create a scenario that helped David see the severity of his sin. Counselors/disciplers are called to speak into the lives of other Christians to help them see the severity of their sin (Gal 6:1; Matt 18:15-18). David's anger was aroused over such an unjust situation that he proclaimed, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die" (2 Sam 12:5). The time was right for David to be made aware that this story was about him. Nathan boldly said to David, "You are the man!" (2 Sam 12:7). Spiritual boldness is something counselors must ask the Holy Spirit to give them. Even when it is difficult for people to hear the truth, there comes a moment in the life of a blinded disciple where they must hear God's truth, even if it is painful. Nathan was used by God to help David recognize his failure and lack of his own displeasure of sin against God to help him find personal restoration with God.

## Repent (2 Sam 12:13; 2 Cor 7:10)

The next dimension of a biblical process of change is repentance. It is important for counselors/disciplers to remember that without genuine repentance real change is not possible. Some counselors/disciplers may settle for a high level of remorse or sorrow, but to find full restoration with the one sinned against, repentance is a critical component. Without repentance, a counselor may just have someone who is sorrowful he was caught, or sorry it affected others, or some other type of worldly sorrow. Second Corinthians 7:10 says, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” Godly grief brings salvation and restoration, where worldly grief produces death and further separation. Genuine Christians must repent from sin for their fellowship with God to be restored (1 John 1:9). Heath Lambert describes such worldly sorrow:

People experiencing worldly sorrow are distressed because they are losing (or fear losing) things the world has to offer. . . . Worldly sorrow experiences sin, winces at the pain, and feels conviction—for a while. Worldly sorrow responds to that conviction by praying—for a while. Worldly sorrow is really determined to fight against sin—for a while.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, genuine repentance is an open recognition before God of how a person’s cognition, affections, and behavior have resulted in violating God’s principles. Repentance means changing one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude regarding sin and righteousness (Mark 6:12; Rom 2:4) Louw and Nida state, “Though in English a focal component of repent is the sorrow or contrition that a person’s experiences because of sin, the emphasis in μετανοέω and μετάνοια seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 34, 36, Kindle.

<sup>27</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 509.



A person must be willing to honestly admit sinful behavior, sinful affections, and sinful beliefs that have led him to sin against God or others in specific ways. Repentance is like making a U-Turn. One must turn from the direction of sin and turn back toward living according the God's principles. Thankfully, God does not put a limit on the number of times a person can repent of sin otherwise every Christian I know would be in trouble. However, God does want people to genuinely repent so that they can move toward lasting change. The context concerning godly grief comes after Paul speaks about the difficult things he had to say to the Corinthians in his previous letter of tears (2 Cor 7:8-10). Paul was thankful for their godly sorrow that led them toward repentance and restoration with God.

Second Samuel 2:12 records David genuine repentance: "I have sinned against the Lord." David rightly understood that although his sin impacted many other people it was first an offense before God. Because of David's genuine recognition of sin, God dealt with the situation with grace. Even though David deserved to die, the Lord was willing to cover his sin. However, out of David and Bathsheba's union, a child was conceived (2 Sam 12:14), and as part of the consequences of his sin, the child would pass away. David wept and prayed for the child even though he knew God was using this to teach him about the consequences of sin. His real repentance led him to continually ask a benevolent God for his mercy on the child, but David appears to recognize God's justice even after the child passes away. Bergen writes,

David surprised everyone, however, by his reaction to the news. Instead of doing something reckless and injurious, David ended his humiliation before the Lord and prepared to worship. Even as David's unnamed son was being prepared for burial, David was grooming himself for a new life. And this new life would begin exactly where the king's earlier life had found its success and strength, in the presence of the Lord.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 375.

## Refocus

A heart desirous to love and serve God will not only stop after recognition and repentance. A refocusing is necessary for every individual who has been deceived into believing sin was worth it. It is a time of reflection about the pathway that led to sinning against God. This third dimension is important because it is the process where an individual continues assessing what he was believing, what he was loving, and how he behaved as a result. Evaluating these areas guides a person back to the truths of Scripture so he can get back on track in his walk with God. Look at Nathan's assessment of what David had overlooked in his willingness to sin with Bathsheba.

Table 1. Areas on which David needed to refocus

2 Samuel 12:7	David overlooked the importance of being God's example as King.
2 Samuel 12:7	David overlooked God's care and deliverance of his life.
2 Samuel 12:8	David overlooked God's provision.
2 Samuel 12:9	David overlooked the importance of obeying God's Word.
2 Samuel 12:10	David overlooked the importance of God's Law—"You shall not kill"
2 Samuel 12:11	David overlooked God's justice.
2 Samuel 12:12	David overlooked the God's consequences for sin.

Nathan brings what David overlooked to the forefront in his confrontation with David. All sin is connected to a theology of God and His ways. Sin often reveals an individual's idols. David needed to go back and refocus his thoughts, affections, actions on what would be pleasing to the Lord (Rom 12:1-2).

A time of refocusing will include saturating oneself with God's Word. The stage of refocusing is critical because it lays the groundwork for the replacement of sin with Godliness. No matter where a person may have sinned, it is important to refocus the thoughts, affections, and behaviors that led him away from God. God desires a heart that is set on glorifying him. Christians are in a constant process of realigning and refocusing their lives toward glorifying God. As 1 Peter 1:16 records, "Be holy, because I am holy." The Holy Spirit is actively helping Christians engage in the battle against sinful desires so that they continue to please God (Gal 5:16).

## Replace (Eph 4:22-25)

The fourth dimension of the process of biblical change is replacement. Replacement of a belief, affection, or action is the only hope for lasting change. Counselors/disciplers often meet people who appear to recognize their sin, appear to repent, appear to refocus, but have no real drive to replace anything and then fall right back into the same sin again and again. Real sacrifice must take place to replace sin in a Christian's life. Without such a focus on replacement, Christians will only become sinners not sinning at the moment, instead of sinners who are changing into the likeness of Christ. Jay Adams addresses this issue by asking, "When is a liar no longer a liar? When is a thief no longer a thief?"<sup>29</sup> He addresses the fact that many answer these simple questions by proclaiming the person is no longer a liar or a thief if they stop these behaviors. Simply not acting in a certain way for a certain length of time does not necessarily mean a person has changed. Adams continues,

There is no assurance whatever that a thief who is not stealing has ceased being a thief. All that the cessation of stealing indicates is that for the moment or at present he is not stealing. Perhaps all that this means is that it is strategically not wise for him to steal at this time. Or it may mean that he has made a good resolution to stop, yet what he will do when he finds himself under economic pressure is another matter. In other words, since thieves do not steal at all times, liars do not always lie, and drunks are not always drunk, cessation of these activities is (in itself) no indication that there has been a permanent change.<sup>30</sup>

Sustainable change can only occur if a Christian replaces his sin with Godliness. Paul in Ephesians 4:22 instructs believers to "put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." The real reason the process of replacement is important is that, without it, a Christian will never genuinely be transformed into Christlikeness. The apostle Paul gives special attention to this put off/put on method of replacement.

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<sup>29</sup> Jay Edward Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 237.

<sup>30</sup> Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 237.

