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INTRODUCING LIFE GROUP LEADERS TO THE PRINCIPLES
AND PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT
AUBURN GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
IN AUBURN, CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

There is no one more surprised than I that this project and course of study has been brought to its conclusion. Thank you Auburn Grace church body, especially my Sunday school class and Wednesday Night Live participants, for supporting and encouraging me to continue through to the end. Thanks, Phil, for leading the staff to serve the body. Thanks to you and the whole staff for cheering me on and not displaying total astonishment/incredulity at my undertaking.

I am thankful for the academic quality and character demonstrated by my professors at SBTS. To Coleman Ford, my project coach, working with you in the basement of the library was the first time I felt even a twinge of confidence in pulling this off. Thanks for being so patient and fostering such confidence. Dr. Danny Bowen, I was intimidated at your reputation and by the first presentation you gave during orientation. But I cannot think of a better doctoral supervisor. I appreciate your competency and style. You pushed me to excellence but did so with grace and humility.

Finally, thanks to my family for not displaying the shock you must have felt when I said I was going back to school at 58. Laura Marie, you could have said, “What are you thinking?” But you didn’t. Thanks for believing.

Greg Hummel

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Auburn Grace Community Church (AGCC) is a member of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches (FGBC). The motto of the FGBC is “The Bible, the Whole Bible, and Nothing but the Bible.”¹ This slogan expresses FGBC’s and AGCC’s desire for the Scriptures to determine and completely control the theology and practice of each church and attender. Increasing the awareness, understanding, and competence in biblical counseling at AGCC logically flows out of this desire. This project developed Life Group leaders who are trained in biblical counseling.² The impact of biblical counseling will spread throughout this local body, influence the Sierra foothills’ evangelical community, and eventually the entire Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.

Context

Between the years of approximately 2008 and 2015, the church experienced a consistent increase in Sunday morning worship attendance. Several factors contributed to this increase, perhaps the most influential being the difficulties experienced in some of Auburn’s other evangelical churches.

Over the span of a few years, a number of these churches experienced volatility in their senior leadership, resulting in church splits. Seeking a sense of reliability, many of the parishioners began attending AGCC. The church gained the

¹ Tim Crow, *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*, vol. 5, *Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 385.

² The name “Life Groups” has been chosen to highlight the relational aspect of the small group ministry rather than an emphasis on communicating biblical information.

reputation as a place of healing and recovery for those coming out of bad church experiences. At least two consequences of this rapid growth need to be addressed.

First, those who have recently come to AGCC are from a wide variety of denominations. Everything from Pentecostals to Episcopalians are now fellowshiping together. Few of them have been exposed to the idea of biblical counseling and the sufficiency of Scripture. The majority have been influenced by popular secular and Christian integrative psychology. There is a pervasive ignorance concerning the Bible's ability to be specifically and practically applied to the relational, emotional, and spiritual problems experienced by everyone living in this fallen world.

As the church attempted to faithfully minister to so many who had been wounded, they were not, in turn, motivated to serve others. When the church was small and struggling, it was necessary for most of the members to actively participate in multiple areas of service. As the church grew and acquired more staff, the percentage of those actively participating in ministry began to diminish. More members became involved in ministry but not in proportion to the growth in attendance. It has become increasingly difficult for the staff to meet all the pastoral needs.

Based on these factors, AGCC planned to implement a small group ministry. It was the leadership's desire that many of the pastoral care needs would be met through these shepherding groups. For this to occur, it was necessary to convince the small group leaders that they could be equipped to confidently and capably serve as shepherds and counselors, and that this role was not reserved for professional, seminary trained clergy.

Personal discipleship was not a strength of AGCC. It was not promoted as an important, essential discipline for every believer. There was a misconception that participation in Bible study was equivalent to engagement in disciple making. The need to develop a true sense of accountability throughout the church body was a priority concern among the pastoral staff.

Rationale

With the church's vision to implant a small group ministry, a prime opportunity existed to spread awareness, understanding, and the practice of biblical counseling. For years, the senior leadership had expressed dissatisfaction with the available counseling options for the church family. There are a few Christian counseling groups in the area, but they have proven unsuccessful and their philosophical approach is questionable.³ Equipping small group leaders in biblical counseling was a significant step in spreading its influence throughout the congregation. As each leader became more capable in practicing biblical counseling and discipleship, a series of natural and intended consequences followed.

With a growing commitment to biblical counseling, increased personal discipleship should increase. An obedient and Christ-honoring church must be characterized by discipleship. As small group participants experience the benefits of the wise application of biblical principles through the ministry of their leaders, they were motivated to carry on this same ministry in the lives of their families and friends. AGCC will be a church *of* biblical counseling rather than a church that *does* biblical counseling.

Second, the pastoral care of the AGCC body became more comprehensive in its efficiency and effectiveness. Members increasingly assumed the responsibility of caring for each other's needs. They observed the apostle Paul's admonition in Galatians 6:2 to "bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." The pastoral staff modified its mode of operation. It was able to focus on "equipping the saints for the work of service" (Eph 4:12).

³ A biblical counseling center may be a long-term result of incorporating biblical counseling into the life of the church. It would be a valuable resource not only to AGCC but to the region's Christian community and serve as an outreach to the community at large. A widespread confidence in nouthetic counseling's effectiveness and a conviction that it is the appropriate model for the church to pursue is foundational. Without this commitment, the establishment of a center will be difficult and its effectiveness doubtful.

It was inconsistent with FGBC's motto concerning Scripture, that it had not adopted a more consistent position on counseling. FGBC's affiliated college and seminary offer a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and uses the following description: "The . . . program is committed to Scripture as the foundation for truth in each course with a *complementary understanding* of the truths in psychology and the social sciences."⁴ This inconsistency was demonstrated by either apathy or general ambivalence toward biblical counseling throughout FGBC. Successfully implanting biblical counseling into the small group ministry at AGCC was a significant step toward rectifying this attitude and inconsistency.

Finally, as the message spreads that AGCC is a place where people minister to each other on a personal level, that the Bible has practical solutions to very real issues, and that it is possible to be personally equipped in biblical counseling, others will desire it for themselves. AGCC can become a training ground for the other evangelical churches in the community and a place where non-believers will come to have a relationship with the God who created them and the Savior who died for them.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to introduce the life group leaders at Auburn Grace Community Church in Auburn, California, to the principles and practice of biblical counseling.

Goals

The following goals were established to determine the completion of this project.

1. The first goal was to assess the awareness of biblical counseling among life group leaders at AGCC.

⁴ Grace College Online, "Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling," accessed December 22, 2017, <https://online.grace.edu/programs/master-of-arts-in-clinical-mental-health-counseling/>, emphasis added.

2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session introduction to biblical counseling course.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the life group leaders at AGCC in the principles of biblical counseling.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the ability of the life group leaders at AGCC to biblical counseling.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the awareness of the life group leaders at AGCC in biblical counseling. This goal was measured by administering a biblical counseling awareness survey.⁵ The survey was completed by members of the congregation who were considered as possible life group leaders.⁶ This survey was administered at the outset of the project, before completion of the curriculum preparation, and was useful in structuring the curriculum. This goal was successfully met when 66 percent of the distributed surveys were returned and analyzed, giving a more accurate understanding of the potential life group leaders' awareness of biblical counseling.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session introduction to biblical counseling course.⁷ The curriculum included the following subjects: (1) the priority of disciple making in the mission of the local church, (2) the role of biblical counseling in the process of disciple making, (3) the place of evangelism as an initial component of biblical counseling, (4) biblical counseling as a one-another ministry of the local church, (5) the sufficiency of Scripture, and (6) case studies. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching

⁵ See appendix 1. 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.

⁶ The pastoral staff, elders, and ministry team leaders participated in selecting the group leaders.

⁷ See appendix 2.

methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁸ This goal was considered successfully met when the lessons were returned from the panel and the suggestions for improvement were incorporated into the curriculum.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the life group leaders at AGCC in the principles of biblical counseling. This goal was measured by administering a Basics of Biblical Counseling Assessment to the participants prior to and subsequently after the eight-session introduction to biblical counseling course.⁹ This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statically significant difference in the pre- and post-course survey scores.

The fourth goal was to increase the ability of the life group leaders at AGCC to counsel biblically. This goal was measured by observing the participants in the eight-session introduction to biblical counseling course interact with a case study.¹⁰ This goal was considered successful when the participants demonstrated thoughtful interaction with the case studies presented during sessions seven and eight.

Definitions and Limitation/Delimitations

The following definitions and delimitations were used to facilitate the understanding and implementation of this project.

Definitions

Biblical counseling. *Biblical counseling* is the development of the approach termed by Jay Adams as *nouthetic counseling* or *nouthetic confrontation*. It is rooted in the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and includes the elements of (1) teaching with the purpose to effect change in personality and behavior, (2) personal directive

⁸ See appendix 3.

⁹ See appendix 4.

¹⁰ See appendix 5.

admonishment aimed toward greater conformity to biblical standards, and (3) the counselor's desire to facilitate change for the benefit of the counselee.¹¹ Kellemen writes,

Communicating gospel truth about grace-focused sanctification in word, thought, and action through one-another relationships that have integrity, genuineness, authenticity, transparency, and reliability, done in love to promote the unity and maturity of the body of Christ for the ultimate purpose of displaying the glory of Christ's grace.¹²

Integration. *Integration* is the philosophy that effective counseling should combine the scriptural teaching regarding the condition of man living in a fallen world with the theories, techniques, and therapies gleaned from the social sciences. There is a wide spectrum of integrationist perspectives. Not all integrationist approaches will look the same. As Stanton Jones states, "Subtle differences of emphasis on different parts of the biblical witness will lead to different theoretical alignments; there are Christian integrationists who are psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, systems and other orientations."¹³ Some integrationists attempt to use the Bible as the foundation upon which to build, incorporating secular theories only after evaluating them biblically. Others attribute equal authority to both scriptural principles and what can be learned through academic disciplines. Collins states,

The Bible never presents itself as a book that includes all truth about God's created beings. We learn from a study of God's written Word, but God also has permitted us to learn about this world, including mankind, through the academic disciplines and sciences such as medicine, physics, and psychology. By shutting our eyes and ears to psychology, the Christian is blinded to much of God's truth about mankind and often is inclined to arrive at simplistic conclusions about human behavior and counseling. Likewise, the psychologist who ignores the divine revelation as found in Scripture has a limited understanding of human beings, their place in the universe, and their possibilities for change and growth.¹⁴

¹¹ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 44-52.

¹² Robert W. Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 50.

¹³ Stanton L. Jones, "An Integration View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, ed. Eric Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 120.

¹⁴ Gary Collins, *Psychology and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 17.

Sufficiency of Scripture. The *sufficiency of Scripture* is the main tenet that distinguishes biblical counseling from every other form of counseling. Heath Lambert teaches that “the Bible contains all that we need to know God’s will and live a life pleasing to him.”¹⁵ In his “95 Theses for an Authentically Christian Commitment to Counseling,” Lambert, states, “When the Bible claims to address all the issues concerning life and godliness, it declares itself to be a sufficient and an authoritative resource to address everything essential for counseling conversations (2 Pet 1:3-4).”¹⁶

Limitation

Due to the AGCC’s mid-week teaching schedule and SBTS’s requirements for the project, the Introduction to Biblical Counseling Course was implemented during the fall-winter months (September through November) of 2019. This necessitated limiting the course to eight sessions.

Delimitations

Participants were chosen from those who were actively involved in AGCC. The pastoral staff and lay leadership made recommendations and facilitated the vetting of the candidates. The desire was to have between twenty-five and fifty participants.

The time frame for a twelve-week introduction to biblical counseling course was chosen to accommodate the customary Wednesday evening teaching schedule.

Due to the number of anticipated participants, it was necessary to enlist several qualified instructors and evaluators. These instructors were chosen based upon training, practical experience, and scriptural/theological competence as evaluated by members of the pastoral staff.

¹⁵ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 37.

¹⁶ Heath Lambert, “95 Theses for an Authentically Christian Commitment to Counseling,” Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, accessed January 9, 2018, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/ninety-five/>.