Table 2. Ephesians 4: Put off/put on process

<i>Scripture:</i>	<i>Put Off</i>	<i>Put On</i>
Ephesians 4:25	Falsehood	Speak the Truth
Ephesians 4:26	Anger	Gentleness/Conflict Resolution
Ephesians 4:28	Stealing	Working/Giving
Ephesians 4:29	Unwholesome Speech	Speech filled with Grace

Adams writes,

Do not fail to note how plainly Paul speaks of more than the cessation of some objectionable actions; he calls for a change in the “manner of life” (cf. vs. 22). Paul calls for genuine change; change in the person. Not merely in his actions. There is hope in that—God expects His children to change. If so, such change must be possible; if so, He Who commands also must have provided the ways and means.<sup>31</sup>

The replacement stage leads to permanent God glorifying change. This fourth dimension takes perseverance. The author of Hebrews continues to encourage believers to “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the found and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:1-2). As Christians move toward Christlikeness they will find peace and satisfaction in him.

Seeking to move toward Christlikeness may not be easy, but it brings glory to God. It will take a lot of effort and energy to continue toward lasting change. Christians must not lose sight of the goal of the change process. Hebrews 12:3 says, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” Just because change is hard, does not mean it is not worth it.

### **Conclusion**

Effective biblical counseling will consider the context from which this ministry will find the greatest success. The local church can be trained to become a community of counselors where instruction, protection, and care are normal. Biblical counseling includes a Christ-centered focus that leads others to reflect on Christ’s love, forgiveness, example, and hope that can only be found in him. Lastly, a biblical counselor’s methodology of

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<sup>31</sup> Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 238.

change will reveal their theological focus. Counselors/disciplers will encourage believers toward the recognition and repentance of sin while helping them refocus on training their mind toward godliness by replacing ungodly thoughts, affections, and actions with ones that glorify God and make them more like Christ.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

#### **Introduction**

The project to equip the members and churches connected with the Biblical Counseling Alliance began as an idea at the inception of the organization. The board collectively agreed that the organization desired to be used as a tool of exposure and training of biblical counseling for individuals and churches. Therefore, the board was excited at the opportunity to have the curriculum prepared as part of a doctoral project by the Executive Director. The summary of the curriculum in the chapter highlights the Alliance's desire to expose and train its members of the Alliance at Palmetto Baptist Church to more effective biblical counseling. The title of the curriculum designed for the project was *Discipleship DNA: The Anatomy of a Church*. Part of the appeal of the title of the curriculum was to communicate the reality that discipleship/counseling must be understood as part of God's design of the community of believers. The goal of this chapter is to catalog the steps of preparation, implementation, and analyzation.

#### **Project Preparation**

The initial desire for the foundation of this project began in January of 2016. The BCA had just become a non-profit organization and desired to help encourage individuals/churches toward effective counseling care. The regional board began to meet and discussed initiatives that would be an encouragement to others in the surrounding areas and beyond. Each of the ministry leaders that came together to create the organization were counseling several people outside their own church ministry. As the discussion of initiatives progressed, the board had me further the ministry of this new organization in the pursuit of his doctoral degree. The regional board began to discuss

and evaluate how few churches were engaging in biblical counseling care in the area churches. Therefore, with a desire to help expose other individual/churches toward more effective counseling care, the regional board agreed to allow me to engage in creating a curriculum for this purpose.

The curriculum focused on introductory topics in counseling care. The beginning survey of the Alliance produced minimal feedback as a result of being a new organization. However, the small amount of feedback continued to confirm the regional board's assessment of using the Alliance to expose and encourage individuals/churches to more effective discipleship/counseling. Therefore, the curriculum focused on helping members/churches increase their understanding and practice of discipleship. The topics sought cover information on a definition of discipleship/counseling, the importance of the church in discipleship, a focus on the heart and how it worships, the goal and process of change, and the importance of forgiveness and communication in discipleship/counseling. Each topic developed each month and submitted to the regional board for approval at the Alliance monthly interactive group. The instruction of each lesson was around 45 minutes per lesson followed by discussion.

As the project came to an end in May 2018, and as the post-surveys were collected, it became apparent that there was a deficiency of data to bring conclusions to the success of the project. The supervisor of the project was consulted along with another advisor. These individuals graciously helped point out the deficiency in data and preparation and gave encouraging advice as to how to move forward.

During the course of the project I changed ministry locations and began serving as a pastor of member care at Palmetto Baptist Church in South Carolina. My advisors encouraged me to reteach the project in my current ministry setting. The previous curriculum was condensed to a six-week series on biblical counseling with an opportunity to collect pre- and post-survey data more effectively. The information

collected on the pre-survey was the catalyst for determining which topics would be taught to the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church.

### **Pre-Survey Assessment**

The pre-assessment survey went out to the adult bible class of Palmetto Baptist Church with the goal of having around 20 participants fill out the assessments. The first part of the survey included questions to gather demographic information as well as personal spiritual practices and discipleship involvement at Palmetto Baptist Church. The second part of the survey included questions seeking to gather information about the respondents' understanding of counseling concepts and practice. The invitation resulted in 38 individuals willing to fill out the pre-survey. Of these individuals, 11 (29.73 percent) were male, 26 (70.27 percent) were female, and 1 did not record a gender. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to over 65. Each of these individuals was a member of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. The survey also revealed that a majority of the respondents had been saved for more than 15 years. However, only 21 (55.26 percent) of them were involved in regular discipleship/counseling of others and 17 (44.74 percent) were not involved in discipling/counseling of others.

The respondents' survey results revealed that each respondent was consistently engaged in prayer and Bible study on a regular basis. Only 5 respondents had any formal training in the area of counseling/discipleship. The survey also revealed the respondents' lack of a definition of biblical counseling as well those who integrate secular and biblical concepts together. Also, when asked to respond to the statement "secular psychological approaches often address problems with greater precision than the Bible," the responses varied.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the first part of the survey led me to teach on the difference between biblical and secular counseling during the teaching component to those in the class.

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<sup>1</sup> Response to the statement, "Secular psychological approaches often address problems with greater precision than the Bible," 16 (42.11%) strongly disagree, 11 (28.95%) disagree, 4 (10.53%) somewhat disagree, 4 (10.53%) somewhat agree, 3, (7.89%) agree. In response to the statement, "Secular



The second part of the survey revealed a high level of confidence in the Scripture as a source of guidance for an individual's problems in life.<sup>2</sup> However, even though the survey revealed a confidence in the Scripture to help with suffering and sin in a believer's life, it also revealed the respondents' lack of confidence in their ability to counsel/disciple others. One of the questions on the survey asked if the individuals believed they were an effective biblical counselor. The response revealed 4 (10.81 percent) strongly disagreed they were effective, 7 (18.92 percent) disagreed they were an effective counselor, 9 (24.32 percent) somewhat disagreed they were an effective counselor, 13 (35.14 percent) somewhat agreed in ability to effectively counsel, and 4 (10.81%) agreed in their ability. These results highlight that while the respondents believe strongly in the sufficiency and authority of Scripture, the majority were not confident in their ability to counsel effectively.<sup>3</sup> As a result of these responses I also determined that it would be important to instruct the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church on a biblical perspective of the heart and how it worships. This is an important introductory perspective that sets biblical counseling apart from secular ideas of counseling. Focusing on the heart/motive of a person's actions is critical to helping an individual get to the root of their behavioral problems in a way that pleasing God.