Conclusion

The body of Christ has been called to the task of discipleship. Equipping the body to skillfully and confidently counsel one another using Scripture, as empowered by the Holy Spirit, is foundational to accomplishing this task. Chapter 2 focuses on the pastoral responsibility to equip the local body to carry out this one another ministry, and demonstrate that the Bible is the all-sufficient resource to do so.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR EQUIPPING
SMALL GROUP LEADERS TO
COUNSEL BIBLICALLY

Every member of the body of Christ, through the power of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the one another ministry of the local church, has been provided with the spiritual resources necessary to counsel biblically. Matthew closes his gospel account with The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. This event is one of the final earthly encounters Jesus had with his disciples before his ascension. As he assigns to them the task of making disciples, he affirms his authority to commission them and assures them of his continued presence. Matthew 28:18-20, together with Luke's account in Acts 1:6-8,¹ demonstrate that Jesus is not expecting his followers to carry out this assignment in their own strength, or depend upon their own resources. This chapter examines four New Testament passages that discuss three resources: the Word of God, fellow believers, and pastors. These resources are available to believers in their efforts to complete the Great Commission.

The first passage to be examined is 2 Peter 1:3-21. The Holy Spirit uses the prophetic word as the instrument through which believers can increase their knowledge of the divine. As believers study and grow in their understanding of the Scriptures, they

¹ The elapsed time between Matt 28 and Acts 1 is not given in detail. Both encounters probably occurred within the final week of Christ's earthly ministry. Lenski suggests that the encounter in Matthew, which took place in Galilee, may have been Jesus' final appearance before the Acts 1 encounter, which took place near Jerusalem. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964), 1167. There are at least three similarities between the passages. In both texts Jesus is the subject of the message to be communicated: "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" and "You shall be *my* witnesses." Both passages assure the disciples of continued divine presence: "I am with you always" and "when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." And the extent of the commission is the same: "All the nations" and "To the remotest part of the earth."

will also grow in their knowledge of and relationship to Christ. This growing relationship will evidence itself in the attitudes and actions of the believer. The next two passages, Colossians 3:12-17 and Romans 12:1-15:19, show that a biblical expectation exists for believers to involve themselves in the spiritual growth of one another, and that they can be adequately equipped to do so. Finally, Ephesians 4:7-16 teaches that God has given gifted individuals to the body of Christ to be the primary human agents in equipping the body of Christ for one another ministry.

The Prophetic Word Is Sufficient (2 Pet 1:3-21)

The context of 2 Peter is similar to that of Matthew 28:18-20. In Matthew 28, Jesus is in the final days of his earthly ministry. In 2 Peter, the apostle Peter also recognizes that his own earthly ministry is drawing to a close (2 Pet 1:14). This letter is Peter's farewell speech.² His desire is to prepare his readers to continue growing in their faith after his death. As they grow in their knowledge of Christ they will grow in godliness. The primary means of growing in the knowledge of Christ is proper interpretation and application of the prophetic word.

Believers Are Divinely Empowered to Live a Godly Life (2 Pet 1:3-15)

The clear expectation of God is expressed through the provisions he has given. The allocated resources must correspond with the desired outcome. Peter tells his readers that everything necessary to achieve the desired outcome of life and godliness has already been distributed. Living a godly life is very possible. As Davids states, "There is no excuse for not living a godly life."³

² Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 148.

³ Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 168.

God has granted the necessary resources to live a godly life. No essential element that is useful for living a God pleasing life has been withheld from the believer. Peter’s declaration, using the perfect participle “has given” (*dedōrēmenos*), indicates past tense with the effects carrying on into the future.⁴ The implication is, that at the time of Peter’s writing, nothing required for godly living was either lacking or awaiting future discovery. “All things” (*pantas*) is in emphatic position in the sentence making the definitive affirmation that *everything* has been provided.⁵

God’s provisions allow participation in the divine nature. The resources God has granted have their specific purpose of producing godly traits. Peter lists these traits: virtue (*aretēn*), knowledge (*ginōsis*), self-control (*egkrateia*), perseverance (*hupomonēn*), godliness (*eusebeian*), kindness (*philadelphian*), and love (*agapēn*). The more these traits are evidenced in the believer’s life, the more God’s nature is reflected. This list of divine attributes is similar to Paul’s description of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 and his exhortation to his child in the faith, Timothy (1 Tim 6:11).⁶

The more God is known the more evidence is shown. The method by which God enables the believer to increasingly manifest godly characteristics is through an increasing understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Peter uses the word “knowledge” (*epignōsis*) three times in eight verses to communicate the meaning of true knowledge gained by relational experience; this is in contrast to theoretical or inaccurate

⁴ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1966), 256.

⁵ Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 168.

⁶ The combined list of fruit of the Spirit in Galatians and the characteristics in 1 Timothy are love (*agapē*), joy (*chara*), peace (*eirēnē*), patience (*makrothumia*), kindness (*chrēstotēs*), goodness (*agathōsunē*), faithfulness (*pistis*), gentleness (*prautēs*), self-control (*ekrateia*), righteousness (*dikaiosunēn*), godliness (*eusebeian*), and perseverance (*hupomonēn*). Four of these—love, godliness, self-control, and perseverance—are identical to Peter’s list. Two of the traits—virtue and kindness—are synonyms.

understanding.⁷ The sequence of character development in verses 5 through 8 is presented as a self-perpetuating, growing cycle. The more a believer understands and grows in relationship with Jesus, the more of Jesus' attributes will be reflected in daily living. The more one practices Christ-like behavior, the more understanding will be acquired. The final six verses of chapter 1 explain the resource God has given to lead the believer into the true knowledge of Jesus.

The Prophetic Word Is the Source the Knowledge of Jesus (2 Pet 1:16-21)

Second Peter 1:3-21 is tied together with a common theme: the power or work of God. Beginning with verse 3, the power of God is what grants the resources necessary for godly living: "His divine *power* has granted." In verses 16 through 18, Peter describes how he personally witnessed the power of Jesus: "The *power* and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The chapter concludes by attributing true prophecy to the work of the Holy Spirit: "Men *moved* by the Holy Spirit." It is God who has powerfully provided the resources. The Power of Christ was evidenced at his coming. The power of the Holy Spirit is responsible for enabling the prophets to record and interpret the message concerning Jesus, which will give his followers the relational knowledge that empowers godly living.

The Prophetic Word Is of Divine Origin

Peter assures his readers that the teachings they have received from him, as well as from the Old Testament Scriptures,⁸ are reliable and effective. The teachings are reliable because Peter can personally testify to their authenticity, and because they are of

⁷ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 291.

⁸ By using the term *prophetic word*, Peter is not saying that only those designated as "prophetic books" be heeded. All prophecy (v. 20) is from God. Peter is referencing all prophecies that relate to Christ; specifically those about his coming. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 292.

divine rather than human origin. As the source of divine guidance the Scriptures will serve this purpose until the believer no longer has a personal need for its direction.

The phrase in verse 19, “until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts,” can either be referring to the time of death when the believer will be face to face with the Savior or to the second coming of Jesus.⁹

Peter witnessed the authentication of Jesus’ person and ministry. Peter is giving his personal testimony to the Father’s validation of Jesus’ prominence. God audibly confirmed who Jesus is, his beloved son. The divinity of Jesus provides the foundation for the affirmations in the preceding verses of chapter 1 about the benefits of growing in the knowledge of Christ. Peter confirms the historicity of his testimony through his choice of grammar and by contrasting his account with other tales.¹⁰ Since the prophetic word is the source through which a growing knowledge of Jesus can be attained, its validity is essential.

The Greek culture of Peter’s day was accustomed to tales (*mythois*) about the activities of gods and heroes.¹¹ It was important to emphasize that Peter’s recounting of the events of Jesus’ life were understood to be rooted in truth, not fiction.

The Holy Spirit is the author of the prophetic Word. Peter is emphatic about who is and who is not responsible for authentic prophecy. It does not originate from human desires (*thelēmeti anthrōpou*) nor is its purpose to achieve man’s chosen goals. Realization of the source and motivation behind legitimate prophecy is of prime importance. It is foundational. The effectiveness of the Word is dependent upon it.

⁹ The former view is held by Calvin, while Peter Davids accepts the latter option. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Second Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 387. Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 209.

¹⁰ Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 286-88.

¹¹ Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 200.

With God the Holy Spirit as the motivator of prophecy, believers can be assured of Scripture's accuracy, capacity, and dependability. As the prophet Isaiah declared concerning God's Word, "It will not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" (Isa 55:11).

Since God's purposes include the sanctification of believers (1 Thess 4:3), and since the prophetic Word is empowered and given by God to accomplish his purposes, it follows that Scripture is the divine resource provided for acquiring the relational knowledge of Christ that is given to accomplish the commissioned task of making disciples.

The inspired Word of God motivates and equips believers to live a God-pleasing life. This life is not designed to be lived in isolation but rather in the context of the community of believers, the local church. The church provides the setting in which Christians can practice the truths revealed in the Prophetic Word. The following two sections explore how believers can minister to one another—the one another ministry—as fellow members of the body of Christ.

Colossians 3:12-17 discusses Paul's expectation for the Colossian church to mutually minister to one another. Because they have been given a new identity as elected saints, they should be motivated by love and gratitude with a desire to live in peaceful community. Teaching and admonishing one another demonstrates that the gospel is effectively working in them and through them. A study of Romans 12:1-15:19 demonstrates the grounds for the apostle's confidence in the Roman church's ability to effectively minister to one another.

**The Person and Work of Christ Manifests Itself
through the One Another Ministry of the
Body of Christ (Col 3:12-17)**

When a person places his faith in the person and work of Christ, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit he becomes a member of the body of Christ. Membership in the body of Christ brings with it many privileges and responsibilities. These responsibilities

involve how believers relate to God, to the world of non-believers, and to other believers. Carl George lists fifty-nine New Testament references that describe how Christians are to relate to each another.¹² These include positive instructions—things to do; and negative instructions—things to avoid. Some of these “one another” passages may be more familiar to Christians than other passages. Some may be familiar enough to be referenced even by those outside the church.

The focus of this next section is on the apostle Paul’s instructions for believers to intentionally engage in encouraging other Christians in the process of growing to become more like Jesus Christ. Mutual teaching (*didaskō*), mutual exhortation (*parakeleuō*), and mutual admonition (*noutheteō*) ought to occur regularly among the family of God. Believers should be motivated by their personal experience of being chosen and loved by God and by their compassion for one another.

Even though there is no explicit claim as to what specifically motivated Paul to write his letter to the Colossians, two specific warnings—Colossians 2:6-8 and Colossians 2:16-19—give an indication of his general purpose.¹³ False teachings were apparently beginning to infiltrate the church at Colosse. These teachings were a mixture of Jewish legalism and emerging Gnosticism.¹⁴ Paul’s defense against these teachings was to emphasize the completeness and sufficiency of Christ’s person and work.

Any doubt regarding Christ’s divinity is eliminated by Paul’s emphatic statement in Colossians 2:9: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” Paul has already proclaimed that Jesus’ divinity is evidenced through his activities of creating all things, and by continuing to rule and to reign over his creation (Col 1:15-17).

¹² Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), 129-31.

¹³ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 46.

¹⁴ Robert G. Gromaki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 268.

The completeness of the work of Christ in providing redemption for the saints is predicated upon the full divinity of Jesus, as Douglas Moo writes, “Our ‘rescue’ from the ‘dominion of darkness’ (v. 13) is certain and lasting because God accomplished it through none other than the one who is Lord of the universe.”¹⁵ The full divinity of Christ and the completeness of his work make possible the resulting completeness in the life of the believer. Believers have a completed standing in Christ. Colossian 2:10 states, “In Him you have been made complete (*peplērōmenoi*).” Ray Summers explains that the perfect tense used here “indicates a completed action with a resulting state of being.”¹⁶ Paul continues with a list of actions that took place because of Christ’s death and resurrection (Col 2:12-14). Believers have a completed standing in Christ, but they are still in the process of learning how to put that standing into practice. Paul describes his ministry as one of admonishing and teaching believers in order to bring them to maturity (Col 1:28).

Built upon this foundation of Christ’s accomplished work, Paul in Colossians 3 gives three positive exhortations.¹⁷ The doctrine regarding Christ’s completeness should manifest itself in the life of the believer. It will manifest itself in the believer’s thought life (Col 3:1-4), it should be demonstrated in how believers deal with temptations and sinful actions (Col 3:5-11), and it will impact how the members of the body of Christ treat one another (Col 3:12-17).

God Imparts a New Identity to the Believer (Col 3:12-13)

Through the work of Christ believers have a new identity. This identity affects

¹⁵ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 111.

¹⁶ Summers writes, “The primary emphasis is on the resulting state of being. Involved in the Greek perfect are three ideas: an action in *progress*, it’s coming to a point of *culmination*, it’s existing as a *completed result*. Thus it implies a process but looks upon the process as having reached a consummation and existing as a completed state.” Ray Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 103.

¹⁷ These exhortations are introduced with the conjunction “therefore” (*oun*).

how they view themselves in relationship to God and to one another. Paul had just told his audience in verse 11 that the former racial, cultural, and social distinctions are no longer determinative factors in this relationship. They now relate to God and to each other by means of divine selection. They are the elect (*eklektoi*) of God. Paul uses the word “holy” or “saints” (*hagioi*) to further describe the significance of this selection. Sainthood carries with it at least two meanings.¹⁸ The character of a saint is distinctive. It is markedly changed from what it was prior to conversion. The attitudes and behaviors that Paul itemizes in verses 5-9 no longer are to be considered appropriate to this new identity. The first list includes immorality (*porneian*), impurity (*akatharsian*), passion (*pathos*), evil desire (*epithumian karkēn*), and greed (*pleonexian*), express underlying attitudes. They are motivated by self-gratification. The second list, in verse 8, includes anger (*orgēn*), wrath (*thumon*), malice (*kakian*), slander (*blasphēmian*), and abusive speech (*aischrologian*), which are demonstrative behaviors. These attributes are not descriptive of sainthood. Sainthood also entails being dedicated to God and set apart for service.¹⁹ The verses following then describe how believers can serve God through service to each other.

The Colossians are not only selected and holy, they have also been the object of God’s love (*ēgapēmenoi*).²⁰ It is reassuring to be the object of God’s love. His love is not the result of individual effort. Wright explains that it “depends not on their goodness but on his grace, not on their loveliness but on his love.”²¹

¹⁸ Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The Communicator’s Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 383.

¹⁹ N. T. Wright, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 12 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 145.

²⁰ This is another use of the Greek perfect. See n16.

²¹ Wright, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon*, 143.

This new identity is both individual and communal. The believer expresses his new identity as a chosen and holy object of God's love through his new position in the body of Christ. The love that God has shown him should be conveyed through the exercising of five virtues: compassion (*oiktirmou*), kindness (*chrēstotēto*), humility (*tapeinophrosynēn*), gentleness (*prautēta*), and patience (*makrothumian*). These five virtues are in contrast to the two other lists of five non-Christ like attributes or vices found in verse 5 and verse 9.²² These virtues are essentially descriptive of Christ. Moo explains,

It is as if Paul is saying, in the words of Romans 13:14, that we are to “put on Christ.” And of course, this Christological focus neatly elaborates the key idea in vv. 10-11. Having put on “the new self,” identified with Christ himself, it is necessary at the same time to put on those virtues that characterize Christ.²³

The more the believer comprehends his new identity in Christ the more he will be transformed and display the virtues of Christ.

Proper Teaching and Admonishing Is Dependent upon a Proper Attitude (Col 3:14-15)

The believer's motivation for caring for others in the body of Christ is an inward motivation, it is not from fear of punishment or selfishly seeking personal recognition. Love, peace, and thankfulness are three qualities that should motivate the way believers encourage one another.

Paul considers love (*agapē*) to be the supreme unifying force. In his list of the fruit of the Spirit he put love first (Gal 5:22-23). In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul concludes by stating that love is greater than faith and hope.²⁴ Love, which is self-sacrificing and puts the best interest of others as primary importance, has the ability to completely unify the body of Christ. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience are all important

²² Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 276.

²³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 152.

²⁴ Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 388.

elements in the proper functioning of the church. When to these is added a genuine concern for others' well-being, the body will grow in its ability to function properly.

The desire for peace (*eirēnē*) among the members of the body of Christ should be one of the main determining factors for decision making and conflict resolution. Moo writes, "Without sacrificing principle, believers should relate to one another in a way that facilitates and demonstrates the peace that Christ has secured for them (cf. Rom 14:19)."²⁵

The exhortation to be thankful (*eucharistoi ginesthe*) in verse 15 is one of seven occasions in Colossians where Paul emphasizes the theme of gratitude.²⁶ Gratitude stems from the recognition that the received blessings are the result of God's choosing and not the believer's worthiness. Moo states, "Believers who are full of gratitude to God for his gracious calling (15a) will find it easier to extend to fellow believers the grace and love and forgiveness and to put aside petty issues that might inhibit the expression of peace in the community."²⁷

Teaching and Admonishing Evidences of the Work of Christ's (Col 3:16-17)

The teaching about who Jesus is and what he has done for his followers should be at the heart of the Christian community. This message will affect the manner in which believers relate to each other. Whether it is for positive instruction (*didaskō*), warning, or correction (*noutheteō*), the authority originates in Christ's message.²⁸ Teaching and

²⁵ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 283. Lenski contrasts Paul's use of "judge" (*brabeuō*) in Col 3:15 with his use of "disqualify" (*katabrabeuō*) in Colossians 2:18. The Colossians did not attain their membership in the body of Christ through striving or attaining a standard which the Judaizers had established. They were awarded this peace by Christ. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 175. Wright comments, "The *pax Christiana* is to prevail in the church, as the *pax Romana* did in the world of Paul's day, allowing its inhabitants to pursue their respective callings without the constant threat of war." Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 148.

²⁶ *Eucharisteō* is used five times (Col 1:3, 12, 2:7, 3:15, 17, 4:2) and *xaris* is used once (Col 3:16).

²⁷ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 285.

²⁸ Moo contends that "admonition" (*noutheteō*) "refers to the more negative warning about the

admonishing must be done wisely (*en pasē Sophia*). Wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. Lenski explains that it is “the ability to use knowledge in the right and wise way.”²⁹

The ministry of wisely teaching and admonishing others in conformity to the message of Christ that Paul exhorts the Colossian believers to exercise among themselves is the same ministry that he carries out among the churches. In Colossians 1:28 he writes, “We proclaim Him [the message of Christ], admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom.” Paul expects the Colossian church to carry out the same mission that was given to him by God. They are to represent Christ and carry out his mission. Wright states, “Acting ‘in someone’s name’ means both representing him and being empowered to do so.”³⁰

Based upon the person of Christ—his full divinity and headship of the church and the work he has accomplished on behalf of the believer—the Colossian believers have been made complete and become members of the Body of Christ. In God’s choosing Christians to receive his love and enablement for service, they are to teach with a grateful heart and admonish each other. Through this one another ministry, believers become co-laborers with God and the apostle Paul in bringing the already accomplished work, having been made complete, into the realm of daily practical application in the life of the local church.

In this section, Colossians 3:16-17, Paul expressed his expectations for believers to minister to one another. The next study of Romans 12:1-15:19 will demonstrate that he was confident in their ability to minister successfully. His confidence was built upon the

danger of straying from the truth.” Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 289. For a more complete explanation of *noutheteō*, see Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 41-64.

²⁹ Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 177.

³⁰ Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 149.

evidences God displayed through the giving of spiritual gifts, providing a supreme example of self-sacrifice in the person of Christ, and experiencing God's gracious work in the lives of the Roman believers as well as in his own life.

Paul Is Confident in the Believer's Ability to Admonish One Another (Rom 12:1-15:19)

In Romans 15:14, Paul makes a bold declaration: he is certain of the Roman saints' abilities to correct and encourage one another in their individual and corporate sanctification. The fact that Paul had not yet personally visited Rome further highlights the remarkability of this confidence. As with the Colossian believers (Col 1:28), he does not reserve the teaching and admonishing ministry for himself, even though he has a unique role as the apostle to the Gentiles.³¹ This section will explore the reasons for his confidence and the implications for the local body of Christ.

Paul Is Confident in God's Work among the Body of Christ (Rom 12:1-13:7)

Beginning with chapter 12, Paul describes different ways in which believers should interact with each other. Utilizing spiritual gifts, exercising brotherly love, properly submitting to authority, and accepting those who are not as mature in their faith are all evidences of a church that is operating correctly.

Believers can demonstrate God's grace by using their gifts for the benefit of the body (Rom 12:1-8). God has graciously given each member of the church the ability to minister. Paul's instruction is directed to everyone (*panti*) and he asserts that God has allotted to each (*ekastō*) person a measure of faith.³² The unity of the body of Christ

³¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 378. Paul refers to this aspect of his ministry at least twice in this epistle (Rom 1:5, 11:13) as well as in Gal 2:9 and Eph 3:1-2.

³² The word "measure" (*metron*) in v. 3 may be referring either to the specific spiritual gift which is to be employed in serving the body or to the common faith that binds all believers as fellow members together. Either way, each believer is to contribute to the betterment of the body. Colin G. Kruse,

is demonstrated through its diversity rather than its uniformity.³³ This is not a complete list of the gifts given to the church.³⁴ Briscoe states, “His overriding concern is that believers utilize to the full the grace of God in their corporate life.”³⁵ Christ was clear in his teaching that Christians need to learn how to live harmoniously with each other and in a world that would be antagonistic to his teachings.³⁶

Believers can demonstrate God’s grace through their relationships with believers and unbelievers (Rom 12:9-21). Because of God’s grace, believers are empowered to love one another authentically. As they devote themselves to each other and seek the well-being of one another they are serving Christ. Christians are able to respond in love to other members of the body and to those who may be outside of the fellowship even though they might have evil intentions toward them.

Believers can demonstrate God’s grace through submission to human authority (Rom 13:1-7). In serving one another, believers are serving Christ. By submitting to civil authority, believers are submitting to God. Submission to the government is not to be only motivated by fear of punishment but also by acknowledging the working out of God’s sovereign will.

Paying government taxes is one clear way to demonstrate recognition of God’s role in establishing human authority. The subject of unfair taxation was probably a volatile

Paul’s Letters to the Romans, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 468.

³³ F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1963), 223.

³⁴ First Cor 12 offers a more extensive listing of spiritual gifts.

³⁵ Stuart D. Briscoe, *Romans*, The Communicator’s Commentary Series, vol. 6 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 221.

³⁶ John 13:35 teaches that corporate love should be the distinguishing mark of Christ followers. John 17:16 and John 16:33 show Jesus’ desire for the disciples to remain as active participants in the world even while acknowledging that the world would be hostile towards them.

issue in the period of Paul's writing this epistle.³⁷ Honoring God by paying taxes to a corrupt and immoral government would make the Roman church's testimony even stronger.

Living in submission to government authorities, submitting to one another in the body of Christ, and using spiritual gifts for mutual edification require Christians to have the mindset of a servant. Jesus provides the supreme example of how to live with a servant's mentality.

Paul's Confidence Is Grounded in Christ's Convincing Demonstration of Servanthood (Rom 14:1-15:12)

Conflict is a normal occurrence whenever people from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds interact with each other. This is the case even among believers. The temptation is to judge one another by imposing personal standards and convictions. Paul expresses his own personal growth in this area in verse 14: "I know and am convinced that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." This is a notable change from the beliefs Paul would have held as a Pharisee.³⁸

Christ is the supreme example of sacrificial service (Rom 15:3). Paul refers four times in this section (Rom 14:9, 16; 15:3, 7) to Christ's example of self-sacrifice and putting the needs of others before his own. Christ's model convinces and convicts believers of the proper way to glorify God through showing deference to one another.

Paul's confidence is grounded in the efficacy of the Scriptures (Rom 15:4-5). Paul repeatedly expresses his complete confidence in the efficacy and applicability of the

³⁷ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 499.

³⁸ Matt 23:1-34 is one example of Jesus confronting the judgmental and self-righteous attitude that characterized the Pharisees.

Scriptures.³⁹ Through observing the lives of earlier saints, believers can patiently endure (*hypomonēs*) and be encouraged (*parakleseōs*). For the community of believers to support each other's weaknesses, these qualities are essential. These qualities together with confident expectation (*elpida*) will enable them to continually seek to please one another rather than themselves.

Paul's confidence is grounded in his desire for God's glory (Rom 15:6-12).