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psychological counseling can bring ultimate spiritual change," 17 (44.74%) strongly disagree, 12 (31.58%) disagree, 3 (7.89%) somewhat disagree, 5 (13.16%) somewhat agree, 1 (.63%) agree. The responses reveal a variation between the level of help respondents believe secular psychological practices bring to a person's spiritual challenges.

<sup>2</sup> When the respondents were asked the question, "I believe the bible is a sufficient and authoritative guide to help them with their problems in life," 23 (60.53%) strongly agreed, 12 (31.58%) agreed, and 3 (7.89%) somewhat agreed.

<sup>3</sup> Another survey question that led to a similar understanding was the question, "I am confident in my ability to ask questions that draw out the heart attitudes and desires," with responses of 4 (10.53%) strongly disagree, 2 (5.26%), 13 (34.21%) somewhat disagree, 9 (23.68%) somewhat agree, 8 (21.05%) agree, and 2 (5.26%) strongly agree. Likewise, responses to the statement, "every Christian has sufficient spiritual resources to counsel others," were 2 (5.26%) strongly disagree, 3 (7.89%) disagree, 5 (13.16%) somewhat disagree, 6 (15.79%) somewhat agree, 12 (31.58%) agree, and 10 (26.32%) strongly agree. These responses further emphasize the varying responses to the respondent's ability to effectively counsel others in need of care.

The second part of the survey also revealed that it would be helpful to focus on teaching through a biblical process of change as well as a biblical perspective of forgiveness. Since these two areas are critical aspects of helping others it became apparent that it would be wise to include a discussion of these topics within the six-weeks of teaching as well. In response to the statement, “I understand and counsel with a biblically-based methodology of change,” 1 (2.63%) strongly disagreed, 3 (7.89%) somewhat disagreed, 12 (31.58%) somewhat agreed, 14 (36.84%) agreed, and 8 (21.04%) strongly agreed. The variation in answers demonstrated the need to clarify a biblical process of change for the class. Other responses in the survey also highlighted this need.<sup>4</sup> Having a biblical goal and process of biblical change is a critical component in counseling/discipleship. The survey informed me that the respondents varied in how to help someone change when facing different issues, such as pornography, conflict resolution, marital struggles, parenting relationships, and anxiety. The response to these particular counseling issues also revealed that instructing on a biblical goal and process of change would be a helpful template for dealing with a variety of topics in counseling.

The last section of the class instruction for the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church sought to bring clarity to the topic of forgiveness and its application in relationships. A response to the statement, “I am comfortable counseling someone struggling with forgiveness issues,” resulted in 3 (7.89%) disagree, 4 (10.53%) somewhat disagree, 16 (42.11%) somewhat agree, 12 (31.58%) agree, and 3 (7.89%)

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<sup>4</sup> In the statement, “The purpose of biblical counseling is to help someone through difficult situations,” 6 (15.79%) disagree, 11 (28.95%) somewhat disagree, 13 (34.21%) somewhat agree, and 8 (21.05%) agree. The responses to the questions also reveal a lack of clarity in the goal of counseling/discipling to move others toward Christ-likeness as the ultimate goal of biblical process of change. Also in response to the statement, “I understand the Scriptures framework for biblical change,” 1 (2.64%) strongly disagree, 2(5.26%) disagree, 5 (13.16%) somewhat disagree, 14 (36.84%) somewhat agree, 11 (28.95%) agree, and 5 (13.16%) strongly agree.

strongly agree.<sup>5</sup> Because forgiveness is an integral part of the change process, it was important to include a section of teaching on this topic.

The pre-survey of the project helped focus the topics of information taught to the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. The results of the survey revealed a desire to instruct on the difference between biblical and secular counseling. The second portion of teaching covered a biblical understanding of the heart and how it worships. The third portion of the teaching covered the goal and process of biblical change. The last portion covered the topic of understanding and applying forgiveness. The curriculum set out to cover these introductory topics based on the pre-survey. Continued teaching on other introductory topics would be needed in the future. A brief summary of the content of these lessons follows in the next section.

### **Description of Lessons**

#### **Lesson 1: Biblical versus Secular Counseling**

Mankind was designed to understand his own dependency on God. Genesis 1:26 records a conversation among the Godhead where he said, “Let us make man in our Image, after our likeness.” Mankind’s identity was bound up in being a reflector of God’s glory. Mankind could only understand himself and the world in which he was created to be part of in light of the designer’s instruction. God designed Adam and Eve with the ability to have a relationship with God that existed without any hindrances. Even in the pre-cursed environment God was giving them instructional truth and directions for living that would allow them to experience joy in God. This joy was dependent on their ability to trust and follow Him. Humanity was designed to contemplate questions like: Who am I? and What is my Purpose? These questions did not arise after sin had cursed the world—

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<sup>5</sup> In support of this need is the respondents’ perspective of the statement, “Forgiving yourself is an important biblical principle,” which were 10 (26.32%) strongly disagree, 8 (21.05%), 7 (18.42%) somewhat disagree, 5 (13.16%) somewhat agree, 4 (10.53%) agree, 4 (10.53%) strongly agree.

they were just as important to Adam and Eve prior to the fall. God, in his wisdom, gave them instruction for living in the Garden under Him in a way they would find joy and satisfaction (Gen 2:15-18). The disturbance of such a glorious relationship was affected when the serpent took aim at the truth to distort it for the sake of getting them to distrust it (Gen 3:1-7). For the first time, Adam and Eve were receiving instruction from a source other than God and had to make a choice about which counsel was true. The question of Scriptures' sufficiency has been a challenge to humanity from the moment the serpent said, "Did God really say?" Doug Bookman states,

Any Christian who sets out to counsel another individual is aware that the counsel offered must be true. Counseling is by definition and impulse a helping ministry. It assumes one individual who is confronted with some measure of confusion, disappointment, or despair and a second person who endeavors to help by analyzing the counselee's situation, sorting out the issues involved, and then offering helpful and healing advice and direction. But the efficacy of all that any counselor undertakes to do is dependent at least on this one thing: that the analysis and counsel is true.<sup>6</sup>

After highlighting the need to address the question of Scriptures' sufficiency, the remainder of the lesson was devoted to unfolding three Scripture passages that declare Scriptures' sufficiency. The three passages used included Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 2:15-17, and 2 Peter 3:5-7.

The lesson addressed the comparison between a biblical and secular approach to counseling. It sought to demonstrate how the secular approach is guided by secular presuppositions about humanity. Stuart Scott writes, "All counselors enter the counseling room with certain foundational beliefs about human problems and human 'rightness,' and both are directly related to their beliefs about the nature of God and change."<sup>7</sup> Biblical and secular approaches are different because of the presuppositions they hold. An attempt to

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<sup>6</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr., Wayne A. Mack, and The Master's College, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling*, electronic ed. (Dallas: Word, 1997), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Stuart Scott, "A Biblical Counseling Approach," in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, ed. Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sisemore (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 160.

integrate secular humanism with the Bible is unnecessary. The synthesis of Scripture with secular theories are dangerous.<sup>8</sup> The biblical approach is superior in the fact that it is centered on Scripture, centered on Christ, and centered on Christ's people. The destructive nature of seeking to integrate secular theories with Scripture results in secular ideas sprinkled with spiritual terminology. John MacArthur states, "The infusion of psychology into the teaching of the Church has blurred the line between behavior modification and sanctification."<sup>9</sup> When Christians confuse the difference between these two opposing worldviews, they will also confuse the biblical focus of how the heart/motive flows into a person's behavior. The Scripture is more than a book to filter opposing truth claims; it is the truth. Because of Scriptures' authority to speak to the human condition of sinfulness, it is the only source worth using for counseling. Any system not based entirely upon the Scripture for its foundations and the methods these foundations produce ought to be rejected as a viable approach for counseling/discipleship.