The body of Christ, when functioning properly, will be the foundation for bringing glory to God. Kruse explains, "When the 'strong' are not looking down on the 'weak,' and the 'weak' are not judging the 'strong' they will unanimously be able to glorify God when they come together."⁴⁰

This concept is reminiscent of Paul's encouragement to the Philippian church in Philippians 2:1-11: believers should follow the example set by Christ by unselfishly submitting to each other. The result of Christ's condescension is His own exaltation, which leads to God being glorified.

Paul's confidence in the Romans' ability to minister to each other is strengthened through scriptural encouragement and through the exemplary life of Jesus. Two other concrete examples bolster Paul's confidence in God's transforming work: the changes that have occurred in the Roman believers and the changes that have transpired in his own life.

³⁹ In 1 Cor 10:11, Paul describes how Israel's conduct during the wilderness experience should instructively warn (*nouthesian*) the Corinthian believers against ungodly attitudes and actions. Second Tim 3:16-17 affirms that "all Scripture" is instructive. In Rom 4:23-24, Paul articulates the same concept of applying principles taught in earlier Scriptures to current situations.

⁴⁰ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 530.

Paul's Confidence Is Grounded in the Person and Work of the Godhead (Rom 15:13-19)

Paul credits each person of the trinity for the transformations that have taken place in his own life and in the lives of the Roman believers.

Paul's confidence is grounded in the work of God in the lives of the Roman believers (Rom 15:13-14). Paul's declaration of confidence in the Roman church is an expression of his confidence in God. Throughout the previous chapters he addressed specific areas in which his audience needed to correct their attitudes and behaviors.⁴¹

Kruse writes,

It is striking, in the light of what Paul wrote in chapter 9-11 and 12-15, that he describes his audience here as being "full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another." "Goodness" seems to have been lacking when the Gentile believers were arrogant in their attitudes towards unbelieving Jews (11:17-20). . . . They do not appear to have been "filled with knowledge" because Paul implies, they were ignorant of the mystery of God's plans for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles (11:25).

However, this arrogance and ignorance does not mean that Paul's assertion regarding their character and knowledge was, as Lenski states, "an empty compliment or flattery."⁴²

Paul's confidence is grounded in the work of God in his own life (Rom 15:15-19). In Paul's declaration of confidence, he describes the supporting foundation for his own ministry. He recognizes that God graciously appointed him as a minister.⁴³ Paul employs liturgical language to describe the priestly aspect of his service.⁴⁴ He ministers on behalf of Jesus Christ while acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is the agent of change and that it is Christ who accomplishes the work through him. In the verse immediately

⁴¹ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 536.

⁴² R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1961), 876.

⁴³ This point is evidenced in the manner in which Paul customarily introduces his letters: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Cf. Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1.

⁴⁴ Bruce, *Romans*, 260.

preceding his declaration, Paul states that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that fills the believer with hope, joy and peace.

Paul has personally experienced the power of the Godhead working in and through his ministry. His confidence is not in himself. He has witnessed results of his teaching—by word and example—in the changed lives of those to whom he has ministered. He has participated in “signs and wonders performed in the power of the Spirit” throughout his travels (Rom 15:18-19). Lenski writes, “God is the source; ‘the power of the Holy Spirit’ is the means, the Spirit is the Mediator through whose efficacious power of grace all is wrought in us.”⁴⁵

Colossians 3:12-17 and Romans 12:1-15:19 have demonstrated Paul’s expectation for believers to involve themselves in caring for one another, and he has declared his assurance that they are able to do so successfully. The final passage to be discussed, Ephesians 4:7-16, explores how the Lord has given pastors to the local body to help in the preparation of each believer for one another ministry.

God Has Given Pastors to the Church to Help Prepare Each Believer for One Another Ministry (Eph 4:7-16)

Ephesians 4:7-16 functions as a bridge between Paul’s presentation of the doctrinal foundation for the unity of the church and his specific moral exhortations that derive from this doctrine.⁴⁶ Because God has purposed to bring together Jews and Gentiles and unite them into a single universal entity, the church, Christians should conduct themselves in such a way that they will contribute to the church’s growth, both in membership and maturity. In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul repeatedly emphasizes that all believers are to zealously maintain peaceful coexistence with each other.⁴⁷ Beginning with verse 7,

⁴⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 874.

⁴⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 241.

⁴⁷ Paul uses the word “one” (*heis, mia, hen*) seven times in these verses, which accentuates the

he states that certain gifts, along with some specific roles, have been given to the church. He further explains how these gifts and roles are to function and for what purpose.

Christ Has Gifted Every Believer with the Capacity to Serve the Body (Eph 4:7-10)

Paul's teaching concerning the unity of the body and the equality of each member does not contradict the importance of individuality. Christ's followers are joined together into a single entity. Paul uses the model of the human body as an illustration of how Christians are to live in unity while simultaneously being uniquely diverse. This diversity is in fact essential to the proper functioning of the church. It would not operate properly without it.⁴⁸

Every believer has been gifted to serve the body. Paul's use of "to each one" (*ekastō*) enforces that he is shifting focus to the role of individuality in the body.⁴⁹ Every member of the body is gifted with the capacity to contribute to its development. This is consistent with his teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.⁵⁰ All believers are capacitated and are expected to utilize the gifts they have received from Christ. Dunnam writes, "On the ship of the church there are no passengers; all are members of the crew."⁵¹

Christ is the one who assigns the gifts to every believer. Gifts are allocated according to the Lord's sovereign will. He decides which gift goes to each one and how much of that gift is dispensed. In verse 8, Paul paraphrases Psalm 68:18. Psalm 68 is a

theme of unity.

⁴⁸ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 211.

⁴⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 246.

⁵⁰ Note the use of "to each one" (*ekastō*) again in Eph 4:16. Paul also uses it in his related discussions concerning gifts in Rom 12:3 and 1 Cor 12:7, 11.

⁵¹ Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 202.

celebration of victory over God's enemies. God has defeated the enemy in battle and is now heavy laden with the spoils of war. Paul is affirming Christ's sovereignty and generosity in the distribution of these gifts. He has the authority to give away his gifts in the manner he sees fit and he has ample resources to do so.

Christ Has Gifted the Church in order to Grow to Spiritual Maturity (Eph 4:11-13)

Christ, the giver of individual gifts, is also the one who gives gifted individuals to the church to help in the employment of the gifts each one has been given.

Christ has given a variety of offices, including pastors and teachers, to the church. Paul lists five types of people who have been given as gifts to the body to help in its growth and development. The last two roles to be mentioned are pastor and teacher. The grammatical construction demonstrates that though these two roles are not necessarily identical or meant to designate the same ministry, they are closely related to one another.⁵² Teaching is one of the roles of an effective shepherd but not every teacher should consider themselves as a pastor. The pastoral office may include other aspects of ministry, such as organizing, disciplining, and leadership, which may not necessarily be involved with the teaching ministry.⁵³

Christ has given offices to the church to help prepare the body for service.

The word used to summarize the duties of the various offices listed in verse 11 is "equipping" (*katartismos*). This word can be translated in a variety of ways, each with its

⁵² There is much debate as to whether these are two entirely distinct roles, identical roles, or closely related roles. See the various positions in John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 280; Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 266; and Arnold, *Ephesians*, 260.

⁵³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 261.

own emphasis.⁵⁴ It is not necessary to be too restrictive when trying to define Paul's intension. *Katartismos* may be translated as "completion," "mending," "perfecting," or "restoration." It probably is meant to encompass the whole process from introducing someone to the message of the gospel all the way until they are actively contributing to the growth of the body to which they have been joined. The goal of preparation is the work of service (*eis ergon diakonias*). Ministry to the body is carried out by all the saints.⁵⁵ Paul does not specify what the exact type of service is that the saints are to perform other than that which is beneficial to the body. Jesus emphasized that his followers should aspire to be known as servants rather than masters.⁵⁶ The more Christians serve the body the more they will look like Jesus. Paul spends the next three verses describing what spiritual maturity will look like when it is attained in the body of Christ.

Christ Has Gifted the Church so It Can Grow to Spiritual Maturity (Eph 4:14-16)

As gifted leaders prepare and encourage the saints to use their individual gifts to serve one another, the body will grow in both quality and quantity. Paul describes two evidences that will indicate that the body is growing in spiritual maturity: doctrinal stability and self-sacrificial cooperative interaction.

Doctrinal stability is evidence of spiritual maturity. Paul contrasts spiritual maturity with childish gullibility. This contrast serves as a warning against the ever-

⁵⁴ Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 228.

⁵⁵ There are two major views concerning the structure of v. 12. The first is that the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor/teacher have been given in order that they may do the work of the ministry. The three propositional phrases coordinate and describe the work of the officials. The second view is that the second and third phrases are dependent on the first phrase and the saints are to carry out the service. For a more thorough explanation of the grammar, see Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262-63.

⁵⁶ Jesus taught this principle repeatedly. In Mark 10 35-45, Jesus points to his own example of servanthood. The apostle Paul describes the servanthood attitude of Christ in detail in Phil 2:1-11.

present dangers in this sinful world as an encouragement to hold tightly to the essential truths of the faith. Paul may be referencing his earlier point of “attaining to the unity of the faith.”⁵⁷ The church of Christ operates within an evil realm. There are many enemies. Tricky and crafty men as well as deceitful and scheming spiritual forces are a constant threat. In Ephesians 6:11, Paul applies one of these words (*methodeias*) directly to the way Satan attacks the body of Christ: “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the *schemes* of the devil.”

Doctrinal purity should be expressed in thought as well as in word. The context of verse 11 supports the translation “*confessing* the truth in love.”⁵⁸ Every believer should mature to the point of standing firm upon his own beliefs regarding the gospel message as well as being able to defend them verbally.

Loving cooperative interaction is evidence of spiritual maturity. For the body of Christ to function properly with every member exercising their giftedness, there must be an overriding atmosphere of love. Lincoln states, “The essential ingredient for the achievement of the harmony of unity in diversity is love.”⁵⁹ According to Paul’s extended description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-13, one of the main aspects of love is considering the needs of others as being more important than one’s own.

Love is not only the atmosphere in which the church is to minister to each other, it is also the goal to which Christians should aspire. It is the standard against which Christian maturity is measured. When each one is striving toward the welfare of the other the body of Christ will be working properly. Lincoln explains, “Love is the lifeblood of

⁵⁷ By using the phrase “the unity of the faith,” Paul is probably referencing the “core convictions” that all Christians should hold. See Arnold, *Ephesians*, 264.

⁵⁸ Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 239.

⁵⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 267.

this body, and therefore, the ultimate criterion for the assessment of the Church's growth will be how far it is characterized by love."⁶⁰

Conclusion

Second Peter 1:3-21, Colossians 3:12-17, Romans 12:1-15:19, and Ephesians 4:7-16 have been presented to establish that the body of Christ has been thoroughly supplied with the resources necessary to effectively exercise the one another ministry that it has been mandated to carry out. Second Peter affirms that the prophetic word is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to motivate and equip Christians to live a life that is pleasing to God. Colossians 3 and Romans 12-15 establish that believers are expected by God to encourage and admonish each other to live a godly life and that they can be sufficiently prepared to do so. Ephesians 4 establishes that along with the prophetic word, God has given each believer certain gifts that are particularly designed to encourage the body to grow in its understanding and proclamation of the gospel, and in its expression of mutual loving cooperation. There are also specialized roles for certain individuals who have been given the privilege, ability, and responsibility to equip each member of the church to effectively use their gifts in one another ministry.

⁶⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 264.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL COUNSELING IS THEOLOGICALLY AND PRAGMATICALLY SUPERIOR TO LARRY CRABB'S INTEGRATED CHRISTIAN COUNSELING APPROACH

There have been several challenges associated with introducing biblical counseling to the leadership and attenders of Auburn Grace Community Church (AGCC). Among these challenges has been the struggle to convincingly communicate the tenets that distinguish biblical counseling from other approaches, particularly Christian integrative counseling. Throughout its history, AGCC has promoted seminars, books, and support groups that utilize principles and techniques derived from various Christian integrative counseling perspectives.¹ It can be confusing to learn that Christian counseling is not necessarily synonymous with biblical counseling. Further confusion results when the body realizes that much of what the leadership has promoted as Christian counseling is more secular, humanistic, or even anti-biblical in its orientation than it is Christian.