## **Lesson 2: The Heart—The Target and Focus of Worship**

The Bible's repetitive focus on the heart is a critical component of biblical discipleship/counseling. The importance of the heart appears to be both widely accepted while at the same time extensively misunderstood. For example, if a Christian comes for discipleship/counseling and is asked to recite the greatest commandment, he would likely be able to deliver Jesus' words in Matthew 22:36-37. Most Christians know Jesus taught that "loving God with all your heart" is the most important command for all Christians. However, if the same Christian was asked, "How do you love God with all your heart?" the person may struggle to articulate exactly what that means. Often the answer to the second question reveals a list of behaviors. Answers such as go to church, read the Bible,

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<sup>8</sup> MacArthur, Mack, and The Master's College, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, 66.

<sup>9</sup> MacArthur, Mack, and The Master's College, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, 10.

pray, obey parents, listen to Christian music, wear certain clothes, or not going to certain places, reveal a misunderstanding.

Since all motivations and behaviors will be exposed before God when one gives an account for this life, it is paramount that Christians understand the heart behind the behavior. Unfortunately, Christians often place a greater importance on externals than on the heart from which those actions come. Paul Tripp says, “We can’t assume that people understand us when we talk about these things. We need to develop the ideas further.”<sup>10</sup> Every Christian ought to be aware of his own heart’s capacity to be deceived into thinking that external conformity is more important than inward heart attitude. Those who are discipling/counseling need to be aware of the possibility of giving instruction that is behavioristic. Such instruction will fall short in helping individuals experience genuine biblical heart change. It would be equivalent to putting a band-aid on an area in need of surgery. Lesson 5 sought to give a biblical explanation of the heart, examine the components of the heart, and appreciate the heart as the control center of Christian conduct. To love God with all one’s heart, it is important to understand how the Scripture speaks about the heart. The heart and other synonyms, such as mind, soul, strength, are used to describe both the inner and outer man component.<sup>11</sup> Psalm 73:25-26 and 1 Samuel 16:7 demonstrate the importance of this wholistic reality. The components of the heart are displayed in scripture in a three-dimensional way.<sup>12</sup> Cognition, affection, and volition help the discipler/counselor effectively counsel the heart and not behavior. Focusing on the heart is the only way to produce disciples that seek to please God with all their heart

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<sup>10</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 65, Kindle.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 16.

(Matt 22:36-37). The main text of Scripture used in this lesson consisted of Proverbs 4:23; Luke 6:45-48; Matt 7:21).

Understanding the heart as the target of discipleship/counseling helps focus on caring about what God cares about. Loving God with all one's heart matters so significantly because God alone knows the genuineness of a person's worship. From the very beginning of the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, Scripture consistently draws attention to the subject of worship.<sup>13</sup> Satan, the deceiver of this world, desires to derail and devour Christians so that they will not worship the one true and living God (1 Pet 5:8-10). Lints describes this liturgical emphasis:

Relationships always manifest and point to a liturgical impulse in the *imago Dei*, where the *imago Dei* is constituted by a yearning for satisfaction or fulfilment in that reflecting relation. The intrinsic desire for fulfilment is hardwired into the sociality of the human person. . . . When the intimacy of the divine-human relationship is broken (Gen. 3), significance and security are shattered as well. The fracturing of the relationship inevitably creates a yearning for something else to provide significance and security. Though there is not anyone or anything that can provide that ultimate significance and security except for the triune God, individuals will search for a substitute. This is the initial dynamic of idolatry.<sup>14</sup>

Worshipping God with all one's heart is not an event that happens only on Sunday, but an event that is happening all day every day. Who, what, and how someone worships are important questions because God designed image bearers with hearts that worships (Exod 20:1-10; Rom 1:22-23; 12:1-2). Guarding one's heart is identical with guarding one's worship. Lints continues,

At the heart of worship is a sense of "giving yourself away" to another. Key to worship then are the questions "To whom are you giving yourself away and in what manner are you giving yourself?" Genuine worship is giving yourself to the living God in whom and for whom you have been created. Idolatry by contrast is substituting the true object of worship (God) for an imitation (idol) and reorienting the relationship from worship to possession. One who worships the living God does not possess him for one's own purposes. But those who created an idol seek to

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<sup>13</sup> Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2012), 17, Kindle.

<sup>14</sup> Bigney, *Gospel Treason*, 155-56.

possess it for their own purpose. . . . This is the difference between the image of reflection and the idols of possession.<sup>15</sup>

The lesson concluded with a reflection on the importance of worship expressed in Revelation 4:11, which says, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” Targeting the heart is critical because it is the control center for God-honoring worship. Worship always has cognitive, affectional, and volitional components; therefore, worship must be examined on each of these levels to see if it is pure before the Lord.

### **Lesson 3-4: The Goal of Discipleship and the Process of Change**

Lesson 3 sought to clarify the biblical goal of discipleship/counseling. The goal is genuine change that permeates beyond the behavior to the components of the heart examined in the previous lessons. Biblical change is far more than behavioral modification. The goal of change is to become more like Christ Jesus. Therefore, Christ is the central example of what each discipler/counselor is helping others to become like. The genuine Christian must never believe that they are justified by faith, and then sanctified by mere works. The apostle Paul, writing to the believers in Galatia, says, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal 3:3). He is making the point that a Christian is saved by the Spirit and lives by the Spirit. Change in the life of a believer is a deliberate activity while being controlled by the Spirit of God so that He is glorified (1 Cor 10:31). In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul says, “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Unfortunately, believers often fall prey to legalistic sanctification. They seek to maintain their worship of God through works, believing what they do is more important than the heart they do it with. Samuel confronted King Saul about this kind of approach to worshipping God (1

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<sup>15</sup> Bigney, *Gospel Treason*, 156.



Sam 15). The goal of discipleship/counseling is Christ-likeness that is applied effectively to the motifs of the saint, sufferer, and sinner.<sup>16</sup>

Lesson 4 continued on the topic of change, with a focus on the biblical methodology for change. Biblical change includes a four-dimensional approach of (1) recognition, (2) repentance, (3) refocus, and (4) replace.<sup>17</sup> Seeking to move toward Christlikeness may not be easy, but it does bring glory to God. It will take a lot of effort and energy to continue toward lasting change. Christians must not lose sight of the goal of the change process. Hebrews 12:3 says, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” Just because change is hard, does not mean it is not worth it.