This confusion manifests itself throughout the Charis Fellowship, with which AGCC is affiliated. Integrated Christian counseling has been widely accepted throughout the Charis Fellowship. Through his many books, seminars, and classroom instruction, well-known integrationist Larry Crabb has been influential in spreading Christian integrative counseling nationally and internationally. His teachings have had a particular impact among the schools and churches of the Charis Fellowship. After a brief description of Crabb's association with the Charis Fellowship, this chapter will demonstrate how

¹ The AGCC bookstore currently offers books by James Dobson on child-rearing, and by Henry Cloud and John Townsend on how to overcome personal struggles. They each utilize an integrative counseling approach.

biblical counseling is theologically and pragmatically superior to Crabb's integrative approach.

Crabb's Influence on the Charis Fellowship

Crabb has been involved in counseling for almost fifty years. He has graduate and post-graduate degrees in clinical psychology and has authored more than forty books and dozens of articles related to counseling. His primary audience has been the church. His books cover topics such as marriage and family, Christian maturity, training in effective counseling, gender roles, dealing with depression, and others. He has been on the faculty of both Christian and public universities and has his own private practice.

Currently, Crabb works in conjunction with the American Association of Christian Counselors as Spiritual Director, serves on the faculty of Colorado Christian University, and is the Founder/Director of NewWay Ministries, an organization whose aim is to encourage believers to value intimacy with God more than receiving blessing from God.²

Crabb's Influence through Formal Education

Grace College and Seminary is the major post-secondary educational institution affiliated with the Charis Fellowship. The seminary was founded in 1937, to train believers from the United States and around the world at the master's and doctoral levels in evangelical ministry and theology.³ In 1982, Crabb was added to the seminary's faculty

² NewWay Ministries' stated calling is "To ignite a revolution in relationships, a new way to live that explores the real battle in our souls and frees us to value intimacy with God more than blessings from God. NewWay Ministries, "About NewWay Ministries," accessed March 19, 2019, <http://www.newwayministries.org/about.php>.

³ Grace College, "Our Story," accessed March 19, 2019, <https://www.grace.edu/about/our-story/>.

to “create and grow the Department of Biblical Counseling.”⁴ He started the Institute for Biblical Counseling, which was later replaced with the School of Behavioral Sciences. During the 1980s, the focus of the seminary’s counseling program experienced a shift away from training pastoral counseling toward an emphasis on professional counseling. There are now a variety of counseling programs at both the college and seminary. Each of these programs approach counseling from an integrated, biblical theology combined with secular psychological theories.⁵

Crabb’s Influence through Writing

While leading and teaching in the Department of Biblical Counseling at Grace Seminary, Crabb was also active as an author. At least four of his books were published during this time.⁶ Before joining Grace Seminary, he had already written his first two books, which were targeted specifically toward training in biblical counseling.⁷

Confusion is understandable when Crabb’s writings are titled and described as books on biblical counseling and he is presented by himself and others as a Bible teacher,

⁴ Kerith Ackley-Jelinek, “A Legacy of Leadership,” *Two Eight & Nine* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 15.

⁵ The on-line description for Grace College and Seminary’s Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling describes itself as a program “committed to *Scripture* as the foundation for truth in each course with a complementary understanding of the truths in psychology and the social sciences.” Grace College, “Clinical Mental Health Counseling, MA: Overview,” accessed March 19, 2019, <https://online.grace.edu/programs/master-of-arts-in-clinical-mental-health-counseling/>. They also state, “100% of courses integrate biblical truth with psychological concepts.” Grace College, “Counseling,” accessed March 19, 2019, <https://www.grace.edu/major/counseling/>.

⁶ Larry Crabb, *The Marriage Builder* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982); Crabb, *Encouragement: The Key to Caring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); Crabb, *Understanding People: Satisfying the Deepest Human Longings through Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); Crabb, *Inside Out* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1988).

⁷ Larry Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling: Meeting Counseling Needs through the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

psychologist, and Christian counselor. The following section is a presentation and theological evaluation of the main tenets of his approach to counseling.

Critique of Crabb's Approach to Biblical Counseling

The modern biblical counseling movement has its beginnings in the 1970s with the teachings and writings of Jay Adams, specifically with the publishing of his book *Competent to Counsel*.⁸ *Competent to Counsel* was influential in motivating many evangelicals to return to the Scriptures as the standard of all faith and practice and to view the Bible as a sufficient resource for its counseling ministry. Pastors were called to assume their responsibility as shepherds to provide biblical counsel and not relegate their role to professional secular counselors.⁹ It was also during this timeframe that Crabb completed his formal doctoral training in clinical psychology and authored his first two books, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling* in 1975 and *Effective Biblical Counseling* in 1977.

Crabb admits that he does not have any formal theological education.¹⁰ All three of his earned degrees are in the field of psychology from non-religiously affiliated institutions. While formal theological training is not a requirement to serve as a recognized Bible teacher, one's approach to biblical counseling can be greatly influenced by the philosophical orientation of the institution in which he is trained. Crabb's approach to counseling appears to be highly impacted by his formal training in psychology. While he uses biblical language and attempts to apply biblical principles the foundational philosophy of his secular orientation is evident in much of his writings. This chapter is neither a criticism of his character nor a questioning of his morality. This critique is meant to be an evaluation of the foundational principles and application of his counseling methodology.

⁸ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

⁹ Chap. 5 of Adams's, *Competent to Counsel* is devoted to the function of ministers as shepherds.

¹⁰ Larry Crabb, *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 72.

In comparing Crabb's counseling approach to that of Adams, there are many similarities. In view of the various contemporary schools of counseling philosophies during the latter half of the twentieth century, Crabb's approach is comparatively biblical. However, there are some clear contrasts between the approaches.

Areas of Agreement

One of the difficulties of determining whether to consider Crabb's counseling approach as either biblical or integrationist is that he makes assertions that can lead in both directions. He clearly states that his writing "introduces my conception of a *truly biblical approach* to counseling."¹¹ He makes at least three assertions that appear, at least initially, to place him squarely on the side of biblical counseling. Many biblical counselors would find agreement with Crabb's assertions regarding the sufficiency of Scripture, the role of pastors, and the role of the community of believers.

The sufficiency of Scripture. The first of Crabb's assertions that aligns with biblical counseling is his declarations regarding the sufficiency of the Bible as a counseling resource. In both his earliest writings and his later works Crabb discusses the topic of sufficiency. In *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*, he states, "We must develop a solidly biblical approach . . . one which clings passionately and unswervingly to belief in an inerrant Bible and an all-sufficient Christ."¹² In his introduction, he declares, "I determined . . . that my psychological theory and practice would have to conform to biblical truth."¹³

¹¹ Larry Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 19, emphasis added.

¹² Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*, 18.

¹³ Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*, 12.

In his later writings, Crabb emphatically affirms his stance regarding the sufficiency of Scriptures: “When I argue for biblical sufficiency, I am suggesting that every question a counselor *or therapist* needs to ask is answered by both the content of Scripture and its implications.”¹⁴ He devotes an entire chapter to promote his position:

Yes, the Bible is sufficient to answer every question about life, but not because it directly responds to every legitimate question. The idea of biblical sufficiency for counseling rests on the assumption that biblical data provide categories of understanding that have implications that comprehensively deal with every relational issue of life.¹⁵

Heath Lambert, former Executive Director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, sounds similar when describing his position of biblical sufficiency: “We need not rely on only a handful of passages to prove sufficiency of Scripture because we have an entire Bible that God has given us to change our lives and demonstrate the sufficiency of Scripture for counseling.”¹⁶ Again he affirms, “The carefully developed view of the biblical counseling movement is not that the Scriptures provide Christians with all of the information we *desire* but rather with the understanding we *need* to do *counseling ministry*.”¹⁷

The role of the pastor. A second assertion that aligns with biblical counseling is regarding the role of the pastor. Crabb describes the role of Christian ministers as two-fold: to help equip the members of the local body of Christ minister to each other, and to effectively and adequately counsel the flock over which God has placed them.

Crabb makes an appeal for pastors to “return to the biblical model not of ministering to their people but of equipping their people to minister to each other by using

¹⁴ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 69, emphasis original.

¹⁵ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 69.

¹⁶ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 64.

¹⁷ Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, eds., *Counseling the Hard Cases* (Nashville: B & H, 2012),

their spiritual gifts.”¹⁸ As presented in chapter 2 of this project, the Bible teaches that Christ has gifted the church with officers who are to use their position to equip the saints to carry out the work of ministering to the body. Brad Bigney and Steve Viars remark concerning the role of ministers: “Ministry is the work of the church, the everyday saints, and not just those with a special calling or professional training. . . . But they cannot do it alone. They will need pastors/teachers who are committed to showing them *how*.”¹⁹

In *Competent to Counsel*, Adams addresses the second aspect of pastoral care: effective counseling. He exhorts pastors to minister through nouthetic counseling to their flocks: “Counseling involves helping people to put off old patterns which grew out of rebellion toward God, and helping them to put on new practices which grow out of obedience to God. This is the shepherd’s challenge, opportunity and duty.”²⁰ He accentuates his argument further by writing, “A minister, therefore, must consider nouthetic confrontation as an essential part of his pastoral responsibility.”²¹

Crabb reveals a similar attitude toward the responsibility and ability of pastors to meet the counseling needs of the church. Basing his position on his previous affirmation concerning biblical sufficiency, he writes, “If the Bible really is sufficient to address a counselor’s concerns, then there should be no need for psychologists, just better trained pastors.”²² He further asserts that many times the only requirement to be a minister in

¹⁸ Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*, 17.

¹⁹ Brad Bigney and Steve Viars, “A Church of Biblical Counseling,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, ed. Bob Kelleman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 25. Brad Bigney is a certified biblical counselor with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC), a frequent ACBC conference speaker, and senior pastor of Grace Fellowship Church, a multi-site church in Kentucky, which features an extensive biblical counseling ministry. Steve Viars is the senior pastor of Faith Church in Lafayette, IN, and is a Board member of both ACBC and of Biblical Counseling Coalition.

²⁰ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 77.

²¹ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 67. “Nouthetic confrontation” is how Adams describes biblical counseling. In Chapter 4 Adams addresses what is meant by “nouthetic confrontation.”

²² Crabb, *Understanding People*, 74.

evangelical circles is doctrinal orthodoxy and not the capacity to “enter wisely and deeply into people’s lives with the truth they believe.”²³

Since the Bible is sufficient as a counseling resource, then the lack of applicability should not be attributed to itself but rather to the counselor’s inadequate study. Crabb writes, “Because the Bible claims to be the word of life, we should be able to find within its pages all that is needed to counsel effectively.”²⁴ This statement is similar to John MacArthur’s, who is widely accepted as a proponent of biblical counseling: “The lack of resolution for the difficult problems of life is not a result of Scripture’s inadequacy; it’s a result of people’s inadequate study and application of Scripture.”²⁵

The role of the church. One of Crabb’s governing assumptions regarding counseling is that “the community of God’s people functioning together in biblical relationship is the intended context for understanding and living out God’s answers to life’s problems.”²⁶ This concept has been a consistent theme from his earliest writings: “I envision the development of meaningful counseling within the local church carried on by church members. When it is operating biblically, the body of Christ provides individuals with all the necessary resources to appropriate their significance and security in Christ.”²⁷ Crabb still prioritizes that the Christian community, the church, is where healing of relational problems is to occur.²⁸

²³ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 74.

²⁴ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 64.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Think Biblically* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 33.

²⁶ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 24.

²⁷ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 161.

²⁸ Larry Crabb, “Sovereign Stumbling: My Life Journey to Date,” NewWay Ministries, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://www.newwayministries.org/sovstumbling.php>.

This philosophy of one-another ministry is repeatedly echoed among biblical counselors. Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer write, “In all this, our goal is to avoid replacing the community found in the local church with the pseudo-community of a private practice counseling office. As pastors in the church, this means that we do our best to *counsel within the context of community*.”²⁹

When comparing the three foundational tenets of the sufficiency of Scripture, the role of the pastor, and the role of the church, it is apparent why Crabb, and others, considers himself to be a biblical counselor. The next section is a discussion of some of the tenets that distinguish Crabb’s approach from one that is consistently biblical. In these specific areas it will be argued that his ideas are derived more from his psychological orientation than from the Scriptures.