### **Lesson 5-6: Understanding and Applying Biblical Forgiveness**

Lessons 5 and 6 were designed to introduce and apply the biblical teaching on forgiveness. Disciples/counselors need to have a biblical perspective about forgiveness. Many people believe the problem is not that God does not forgive them, but that they cannot forgive themselves. The topic of forgiveness is regularly discussed in discipleship/counseling because it is the solution for restoring relationship with God and with others. The lesson is focused on understanding the need for God’s forgiveness on both a judicial and relational level. As C. S. Lewis point out, “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely word, until they have something to forgive.”<sup>18</sup> The lesson unfolded three principles concerning biblical forgiveness. The first principle states that God’s forgiveness is necessary when sin is present. Isaiah 53:5-6 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 record how Jesus

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<sup>16</sup> Michael R. Emlet, *CrossTalk: Where Life & Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009), 74, Kindle.

<sup>17</sup> See chap. 3, under the heading of “A Biblical Methodology of Sanctification” for a description of each of these principles in more detail.

<sup>18</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, rev. and enlarged ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1980), 104.

was willing to die for the sins of all mankind. Whether it is sin before God or sin between believers, sin necessitates forgiveness. The second principle states that when sin is present, a pardon is required. Nehemiah 9:16-17 displays a God who is ready to forgive or pardon the sins of his people and restore them. Without forgiveness the relationship between God and others will remain unrestored. Romans 5:8-10 says that Christ was willing to pardon those who admit their sin. Once this happens, God is willing to remove sin “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps 1-3:11-12). God chooses not to hold sin against those believers, even though he does remember their sin.<sup>19</sup> The third principle states that once a pardon is granted, relationships can be restored. Romans 8:1 describes an individual’s condition once he is forgiven by God. The fourth principle of forgiveness is that its practice brings glory to God. When a Christian forgives the way God forgives, he/she is acting in a Christlike manner. The lesson ended by explaining Luke 7:36-50 in relation to forgiveness and a person’s love for Christ. The lesson defined biblical forgiveness and a six-step forgiveness plan that must accompany those who seek to forgive. Forgiveness is the act of promising to pardon sin for the sake of restoration for the glory of God. The parable of the unforgiving servant was explained to demonstrate eight principles about Christ’s forgiveness (Matt 18:21-35).

### **Post-Instruction Process**

After the six-week instruction to the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church, the series concluded by sending out the post-survey analysis to those who had completed the pre-survey. The analysis of the post-survey responses is covered in chapter 5. One question was added to the post-survey to give participants the opportunity for further comments on teaching, outside the specific questions in the post-survey. Concerning the series on biblical counseling, one respondent said, “The six lessons taught

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<sup>19</sup> Gary Inrig, *Forgiveness: Discovering the Power and the Reality of God’s Authentic Christian Forgiveness* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2005), 114.

by Pastor Josh Stephens at PBC were lessons I will return to again and again. It was over all a good reminder that we need to live with a Biblical world view, which includes the fact that the Bible gives us everything we need to resolve our problems.” Another individual commented, “Really enjoyed this series. I appreciate the emphasis on the sufficiency of scripture and that we can interpret our circumstances correctly to live a life that glorifies and pleases God, no matter what sin and challenges that are in our life.” A third respondent said, “I really appreciated your sessions on forgiveness, but think that more time could still be spent on the topic including answering questions we may have on the topic (including how to move forward when someone confesses that they know they need to forgive, but are honestly not ready to yet).” These comments highlight the positive and clarifying feedback to topics chosen for the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. These comments demonstrate where the respondents were most helped by the material and where more teaching in the future would be necessary to specific topics like forgiveness and its application. Overall, the comments were encouraging and instructive. Further analysis of the post-survey will be given in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The desire to help equip individuals and churches for more effective counseling arose from a small gathering of biblical counselors. The group began to discuss the difficulties of many individuals who sought help outside their pastor or church and were coming to them for help. As the group continued to gather during the following year, they continued to discuss what they could do to help the exposure and promotion of biblical counseling within the area of the Upper Midwest. The group decided to create a new organization to encourage individuals and churches to more effective counseling by providing monthly interactive focus groups. The new organization was called the Biblical Counseling Alliance (BCA). At the same time the organization was launched, I began my doctoral studies at Southern Seminary. As the executive director of the organization, I desired to create an introductory counseling curriculum for my doctoral project to be used to sharpen others in biblical counseling.

The monthly interactive groups consisted of two parts. The first part includes a time of biblical instruction. The second part was a time of interaction designed with questions or case studies toward further growth in biblical counseling. The board desired to launch the interactive focus groups during the month of March 2017. The curriculum took the group twelve months to complete since it would be delivered once a month. In March 2017, the BCA monthly Interactive Focus Groups were launched. As the project ended in May of 2018, the project failed to gather enough statistical analysis to provide evidence for meeting two out of the three goals of the project. As a result of the lack of data, my supervisor encouraged me to resurvey and reteach the project to members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church where I currently serve. Therefore, I resurveyed the

members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church and condensed the twelve series introductory lessons into a six-week series based upon the survey information received.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

As stated in earlier chapters, the purpose of this project was to increase the knowledge and appreciation of biblical counseling of members of the BCA. Even though the first round of teaching did not result in enough data to be conclusive about the result of the project, the purpose to raise the knowledge of counseling/discipleship among BCA members remained the same. The six-week condensed curriculum resulted in the opportunity for the BCA to partner with Palmetto Baptist Church.

The Lord brought me to Palmetto Baptist Church toward the end of my doctoral work to take a position as Pastor of Member Care/Counseling. The leadership of the church communicated their desire to focus intentionally on counseling/discipleship. Therefore, the opportunity to teach the project to the BCA members of my local church provided an opportunity to increase knowledge and practice of BCA members that would help the ministry of the local church as well. It provided members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church the opportunity to be part of the process of growing together in this area of counseling/discipleship.

The BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church were receptive to the opportunity to be challenged and sharpened in the area of counseling and discipleship. The church has a history of seeking to be intentional about discipleship. Therefore, the teaching fit into the overall focus of the ministry and sought to help shape the knowledge and skill of these efforts at the church.

The purpose of the project targeted a growing desire in the leadership to help the church pursue both preventative care as well as precision care in specific problems. Targeting the introductory aspects of biblical counseling topics aided in bringing an awareness to the church. Individuals throughout the course of the teaching communicated positive feedback on how these topics helped them solidify a biblical approach to caring

for others. The project also aided in the overall church emphasis of offering counseling to the community in the future. This was accomplished through interest generated in helping in the counseling ministry as a result of the teaching. Some in the congregation have chosen to go on for more training and continue to pursue a greater awareness beyond these introductory topics. Some of these individuals have become care advocates in the counseling ministry at Palmetto Baptist Church. The focus and purpose of the project to help the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church gain a greater awareness of biblical counseling was a benefit to the BCA and the church. It also accelerated interest in being further trained in counseling/discipleship as well as caused others to be more proficient in informal counseling care in relationships within the body.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The project for the BCA included three goals as measurements of the success of the project. The first goal was to assess the current level of understanding of biblical counseling within the membership of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. The second goal was to develop an introduction to biblical counseling curriculum to teach to the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church. The third goal of this project was to raise the knowledge of biblical counseling among the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church through implementing this curriculum.

The leadership team at Palmetto Baptist Church was thankful that I would have the opportunity to teach a six-week series on counseling/discipleship at Palmetto Baptist Church. Having sought out someone to fill the position of member care, they were eager to see how the focus of counseling/discipleship care would strengthen the church.

The first goal of the project was to assess the knowledge and practice through a counseling knowledge and practice assessment (CKPA). This goal was considered successfully met when BCA members of the adult class at Palmetto Baptist Church completed the pre-survey. The assessment of the pre-survey was given in chapter 4 to

highlight the information received, which guided the selection of the introductory topics for the six-week series.

The second goal of this project was to develop an introduction of biblical counseling curriculum for the members of the BCA at Palmetto Baptist Church. The curriculum sought to communicate introductory topics in biblical counseling/discipleship chosen as a result of the pre-survey. To measure this goal, a panel consisting of the regional board members of the BCA evaluated the curriculum. The regional board consists of five individuals; three men, two women. One was a pastor who oversees a biblical counseling ministry in the inner city, another was a pastor with a master's degree in biblical counseling, and one other was an ACBC certified counselor who is the main women's counselor at her church. The other person was unable to participate because of medical conditions experienced by her husband during the time of the teaching. Therefore, three of the regional board members evaluated the material. The goal was measured by a rubric seeking to evaluate the curriculum's scriptural faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level. The measurements of the three regional board members scored the curriculum as exemplary, meeting the requirement for success and approved it for use in teaching BCA members.

The third goal of this project was to raise the knowledge of biblical counseling among BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church by implementing the six-week curriculum. This goal was measured by administering a CKPA post-survey which was used to measure the change in the knowledge of biblical counseling.<sup>1</sup> Thirty-eight individuals participated in the pre-survey. As a result of various conflicts, lack of attendance, or other difficulties, seventeen individuals participated in the post-survey. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2.

demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. The results of the t-test indicate that the training of the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church made a statistically significant difference, resulting in their increased knowledge and confidence to counsel biblically ( $t_{(16)} = 3.278$ ,  $p < 0.0047$ ). The results of the survey are seen in table 3 and 4.

Table 3. Results of pre- and post-course CKPA scores

Respondent	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
1	113	121
2	135	142
3	123	139
4	138	141
5	143	138
6	132	143
7	102	125
8	128	136
9	111	111
10	127	134
11	149	149
12	134	131
13	104	111
14	120	128
15	128	125
16	137	158
17	133	134

Table 4. t-Test: Paired two sample for means

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	126.8823529	133.2941176
Variance	175.4852941	154.0955882
Observations	17	17
Pearson Correlation	0.804453469	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	16	
t Stat	-3.278844315	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002362612	
t Critical one-tail	1.745883676	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.004725223	
t Critical two-tail	2.119905299	



## **Strengths of the Project**

The first strength of the project concerns the opportunity to address the differences between secular psychology and a biblical counseling model. While seeking to make a distinction between these two approaches I was able to communicate the differing pre-suppositions of each counseling philosophy. Biblical versus secular counseling was addressed because of the concerns mentioned in chapter 1 about the influence of psychology. Many individuals and churches often do not even realize that various forms of secular psychology that permeate their thinking. The project helped the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church continue focusing on how the Bible speaks to various challenges and labels often found in secular psychology. Because I had the opportunity to teach portions of my material in two different locations, I was able to hear how certain lessons brought clarity to how the Bible speaks to today's issues day. One individual, who was a licensed psychologist, responded to the clarity of the lessons on biblical versus secular psychology lesson: "I am in a serious identity crisis, I know the people I help everyday need the Scripture, but I am not allowed to give it to them without their request. So, I try my best to bring the discussion up to help them more effectively, but it bothers me that I am not able to help them more." This individual was being convinced that his training in psychology could not match up to the Scripture in addressing people's problems. This is just one account of an individual who came to me and discussed how they needed to have more of a biblical counseling emphasis. Therefore, one strength the teaching had at Palmetto Baptist Church was that it brought even more clarity to the presuppositions of biblical counseling and secular counseling. Another individual who attended the class said in their post-survey analysis that "it was over all a good reminder that we need to live with a Biblical world view, which includes the fact that the Bible gives us everything we need to resolve our problems."

The second strength of this project concerns the networking of individuals and churches in favor of biblical counseling. As mentioned in concern 3 in chapter 1, the BCA desired to create of network of people and churches who were connected over effective

biblical counseling. The monthly interactive group teaching was a mechanism used by the organization to offer connectivity among individuals/churches. Many who have been affected by Faith Church in Lafayette, ACBC, CCEF, and other biblical counseling organizations go back to a local church that does not practice or promote biblical counseling. The interactive focus groups and curriculum provided further times of continued instruction and interaction to sharpen their skill in discipleship/counseling. The BCA offers online resources for counseling, monthly interactive groups, and a yearly seminar to connect its members. When the organization began in January 2016, the only individuals involved were the three churches connected to the regional board members. Membership has increased to 60 individual members in 20 different locations across the United States. The BCA has grown in church/organization connectivity. It has grown from the original 3 churches to 8 total churches and 1 seminary institution.

A third strength of the project was the increase in awareness of biblical counseling of BCA members at Palmetto Baptist church. Re-surveying and reteaching lessons on introductory topics in biblical counseling accelerated the understanding and interest of others at Palmetto Baptist Church in the counseling ministry. Some are now considering further training at Faith Church in Lafayette, or future training offered at Palmetto Baptist Church. Others are seeking to work as advocates in the counseling ministry at Palmetto Baptist Church. Individuals who participated in the series about biblical counseling/discipleship are now counseling others more effectively on an informal and formal basis.

A fourth benefit generated by the project at Palmetto Baptist Church was the implementation of further training of the elders for more effective soul care in the church. The lessons sparked an interest by the lead pastor to have us go through Jeremy Pierre's book, *The Pastor and Counseling*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

A fifth benefit that occurred from the project to the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church was continued small group leader training through quarterly workshops. These workshops are taking portions of the material and helping the small group leaders and their wives in doing preventative counseling/discipleship within their small groups.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

One of the obvious weak points of the project can be seen by the lack of data and forethought in the project resulting in re-surveying and reteaching the material in a second location at Palmetto Baptist Church. The first time I sought to teach the project many of the individuals who began to attend the event were not yet members of the BCA. The BCA encouraged its members to invite others outside its membership for a few nights of the event where I would encourage them to join as a member to continue. Because of encouraging exposure in this way, the monthly groups often had new visitors for a couple of months and they might not return. This format did not help the pre-post survey results. Even if they did fill out the survey, they may not have been a member or may not have returned for the rest of the teaching. Besides visiting non-members of the organization, the teaching was intended to take place over a twelve-month period. Even though the monthly gatherings did serve the purpose of the organization's networking desire, it did not help to acquire a stable group to survey for measuring the increase in knowledge and practice of its members. Stability in the group was also more difficult because the teaching was spread over a broad span of twelve months. Therefore, the recommendation by my supervisor was to reteach the project with a more stable group of attendees at Palmetto Baptist Church. The suggestion was also made to condense the series from a twelve-month series to a six-week series. However, condensing the series to six weeks meant that I could cover less content than I had originally planned from the beginning of the project.