Areas of Concern

Three specific topics are addressed in this section to demonstrate how Crabb’s approach to biblical counseling differs from a non-integrated approach to biblical counseling. The first topic involves his view on anthropology—what it means to be created in the image of God. Second, and still related to the subject of anthropology, concerns his premise about the core motivation that drives human behavior. Third is Crabb’s position on bibliology: how should the Scriptures be used in constructing an approach to biblical counseling?

Man in God’s image. What does it mean that man was created in the image of God? Crabb summarizes, “The image of God consists in the enduring qualities of personhood that both God and people share, qualities that define what it means to be a

²⁹ Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer, “Biblical Counseling and Small Groups: Counseling in the Context of Community,” in Kelleman, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 137.

person rather than a nonperson.”³⁰ He further defines personhood as consisting of four attributes: deep longings, evaluative thinking, active choosing, and emotional experiencing.³¹ The first of these attributes, deep longings, sets his interpretation apart from non-integrated biblical counseling.

Crabb proposes that there are *crucial* and *noncrucial longings* or desires in every human heart. *Crucial longings* are those that must be met to live a life that is “worth living.”³² He specifically mentions the desires for *relationship* and *impact* as pertaining to this category. He states, “Nothing can satisfy our crucial longings except the kind of relationship that only God offers.”³³ The consequence of not fulfilling these longings, according to Crabb, is “a pain that must be dealt with.”³⁴

Biblical counselors agree that man was created to be in relationship with God. Bob Kellemen, a recognized author and lecturer in the area of biblical counseling, and Crabb, both cite Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman and the discussion concerning spiritual thirst to illustrate man’s longing for communion with the creator.³⁵ The concept of *relationship with God* constitutes part of what it means to be created in *the image of God*.³⁶ What distinguishes Crabb in this discussion is his proposal that innate needs are what drive man’s behavior.³⁷ Not only is man driven by the quest for relationship, he is

³⁰ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 102.

³¹ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 104-5.

³² Larry Crabb, *Inside Out* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 101.

³³ Crabb, *Inside Out*, 101.

³⁴ Crabb, *Inside Out*, 103.

³⁵ Bob Kellemen, “How Do We Overcome Sexual Sin?” Biblical Counseling Coalition, September 6, 2011, <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2011/09/06/how-do-we-overcome-sexual-sin/>.

³⁶ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), s.v. “image of God.” Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), s.v. “image of God.”

³⁷ Crabb’s language evolves in his writings from using the term *need* to *deep longing*. Crabb,

also driven by the quest for significance. He states that apart from a caring relationship with God and “something to do that matters, life is an unspeakably cruel experience to be avoided, distorted, or denied.”³⁸ These two small modifications form the basis for much of his counseling philosophy.

Crabb refers to Hosea 11:8 to illustrate how God intensely desires relationship with his children and he draws a parallel between this and King David’s thirst for communion with God in Psalm 63:1.³⁹ There is however, a difference between God and man both *desiring* relationship, and claiming this to be the prime motivational factor in determining behavior. It is another step to claim that David’s *thirsting after God* can be attributed as a common sentiment among all humanity. Crabb believes, “God appeals to people to enter into relationship with him on the basis of their longings. Therefore, knowing what our longings are and experiencing them deeply is important.”⁴⁰ These *deep longings* for relationship with God are not even recognized by most people. They are hidden in the *unconscious*. He states, “There is an unconscious.”⁴¹

The unconscious that Crabb describes is comparable, in his view, to the heart of man described in Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it.” He claims that the unconscious needs to be exposed to reveal the relational pain and self-protective patterns that have developed.⁴²

Understanding People, 18.

³⁸ Crabb, *Inside Out*, 103.

³⁹ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 104.

⁴⁰ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 133.

⁴¹ Crabb, *Understanding People*, 162. Freud was not the first to introduce the idea of the *unconscious*. He is widely attributed with explaining and popularizing the concept. For a more thorough understanding of his theory, see his *Papers on Metapsychology*, specifically “The Unconscious,” which he wrote in 1915. Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1991).

⁴² Crabb, *Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationships*, 163.

At man's core he is attempting to satisfy his desire or need to be in relationship with God. It is precisely at this point that he, apparently unknowingly, has integrated his secular orientation into his teaching. He believes that man's nature is basically good. Man's sin is in the inappropriate ways that he attempts to fulfill his appropriate need. This interpretation is contrary to the teachings of Scripture that man is not naturally inclined toward relationship with God (Rom 3:10-11; 1 John 4:10; Eph 2:1-10). Crabb derives his view of personhood from his anthropology and it forms the background for his assertion that "the basic personal need of each personal being is to regard himself as a worthwhile human being."⁴³ This assumption leads into the assertion he makes regarding male and female motivation.

Male and female motivation. Secular psychology has also strongly influenced Crabb's anthropology in his teaching regarding the primary motivators for men and women. He explains that man seeks to satisfy the basic need for self-worth via one of two routes: for males it is a search for significance, for females it is seeking security. He writes, "My experience suggests that although men and women need both kinds of input, for men the *primary* route to personal worth is significance and for women the primary route is security."⁴⁴

It is notable that Crabb bases this conclusion on his personal experience. He attempts to support his findings with a lengthy discussion of the roles, responsibilities, and responses of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as recorded in the early chapters of Genesis.⁴⁵ He also cites some New Testament passages in support of his premise regarding

⁴³ Craig, *Basic Principles*, 53.

⁴⁴ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 63.

⁴⁵ Crabb's most thorough presentation is found in his book *Fully Alive*. This work is specifically devoted to a presentation of what he considers to be "a biblical view of gender." Larry Crabb, *Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender That Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

man's core motivations.⁴⁶ While it may be possible to find theories in the secular realm that match scriptural teaching, it is reasonable to ask whether these principles would be derived from the Bible or have been imported and then a search for validation takes place. Would Crabb have discovered these principles if he had solely relied upon biblical exegesis or did his education allow him to discover them? The way Crabb uses Scripture to validate his theories addresses the question of his biblical counseling methodology. The next section specifically speaks to this issue. Before critiquing Crabb's methodological approach to biblical counseling, one other concern is raised in relation to his teaching about motivation.

Even if Crabb's proposition concerning man's innate need (or desire) for significance were true, and if one agrees that this need for significance can only be satisfied through a relationship with God, this should not be the primary motivation for pursuing such a relationship. Pursuing God to satisfy personal needs is tantamount to idolatry. It establishes meeting needs as the priority over the goal of pleasing or glorifying God. Relationship with God becomes the methodology to accomplishing the goal of personal fulfillment.

The principle motivating factor for all of life should be focused on God, not focused on satisfying needs. Pleasing God is the priority. Personal satisfaction or need fulfillment is a resulting consequence. Many passages emphasize this principle (Prov 3:5-6; Ps 37:4, Matt 6:33; 1 Cor 10:13; Col 3:17). It is true that God alone can and will satisfy man's deepest longings. This should not be the *primary motivating factor* for any activity. Crabb writes, "Do you want God's solution to your real problem? Let's take a look at what God's plan is for you in your present circumstances. If you will follow His plan and do what He wants you to do, you will experience the exhilarating sense of being

⁴⁶ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 55. Crabb cites Acts 17:22-34, Rom 8:35-39, Matt 11:28 and Gal 2:11-13 and briefly outlines how his beliefs correspond with various secular sources from the realm of psychology.

a real somebody; a carefully and eternally meaningful child of God.”⁴⁷ It is not an either or dichotomy between glorifying God and satisfying human need. It is a matter of priority. Kevin Carson writes about the continual struggle of prioritizing God’s glory in difficult situations: “It is in these individual moments where the believer chooses to live for something—either for God or self. As the waves of life circumstances continually crash on the shore of life, with each new wave the believer must choose how to respond, what to live for, and whom to live for.”⁴⁸ Even if striving to please and glorify God were to result in dissatisfaction and negative consequences (hypothetically) intimacy with Him should still be pursued.

Biblical counseling methodology. The final concern to be addressed is perhaps that which fundamentally distinguishes Crabb’s approach from non-integrated biblical counseling methodology. When formulating an approach to counseling it is important to determine what role the Bible will play as the authoritative source of truth. In other words, should the Scriptures merely be used to either validate or reject other approaches that originate from other sources? This is the question regarding the counselor’s practical application of the doctrine of sufficiency.

Crabb affirms that his “psychological theory and practice would have to conform to biblical principles”⁴⁹ and that “we can profit from secular psychology if we carefully screen our concepts to determine their compatibility with Christian presuppositions.”⁵⁰ Again he writes, “I too believe in the sufficiency of Christ for every need of man, but I don’t believe we are denying His sufficiency when we accept secular

⁴⁷ Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*, 59.

⁴⁸ Kevin Carson, “The Richness and Relevance of God’s Word,” in *Scripture and Counseling*, ed. Bob Kelleman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 34.

⁴⁹ Crabb, *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*, 12.

⁵⁰ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 50.

thinking that in no way contradicts the revelation of Christ in His Word.”⁵¹ These statements indicate that Crabb operates from the same understanding regarding the doctrine of sufficiency as do other Christian integrationists. Stanton Jones, Professor of Psychology and Core Studies at Wheaton College, expresses the same position as: “The integrationist also surmises that Scripture does not provide us all that we need in order to understand human beings fully, and that there is a legitimate role for psychology as a science and as a profession in giving us intellectual and practical tools for understanding and improving the human condition.”⁵² At times, Crabb appeals to various secular psychologists in support of his theories and endorses them as valuable and practical resources. A few examples will be cited to demonstrate how he has been influenced.

Sigmund Freud is widely recognized as the founder of psychoanalysis. In Crabb’s proposal concerning the motivations for men and women he writes, “It intrigues me to observe Freud’s conclusion that the two basic drives behind behavior are power and pleasure, or in his terms, *thanatos* and *eros*. . . . I wonder if these two drives are not really degenerate forms of the God-created personal needs of significance and security.”⁵³

Carl Rogers was one of the founding fathers of psychotherapy and the *person-centered approach* to counseling. Crabb states that relationship is an important aspect of any counseling approach: “Again, let me underline the central importance of *relationship* in counseling. . . . Christians would do well to read Carl Rogers on the need for profoundly accepting the client as a worthwhile human being.”⁵⁴

B. F. Skinner was Professor of Psychology at Harvard University in the 1960s

⁵¹ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 42.

⁵² Stanton L. Jones, “An Integration View,” in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, ed. Eric Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 101-2.

⁵³ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 73.

⁵⁴ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 97.

and 1970s and developed the field of *behavior analysis*. In Crabb's development of "need based anthropology" he builds off of secular psychology by affirming, "Psychologists make an important distinction between primary needs and secondary needs. . . .

Psychologist B. F. Skinner has technically defined a secondary reinforcer (or need) as a stimulus event that has acquired its reinforcing property through prior service as a discriminative stimulus."⁵⁵

Jerome Frank was a well-known psychiatrist at the Johns Hopkins University Medical School. When discussing the difficulty for counselees to understand their hidden motivations Crabb finds support in Frank's writings. He states, "For a counselor to explore a person's "assumptive system" (Jerome Frank's term in his excellent book *Persuasion and Healing*) involves shining light on thinking that to this point has been enshrouded in darkness."⁵⁶

Millard Sall, an evangelical psychologist, is cited as an authority in the area of developmental psychology. Crabb does not question nor interject any biblical support for the assertion that he makes. He simply refers to Sall saying, "Children pass through a variety of developmental stages, Millard Sall, in his book, *Faith, Psychology and Christian Maturity*, gives an excellent, readable summary of the psychoanalytic view of stages in personal growth."⁵⁷

Lambert points out the difficulty of using the Bible to verify or validate secular psychological ideas rather than letting it provide the principles and practices to be utilized. The problem, he explains, is that Christian counselors, by which he means integrationists, claim that secular psychology can "fill the gaps of Scripture concerning counselor

⁵⁵ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 113.

⁵⁶ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 96.