Another weakness of the survey was due to its clarity in structure. The survey could have been clearer. To clarify certain questions of the Counseling Knowledge and

Practice survey, I went back over the survey with my supervisor to sharpen some of the questions that lacked clarity or specificity. The revised survey that I issued when re-surveying to the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church went much better than the first time I gave the survey.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Because of what I have reflected on, I would do a couple of things different that would render better results. First, I would likely have waited for the BCA to reach one year as an organization before starting the project. Waiting for a stable group of BCA membership would have allowed a more stable group to begin the teaching and would have hopefully forgone the need to reteach the project a second time.

Second, I would have sought to provide online access to the monthly interactive focus group from the beginning. Providing the online participation would have allowed for more consistency in attendance and exposure to the instruction. Adding this element from the beginning may have also deterred the project from having to be retaught.

A third element I would done differently in the reteach would have been to teach the material as small group leader workshops instead of the adult class. Because Palmetto Baptist Church does not yet have a facility, it is limited to certain teaching opportunities. Teaching the material in the small group leaders' workshops could have yielded more interaction and dialogue

### **Theological Reflections**

The BCA originated out of the reality that many churches in our region were lacking an emphasis of counseling within the church. One of the theological emphases highlighted in the project was the prominence of the local church. The BCA set out to strengthen individuals who would then influence their own congregations. By God's grace we witnessed the sharpening of various churches that were represented at each monthly gathering the first time I ran the project. An average of 6-10 churches were

represented each month. How the Scripture reveals the importance of the local church in God's design for a Christian growth is remarkable. Having two churches begin the process of providing more formal counseling within their church has been a tremendous encouragement. This project heightened my own love and appreciation for Jesus being willing to die for the church (Eph 5:25). The individuality that permeates western culture struggles to see the necessity of connecting to the local church. It is as if Christians today say, "I love Jesus, but I really don't want to commit to the church for which he died." This mentality of individuality does not foster Christian growth as effectively as a covenanted group of believers choosing to deliberately care for each other. The author of Hebrews describes the importance of this connection when he says, "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering" (Heb 10:23). Biblical counseling within the church is intended to be a place where Christians remind each other of the hope they have in Christ. It is a place where Christians "stir each other up to love and good works" (Heb 10:24). The importance of the local church ought not be neglected (Heb 10:25). In God's gracious providence, he has grown my appreciation for the local church and God's people. The local church has been perfectly designed by God to provide a context where Christians can grow together most effectively. It has been my personal privilege to partner with other Christians and churches to foster a love for the entity Jesus was willing to die to establish. The byproduct of this appreciation has been a greater love for God's design of the church and the ability of God's people to help each other with the Scripture.

A second theological reflection concerning my project revolved around the subject of the sufficiency of Scripture. I have seen this in counseling ministry as people from other churches came to our ministry after having gone to a psychologist and were left with no guidance or hope. I have also witnessed churches making it a common practice of sending people to Christian counselors who only gave lip service to the sufficiency of Scripture. The attack on the sufficiency of Scripture did not begin as a result of secular psychology, but took place the moment the serpent said, "Did God really

say” (Gen 3:1). The serpent challenged the sufficiency of God’s Word. The temptation to distrust God’s good Word resulted in a sin cursed catastrophe. Over the course of teaching the curriculum I have had the wonderful privilege to provide instruction from God’s Word. The BCA remained faithful in encouraging others toward the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling/discipleship ministry. I am grateful to the Lord for his guidance through the Scripture and that it can be trusted as the only source for spiritual direction in biblical counseling.

A third theological reflection concerned the topic of forgiveness. From marriage counseling, mission’s teams, families, church members, and friends, the topic of forgiveness is important. Teaching on this topic helped sharpen my understanding and ability to share its importance. Christ is the model for Christians’ forgiveness to one another. Forgiveness is an important introductory element in counseling because one is typically dealing with situations that require a forgiveness from God and from others for relationships to be restored. I can remember one such counselee who had been molested as a child by a family member who had long passed away. The person desired to find reconciliation. The individual asked, “What does forgiveness look like in this situation.” Questions like this, in situations like those and others, make forgiveness an important topic. By studying/teaching on forgiveness I am now able to better train others more effectively. Praise the Lord for the model of His forgiveness!

### **Personal Reflections**

The project for the BCA of creating an introductory counseling curriculum was an enjoyable experience. Each class through the course of the project contributed to strengthening the curriculum. The project served the organization by helping equip the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church. In God’s good providence, the organization continues to grow even outside its intended region and is having more of a national reach than initially expected. The six-week curriculum became a launching pad for the counseling ministry at Palmetto Baptist Church. I received a blessing by those who

attended the series. The project provided the opportunity for the church which I now serve to jumpstart its counseling ministry through the project. It was amazing to see each attendee of the series demonstrate the truth of Proverbs 27:17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Through the course of the project the Lord allowed unexpected events to occur. At the beginning of the pursuit of my degree, I had been ministering at the same church for around seventeen years—twelve as associate pastor and five as the lead pastor. When I began deciding what my project would be, the BCA was already at a point where they wanted to begin monthly interactive focus groups. As a result, I received permission to begin my project a year early since it would take twelve months to complete the project for the BCA. Little did I know what God was planning for my family when I began. Two years into my project, the Lord called me away from the church I had been serving for seventeen years in Minnesota. It was God’s desire to put me in a new ministry in South Carolina. I accepted a call as the Pastor of Discipleship and Member Care. The church desired for me to help initiate a counseling ministry in their church to care for its members and community more effectively. Even though I was dejected that my initial run of the project for the BCA was not as successful as I had hoped, the Lord had a plan. Initially, when I was advised to reteach the project, I internally struggled in my heart over a desire to complete the project without having to reteach it again. I am thankful for such a helpful supervisor in Jeremy Pierre to help encourage me through the struggle. As I continued to trust in God’s plan and timing for my project, God needed to teach me a few things about identity in Christ instead of in the completion of my doctoral work. As usual, God’s timing is certainly best. Re-surveying and reteaching my project to BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church gave me the opportunity to glimpse how I could help increase the knowledge of counseling/discipleship at the church. The project also gave me the opportunity to promote and jumpstart the counseling ministry to members who needed care but were nervous to ask for help. Reteaching also provided me the opportunity to

connect with advocates now serving in the counseling ministry at Palmetto Baptist Church. The Lord made it abundantly clear that by delaying the completion of my project, he opened a door for it to serve more people in my present ministry. God has been so gracious and kind to reinforce my identity in Christ through this project. He has also allowed me to appreciate his kindness in working out all the events of my project to help in my present ministry in a way that helped accelerate the training of elders, small group leaders, and lay people at Palmetto Baptist Church.

It has also been amazing to watch the Lord use the material to not only help me, but to strengthen others. During my schooling, the Lord opened the door for me to travel to Spain to speak at a retreat for church planting missionary teams. I used some of the material created for the monthly groups to help the church planting teams better reflect on how discipleship/counseling was a necessity to the culture of any local church. I then had the privilege to do preventative care counseling for each couple and mission's team to help strengthen marriages and ministries. God allowed the project of the BCA to prepare me for this opportunity.

The Lord also allowed me to travel to Uruguay to be the pre-conference speaker at a pastor's conference. God had been preparing my heart, and the material I would use through this project. The topic of the pre-conference included an introduction to biblical counseling. I was asked to provide a rationale for biblical counseling and how it can help the church and its community. Therefore, God used this material in more contexts than just the BCA.