⁵⁷ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 115.

care.”⁵⁸ The Bible must be used “to evaluate these secular therapies to determine what elements of them should be included or excluded in order to be faithful.”⁵⁹ Lambert suggests that by arguing that the Bible can be used in this fashion actually demonstrates “that the contents of Scripture address the counseling principles they claim it lacks.”⁶⁰ He claims that it is not appropriate to claim that the Bible is inadequate to establish the same useful principles applied in secular therapy but at the same time to use the Bible to “adjudicate which of those secular principles are faithful or unfaithful.”⁶¹ The result of merely using the Bible as a filter for removing unbiblical practices from secular therapies is that, as Lambert writes, “you are no longer left with the secular therapy.”⁶² It is more effective and efficient to derive life-changing principles directly from the Scriptures. John Street, chair of the Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling at The Master’s University, expresses the same sentiments regarding the sufficient role of the Bible as the *source* for building the proper biblical counseling approach:

For the Christian counselor, The Word of God must be more than an interpretive grid for the acceptance or denial of psychological truth-claims; it is the operative domain from which the counselor derives his/her functional and final authority, being accepted as the determinative authority in anthropology. Scripture serves as the only reliable resource for the Christian counselor’s diagnostic terminology and remedy.⁶³

Lambert’s and Street’s opinions are different than those expressed by Crabb and other integrationists.

There are other examples throughout Crabb’s writings of his acceptance of

⁵⁸ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 98.

⁵⁹ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 98.

⁶⁰ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 99.

⁶¹ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 99.

⁶² Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 99.

⁶³ John Street, “Why Biblical Counseling and Not Psychology,” in *Think Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2003), 203.

secular psychological personality theory. In discussing the conscious and unconscious mind he concurs with various secular analysts by writing, “Freud and Skinner both taught that what *happens* to a person is responsible for his problems. Along with Adler, Ellis, Rogers and others, I am suggesting that how a person perceives what happens to him has a lot to do with his emotional and behavioral reaction.”⁶⁴ In fact, Crabb’s presentation of motivational deep needs appears almost identical to Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.⁶⁵ Crabb’s use of non-scripturally derived theories demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining a truly biblical approach when the counseling methodology as well as the philosophy are not only supported by the Bible but also derived from it.

Psychology has gained at least popular recognition as a valid field of *scientific* study. It is commonly referred to as the *science of behavior*. Integrating psychology and Scripture is now described as integration of *Christianity* with *science*.⁶⁶ David Powlison, editor of the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* and teacher of biblical counseling, argues concerning the dangers of integrating psychological science with biblical counseling. He explains that the forte of psychological science is in its attempt to describe behavior but not in explaining it or changing it:

The fatal flaw in both research psychology and the personality theories: they cannot explain why people do what they do, because they exclude the truth à priori and elevate secondary factors to primary significance. . . . For all their care and skill, they do not reorient strugglers to reality, and the deeper they probe into a person, the more misleading they become.⁶⁷

Other writers, including integrationists, extend this caution even further. They would warn that even the ability to make unbiased observation should not be taken for

⁶⁴ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 91.

⁶⁵ See Abraham Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370-96.

⁶⁶ Jones, “An Integration View,” 105.

⁶⁷ David Powlison, “A Biblical Counseling Response to Integration,” in Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 144.

granted. Jones warns, “‘Facts’ are not quite as simple as they seem. . . . We always see or interpret facts in science through the grid of some orientating theory or conceptual scheme.”⁶⁸ Relying on even apparently obvious and well-accepted non-biblically generated concepts is an ever-present danger. Treating psychology with the same level of confidence in its ability to obtain *the facts* through observation as in other scientific fields is questionable. Attempting to unbiasedly observe behavior is not a simple matter.

Eric Johnson, a Christian psychologist, acknowledges that it is difficult to maintain a proper balance when combining biblical and secular theories. He writes, “Too much borrowing from an alien tradition can lead to the disintegration of one’s own tradition and sometimes even to its disappearance.”⁶⁹ Unfortunately, it is exactly this that appears to have happened to Crabb’s biblical counseling approach.

Allowing oneself to be overly influenced through ungodly associations is what the psalmist warned against in Psalm 1. The wise counselor will exercise extreme caution when listening even skeptically to ungodly opinion; it is contrary to wisdom. One can quickly and unwittingly progress from casual listening, to intentionally considering the ideas, and ultimately full participation in promoting the philosophy.

The pragmatic advantage of a truly biblical counseling approach. One of the most attractive distinctives of the biblical counseling movement is its emphasis on equipping every member of the body of Christ to minister to one another. The most prolific authors of the current movement, including Crabb, have devoted chapters, and in many cases entire books, to the subject of counseling as a one another ministry of the local church.

The secular view of counseling is that it is an area primarily for professionals. Years of formal education and practice are required for licensure. From an integrationist

⁶⁸ Jones, “An Integration View,” 113.

⁶⁹ Jones, “An Integration View,” 23.

perspective this is understandable. If one accepts the premise that valuable information can and must be gleaned from all the various approaches it follows that one should at least become familiar with as many of them as possible. This prospect can be intimidating. How can any pastor hope to create and implement a counselor training program that incorporates the best aspects of the myriad of secular and Christian philosophies?

Conclusion

This chapter has been an attempt to demonstrate that, while Larry Crabb incorporates biblical truths into his counseling approach and there are areas of agreement with non-integrative biblical counselors, there are also some significant differences. Basing his approach on the belief that man is primarily motivated by his desires to be in relationship with God and to find significance is one deviation. Making distinctions between the unique desires of men and women is another variation from non-integrative biblical counseling. The influence of extra-biblical, secular philosophies is evident in his writings and they appear to have influenced his approach more than he recognizes. Non-integrated biblical counseling attempts to minimize as much as possible the importation of secularly derived theories.

On numerous occasions counselees have expressed thoughts like, “I have tried counseling, the counselor said she was a Christian and it wasn’t any different than the other counselors I’ve had,” or “We’ve already gone to Christian counseling and it didn’t help.” Upon further investigation, it was integrated counseling to which they were referring. They were unaware of any significant difference between Christian integrated counseling and biblical counseling. The people were doubtful about the efficacy of “biblical” counseling because they mistakenly believed they had already received it. They had not, however, experienced biblical counsel. It was instead an attempt to incorporate secularly derived theories and therapies together with Bible verses and scriptural principles. It has resulted in much confusion and frustration, both on the part of the counselee and the counselor.

Crabb calls his approach *biblical*. However, it is still an integrated counseling approach. There are similarities to non-integrated biblical counseling, but they are not sufficient to distinguish his approach from that of integrated Christian counseling. This lack of distinction creates a hindrance to those needing biblical counseling and hinders those who would like to receive training to give biblical counseling.

Many Christians are already hesitant to accept their biblical responsibility to admonish one another. They have been convinced by Christian and non-Christian counselors alike that effective counseling is the realm of professionals. Even though Crabb demonstrates a commitment to motivate and equip Christians to counsel each other, he simultaneously discourages them through his regular appeal to non-biblical practitioners. When he appeals to or cites Freud, Adler, Frank, Rogers, and others he is unintentionally demonstrating that the Bible is not sufficient. He is communicating that to effectively minister to one another it will require a broad range of study that may last years. When presenting church members with the possibility of receiving training to counsel one another biblically, a common response has been, “I’m not smart enough to do that, I would have to know too much,” or “I studied psychology in college and it was really complicated.”

This project comes from the perspective that it is not necessary to understand or even study non-biblical approaches to become an effective biblical counselor. It is necessary to study and dedicate time and energy, but the subject matter is extremely focused. Understanding and applying biblical principles is the course of study. Extra-biblical writers may be consulted and referred to but only as they specifically help clarify the interpretation, understanding, and application of biblical principles. The following chapter presents the ten-week training seminar that was implemented at AGCC to introduce the life group leaders to the principles and practice of biblical counseling that will help them minister to their small group participants.

CHAPTER 4
EQUIPPING LIFE GROUP LEADERS
IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Approximately one year prior to this project, AGCC officially launched its church wide small group ministry, with the official designation of “Life Groups.” Fourteen Life Groups were meeting regularly throughout the community with approximately 150 participants. The Life Group leaders began assuming more responsibility for providing pastoral care to their groups and recognizing the need to be better equipped as counselors.

The primary focus of this project was the training of Life Group leaders. Others of the church body were consistently involved in non-Life Group discipleship ministries. Some of these individuals and potential future Life Group leaders also participated.

The first goal of the project was to assess the awareness of biblical counseling among the Life Group leaders at AGCC. The Biblical Counseling Awareness Survey (BCAS) was prepared and distributed to current and potential Life Group leaders at the outset of the project.¹ This goal was achieved when 66 percent of the distributed surveys were returned and analyzed. The information was useful during the preparation of the curriculum. A common felt weakness among the survey participants was the lack of knowing which biblical verses could be specifically applied to particular problems. The curriculum therefore was re-evaluated and modified, where needed, to explicitly demonstrate the direct applicability of scriptural passages.

The initial preparation of the curriculum lasted for ten weeks. Included in the ten weeks was the preparation of the BCAS, and the Basics of Biblical Counseling

¹ See appendix 1.

Assessment² (BBCA), which was used at the first teaching session. The teaching portion of the project took place during weeks 11-18. The duration of the class was predetermined according to AGCC's fall Wednesday night schedule. Some significant changes were also made to the curriculum between the Wednesday night sessions. The BBCAs, which were taken by the participants during both the first and last sessions, were processed and evaluated during the final two weeks of the project, weeks 19 and 20.

Initial Development and Curriculum Preparation

The second goal of the project was to develop an eight-session introduction to biblical counseling course, which included the subjects of (1) the priority of disciple making in the mission of the local church, (2) the role of biblical counseling in the process of disciple making, (3) the place of evangelism as an initial component of biblical counseling, (4) biblical counseling as a one-another ministry of the local church, (5) the sufficiency of Scripture, and (6) case studies. This goal was successfully met when the eight-session curriculum was completed, evaluated by members of the expert panel, and suggested modifications incorporated into the lessons.

Weeks 1-6

The BBCA and the BCAS were both developed during this time and submitted to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Research Ethics Committee for approval. Once the approval was received, the BCAS was distributed.

The process of selecting which members of the congregation would be invited to participate in the training also took place during these weeks. All Life Group leaders were invited, along with other congregants whom had been recommended by church staff.

² See appendix 3.

The majority of the preparation of lesson 1, “Introduction to Biblical Counseling,” and lesson 2, “Scriptural Foundations of Biblical Counseling,” took place during weeks 5 and 6.³

Weeks 7-10

The BCASs were received during this period and used to modify the plans for lessons 1 and 2. They were further used in the planning of lessons 3-5. In this time period the advisory panel was invited to participate in assessing the plans for lessons 1-5 using the Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation.⁴

The panel included two staff pastors of AGCC, one congregant who was an English teacher at a local Christian High School.⁵ and one congregant who had received graduate-level academic training in counseling and had been through extensive lay counselor training.⁶ Both pastors on the panel have been employed in Christian ministry for over thirty years and have experience in pastoral counseling. Their primary role was to ensure the proper usage of the context and exegesis for each passage used to present the various topics. The English teacher was consulted regarding appropriate methodologies for teaching topics focused on practical application instead of theoretical knowledge. The input of the congregant with graduate training in biblical counseling was particularly valuable in the preparatory stages of planning the overall trajectory (subject matter) for the eight sessions.

³ Due to difficulties in communication between myself, the faculty supervisor, and the PDS office, there was a significant delay in becoming aware of the materials having received approval. To avoid delaying project implementation, curriculum development began prior to receiving approval of the BCAS.

⁴ See appendix 2.

⁵ The English teacher is also certified in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

⁶ The congregant with graduate-level training had participated in a training course developed by the Biblical Counseling Foundation (BCF), which uses John C. Broger, *Self-Confrontation: A Manual for In-Depth Discipleship* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994).

Project Implementation

The teaching of the project began on week 11 with twenty-nine participants in the first session, seventeen of which participated in at least six of the eight sessions.⁷ The purpose of the implementation portion was to accomplish goals 3 and 4 of this project: increase the knowledge of the life group leaders at AGCC in the principles of biblical counseling, and to increase their ability to counsel biblically.

Goal 3 was successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statically significant difference in the pre- and post-course survey scores.⁸ Goal 4 was considered successfully met when the participants demonstrated thoughtful interaction with the biblical counseling case studies presented during sessions 7 and 8.

Week 11

Before any teaching regarding the nature of biblical counseling occurred, the participants were informed as to the course's role in my academic studies and how the BBCA was part of the degree process. The BBCA was then distributed, completed, and collected. It required approximately twenty minutes for the completion and collection of the BBCA. After collecting the BBCAs, a brief orientation was given about my background and how I became interested in studying about and teaching biblical counseling.