I will continue to use this material in the church I am now serving and the BCA regional board desires to record the material as a future resource for its members. I am grateful to the Lord for his kindness and grace during my schooling, ministry changes, and international trips. I have much more to learn and look forward to many more interactive focus groups where I can be sharpened by my brothers and sisters in Christ. I



look forward to how the BCA will continue to develop more ways to strengthen discipleship/counseling ministries of individuals and churches in the future.

### **Conclusion**

The Lord used the project of creating introductory material for the BCA members at Palmetto Baptist Church in more ways than I ever expected. I was personally strengthened by the project as a pastor and executive director of the organization. The connections and network created by the project will last for many years to come. Currently, some of the attendees are being personally trained by some of the regional board members because of the relationships established by the project. Two churches continue to move forward in the pursuit of more effective biblical counseling in their local church. Most importantly, the project material was faithful to Scripture. The material promotes the sufficiency of Scripture as the source for effective biblical counseling and the local church as the most effective context for counseling to occur. I will be forever thankful to the Lord for all he has taught during my degree. I am delighted to continue to serve as the executive director of the BCA and continue helping ministries with counseling resources and instruction. The BCA board continues to pray that God will use this organization as a tool to strengthen his people and his church.

APPENDIX 1  
COUNSELING KNOWLEDGE AND  
PRACTICE ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Counseling Knowledge and Practice Assessment (CKPA). Some general questions are followed by a thirty-four-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess the level of biblical counseling knowledge and practice of each of the members of the Biblical Counseling Alliance at Palmetto Baptist Church.

## COUNSELING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE ASSESSMENT

### **Agreement to Participate**

Biblical Counseling Alliance (BCA) is committed to quality biblical counselor. The Biblical Counseling Alliance Exists to promote biblical sufficiency, assist toward certification, facilitate training opportunities, and develop interactive focus groups to strengthen churches, individuals, and parachurch ministries. The BCA believes that one of the best ways to help churches is to assist ministry leaders in the area of biblical counseling/discipleship. This survey for BCA board of directors will help us assess the member's current competency of counseling knowledge and practice.

This research is being conducted by Josh Stephens for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Because the BCA is relational, we prefer that you include your name below, rather than completing the survey anonymously. If you prefer to be anonymous, however, please use a four-digit code of your choosing.

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Name (or 4 Digit Code):</b>	
<b>Gender: Male or Female</b>	
<b>Age:</b>	
<b>Part 1: General Questions</b>	
1. Would you consider yourself a Christian?	Yes or No
2. How long have you been a Christian?	
3. Are you currently involved in the discipleship of others at Palmetto Baptist Church?	Yes or No
4. How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions?	
5. How would you describe your prayer life?	

6. How would you define counseling?
7. How would you define biblical counseling?
8. Have you received any formal counseling training? Is so, please describe.
9. Briefly explain what integrationists teach and list one individual you would consider an integrationist?
10. Have you received any kind of formal counseling? If so, please describe.
11. Does assisting people through their spiritual problems make you comfortable or uncomfortable. Yes or No, and Why?
12. How often do others seek help from you for their spiritual (non-physical) challenges? (Circle One) A. Daily B. Weekly C. Monthly D. Seldom

<b>Part 2: Counseling Knowledge and Practice</b>							
<b>Directions:</b> Please mark your response to the statements based on the following scale: SD = strongly disagree D = disagree DS = disagree somewhat AS = agree somewhat A = agree SA = strongly agree							
1.	The Bible commands Christians to counsel one another.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2.	Addressing a person's salvation is a priority in counseling before addressing behavioral problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3.	I comfortable with my ability to give biblical counsel to those who are suffering or sinning.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4.	Suffering is never God's plan for believers	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5.	Man is basically good.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	Sin is the ultimate source of man's suffering.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I am confident in my ability to share the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I believe the Bible is sufficient and authoritative as my guide to my problems in life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I am confident in my ability to ask questions that draw out the heart attitudes and desires.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	The pastors are the only ones responsible for counseling in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	Lay people can be equipped to counsel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	The local church is the best place for believers to receive spiritual care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	Every Christian has sufficient spiritual resources to counsel others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	I am an effective biblical counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	The goals of counseling are set by the counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	The goals of counseling are set by the counselee.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	Secular psychological approaches often address problems with greater precision than the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

18. Secular psychological counseling can bring ultimate change.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I understand and counsel with a biblically-based methodology of change.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. Family upbringing is the primary determiner of how a person will behave in adulthood.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. Understanding an individual's health background is important for biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. Understanding an individual's family history background is important for biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I could help someone struggling to develop biblical communication.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Forgiving yourself is an important biblical principle.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. It is important to raise an individual's self-esteem in counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. The purpose of biblical counseling is to help someone through difficult situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. I understand the Scriptures framework for biblical change.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28. I have a biblical perspective of conflict resolution.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29. I am comfortable counseling someone struggling with forgiveness issues.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30. I am comfortable helping someone struggling with anxiety.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
31. I am comfortable helping someone struggling with pornography.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
I am comfortable counseling a teen who is having difficulty in parental relationships.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32. I am comfortable counseling Christians who have unresolved conflict in relationships.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33. I am comfortable counseling couples with marital difficulties.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2  
BIBLICAL COUNSELING CURRICULUM  
EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to the BCA board of directors. This group evaluated the course material to ensure its faithfulness to Scripture and whether it was practically applicable.

<b>Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation Rubric</b>					
<b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Scriptural Faithfulness</b>					
The content of the curriculum is based upon a good theological foundation.					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound.					
The content of the curriculum encourages faithfulness toward Christ and His Word.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The curriculum sufficiently provides a helpful resource for introductory issues in biblical counseling.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The curriculum gives an overview of methods of biblical change for counseling others.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum gives opportunity to grow in the ability to practically apply the truth of Scripture					
The curriculum provides an acceptable overview of biblical counseling and a biblical methodology of change.					

**Additional comments regarding the curriculum:**



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## ABSTRACT

### PROMOTING THE VALUE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING THROUGH TRAINING MEMBERS OF PALMETTO BAPTIST CHURCH, EASLEY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Joshua David Stephens, DMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jeremy P. Pierre

This DMin project sought to promote the value of biblical counseling through training members of Palmetto Baptist Church, Easley, South Carolina. Chapter 1 discusses the sufficiency of Scripture and its authority in biblical counseling from Romans 1:18-32, Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:3. Chapter 2 explains how biblical counseling and the local church are a Christ-centered discipleship model promoting heart and behavioral conformity to Scripture. Chapter 3 describes the details of the project. Chapter 4 lays out a summary of the six-lesson curriculum developed for the Palmetto Baptist Church. Chapter 5 records the projects goals, strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned from the project.

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B.A., Pillsbury Baptist Bible College, 2000  
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### MINISTERIAL

Associate Pastor, Community Baptist Church, New Prague, Minnesota, 2001-  
2012  
Senior Pastor, Community Baptist Church, New Prague, Minnesota, 2012-  
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Pastor of Discipleship & Outreach, Palmetto Baptist Church, Powdersville,  
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### ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Biblical Counselors  
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