The majority of the class time was devoted to explaining the meaning of *nouthetic* counseling and a study of the biblical passages where the word *nouthetic* occurs. The concept of "helping people put their thinking in order" was the focus of the discussion. The class interacted with seven New Testament passages: Acts 20:31-32, Romans 15:14, 1 Corinthians 4:14, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 1:28-29, Colossians 3:16, and 2

⁷ Only the test scores for the seventeen participants who attended at least six of the eight sessions were used for the calculations.

⁸ Assuming a level of significance set at .05, there was a statistically significant difference ($t(16) = 2.64, p = .0088$) in the participants' knowledge of the principles of biblical counseling pre- and post-test scores.

Thessalonians 3:15. I also introduced the idea that biblical counseling and discipleship are related. The class discussed the origin of the word Greek word *mathatas*, disciple, and its relation to the word mathematics. A disciple is someone who learns to think like or orders his thinking along the lines of his master.

During the remainder of the time the class discussed some of the commonly heard ideas regarding biblical counseling. One of the major misconceptions regarding biblical counseling discussed was the perception that it is neither compassionate nor sympathetic to the struggles and feelings of the counselee. Acts 20:17-32 was studied to counter this misconception and to prove the significant level of emotional care and concern the apostle Paul invested while ministering to the Ephesian church.

At this point it became obvious that I had not allowed adequate time for the level of interaction among the participants that the material would inspire. I stopped the class at that point and covered the rest of lesson 1 material the following week. Chapter 2 of my project, “The Biblical Foundations for Equipping Life Group Leaders to Counsel Biblically,” was distributed at the end of class to be read before the next session.

Week 12

Three individuals desiring to attend the class had not been in the first session. I met with them outside of class and asked them to complete the BBCA before entering the classroom.

As session 2 began, I instructed each participant to tell the person next to them about something they had learned about biblical counseling from the previous week’s material or express a question they had regarding it. After a few minutes of interaction I asked for several of the students to share what their neighbor had expressed but they were to rephrase it. They needed to ask the question or state the principle learned using different words. I did not attempt to answer all the questions that were rephrased since most of them would be addressed in future sessions.

After the sharing of the participants' questions I reviewed the main points of the previous week and started to give a brief history of the development of biblical counseling. The class discussed how counseling has come to be viewed as a profession and how many consider it to be either the role of the highly trained pastor or the clinically trained professional.

Jay Adams was presented as the father or revitalizer of the current biblical counseling movement and the pivotal role that his book, *Competent to Counsel*, played in the early 1970s and continues to play today. It has influenced many by helping pastors and lay Christians understand that they also are privileged to provide biblical counsel. All believers should be involved in counseling each other from the Word of God.

After concluding the material from lesson 1, I began to introduce lesson 2, "The Scriptural Foundations for Biblical Counseling." Due to the lack of time remaining however, I decided to begin with an example of how the Bible is practical in counseling. I began to introduce the lesson entitled "The Practicality of Scripture in Counseling." This lesson involved an analysis of Psalm 64, which provides an example of the psalmist counseling himself when experiencing his own struggle with anxiousness.⁹

The introduction attempted to demonstrate that the Bible gives clear direction about what attitudes and behaviors are or are not acceptable to God. It also provides specific direction on how to transform the unacceptable into acceptable attitudes and actions. Two scriptural examples, King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 and Cain in Genesis 4, were given to illustrate how those who were displaying ungodliness were not only directed to stop practicing ungodliness but also how to stop it.

⁹ The study of Ps 64 was inspired by a lecture given by Heath Lambert, the former Executive Director of ACBC. The style of the lecture created considerable controversy; therefore, I decided to base the class study upon the lecture without showing the actual recording. See Heath Lambert, "Heath Lambert Caricatures and Condemns Eric Johnson at ACBC conference, September 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPP4I3TNtKM>.

First Peter 5:7 was highlighted as a New Testament example of believers being told what not to do (do not be anxious) while also given clear direction on how to not to do it (cast all your anxiety upon Him). A discussion then began about the difficulty of not being anxious and on the circumstances that contribute to Christians believing that anxiety may be acceptable at times. The class discussion ended with the instruction to reflect upon the passages covered during the session.

Week 13

Session 3 was devoted to guiding the class through Psalm 94. I explained how the psalmist corrected his own anxious thinking by reminding himself of God's character and promises. This served as an illustration of the role of a biblical counselor in using the truths of Scripture to deal with anxiety.

In Psalm 94, the writer expresses that he is wrestling with the anxiety, which has resulted from his faulty thoughts. He recognizes that even though he is feeling alone, helpless, powerless, and out of resources, he in reality is not. He reminds himself that God is with him. God loves and cares for him, God promises to punish the wicked and reward the righteous, and he can rely on God's power, justice, and faithfulness.

After discussing the psalm, I outlined a four step process for personal application; the Four A's of biblical counseling: (1) acknowledge (i.e., come to the personal realization) that we are not focusing on who God is and what he has promised; (2) admit (i.e., verbal audibly to ourselves, God, and to another person) that how we have been responding to our circumstances is not how God wants us to respond; (3) accept the forgiveness that God freely offers to his children who have ignored, denied, doubted or devalued him and his promises; and (4) ask for his Spirit to provide the ability to recognize, affirm, believe, and appreciate God's provision, and to ask for help from others in the body of Christ.

The session concluded by introducing two homework assignments. The first assignment was to read pages 28-35 of *Think Biblically* by John MacArthur.¹⁰ The second assignment was to complete a worksheet covering Ephesians 4:21-32. This worksheet introduced the biblical counseling principle of *putting off* improper actions, thoughts, and beliefs, and replacing them by *putting on* godly actions, thoughts, and beliefs with the proper motivations. The worksheet was to be completed at home and brought back to class the following week.

Week 14

Session 4 began with a review of the put on/put off exercise distributed at the end of lesson 3. A majority of the class acknowledged that they had completed the assignment. The lesson covered the four actions that Paul told the Ephesians to stop doing—the four behaviors that are to replace these actions, and the reasoning that motivates it. The four actions to put off are lying, harboring anger, stealing, and speaking harmful words. The four replacement behaviors are speaking the truth, being quick to forgive, working, and speaking words of encouragement. These are all motivated by realizing that all believers are part of the body of Christ and one person’s sin affects other members. I concluded the exercise by underscoring that the principle motivation is the desire to please and honor God and not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

After completing the put on/put off exercise I proceeded to the next topic, “Scriptural Foundations of Biblical Counseling.” There were three main points to this session: the goal of biblical counseling, the motivation for biblical counseling, and the methodology that is used in biblical counseling.

Colossians 1:28 and Galatians 5:22-24 were the scriptural references used to support the teaching that the aim of biblical counseling is to help believers progress

¹⁰ John MacArthur, “Embracing the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture,” in *Think Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2003), 28-35.

toward spiritual maturity. I emphasized that maturity is not the same as sinlessness. God's desire is for every believer to grow in each of the nine the fruit of the Spirit.

After talking through each of the fruit of the Spirit I used 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Colossians 3:17 to re-emphasize that the overarching motivation that every believer should have is to please and honor God. I explained that pleasing God should be distinguished from attempting to gain God's love or acceptance. Christians are not accepted or loved by God because of good works. Nor can they cause God to love them more by doing what pleases him.

The motivation of desiring to represent Christ well was also highlighted in the Colossians passage. Christians need to realize that their actions are seen by others and need to faithfully demonstrate the truth about the savior. Doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus conveys both authority and responsibility.

In the last few minutes of session 4, I presented the need for Christians to learn to distinguish truth from error. Hebrews 4:12 teaches that Scripture is the tool that the Spirit uses to convict believers regarding right and wrong. Hebrews 5:14 explains that it is necessary for believers to practice applying the Scriptures to become proficient at differentiating truth from error.

After discussing the Hebrews passages, I introduced the topic of "taking every thought captive." This portion of the lesson was a review of what was discussed in the Ephesians 4 exercise, specifically taking off falsehood and putting on truth. I distributed a handout taken from *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil Anderson, which lists many statements found in Scripture regarding the proper identity believers have as a child of God.¹¹ I gave instructions to read through the handout and come prepared to discuss it at the next session.

¹¹ Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1990), 248-50.

Week 15

Week 15's session began by walking the class through the handout, which was distributed at the end of the prior session. In *The Bondage Breaker*, Neil Anderson presents what he believes to be three common falsehoods that many believers wrongly accept as truth. In response to these falsehoods, Anderson presents specific declarations of Scripture that directly refute them.

The three falsehoods can be summarized as (1) the lie that I am rejected, (2) the lie that I am hopelessly condemned, and (3) the lie that I am worthless. In response to these lies, the participants read, one-by-one, each of the verses that can be used to replace the lie with the truth regarding a believer's true identity, acceptance, and value as a child of God.

The second half of session 5 highlighted the fundamental claim of biblical counseling that the Bible is a sufficient resource for counseling. Three passages were used to establish the claims that Scriptures makes regarding itself: John 17:17, 2 Peter 1:3, and Psalm 19:7-10.

John 17 presents the Bible as the means through which believers access God's truth and that God's truth being applied brings about sanctification. As a working definition of sanctification, I presented the phrase "becoming more like Jesus." The believer's sanctification is God's goal for each one and the Holy Spirit's application of biblical truth is the primary method he employs.

Second Peter was used to present that the Scriptures present the reality of who Christ is and what he has done. Becoming more godly is equivalent to becoming more Christ like. The more a believer understands regarding Jesus the more he becomes like Jesus. The more a believer becomes like Jesus the more he is able to understand about Jesus. The hope is that this growth in Christ likeness, which leads to increased understanding, becomes a repeated cycle in the Christian's life. The point was also made that the phrase "everything we need for life" includes what is needed for emotional and psychological well-being.

The third passage discussed regarding biblical sufficiency was Psalm 19. In Psalm 19, the writer declares four effects that God's Word produces in a person who follows its principles: (1) soul restoration, (2) wise living, (3) a rejoicing heart, and (4) enlightened eyes. These four effects were further explained and offered as desired outcomes in counseling situations.

Two final passages that emphasized the necessity to be diligent in the pursuit of seeking to accurately applying Scripture were briefly discussed. Second Timothy 2:15-17 and Psalm 1 present that the pursuit of biblical truth and its application require eagerness and delight. Christians are to be zealous in using all the resources God has made available to them. Also, it can and should be pleasurable to receive divine instruction.

Session 5 ended with the distribution of a reading assignment from Heath Lambert's book *Finally Free*, which presents seven indications that a person is genuinely repentant about their sin.¹² These seven indications were to be the subject of the next week's session about repentance as a prerequisite of forgiveness. The handout specifically addresses the sin of pornography, but these principles can be applied to repentance in general.

Week 16

Session 6 was primarily devoted to discussing the topic of repentance. The lesson emphasized the importance of repentance as an essential component of granting biblical forgiveness. Two Old Testament and two New Testament passages were presented to establish the principle that God freely grants forgiveness to everyone who truly repents of their sin.

The main concepts derived from 2 Chronicles 7:14 were that repentance involves humble submission together with a disposition on the part of the repentant person

¹² Heath Lambert, *Finally Free* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 36-41.

to accept God's opinion and judgment regarding sin. Second Chronicles 30:8-9 further enforced that a repentant person will surrender their selfish desires and replace them with an acknowledgment of God's authority and will. When a sinner submits in this way it opens the path for further relationship with God. Luke 15:7 and 2 Peter 3:9 teach that God is patient with sinners and will always joyfully engage in a relationship with anyone who repents.

Seven evidences of true repentance were then presented to the class. These evidences were derived from 2 Corinthians 7:8-11. The seven key words used to summarize each one were earnestness, eagerness, indignation, alarm, longing, zeal, and readiness. Next is a brief description of the significance of each word.

Earnestness expresses an enthusiasm to correct a wrong. *Eagerness* means there has been thoughtful consideration of what would be an appropriate response on the part of the repentant person. *Indignation* involves emotionally experiencing personal grief. *Alarm* signifies the fearful recognition of the seriousness and the consequences of the offense. *Longing* means that there is a yearning for restored or reestablished relationship with the offended person. *Zeal* indicates that the yearning for restored relationship is enthusiastic with a sense of urgency. The final evidence, *readiness*, denotes being motivated by a desire for righteousness rather than a desire to minimize consequences that may come about because of the offense.

There was no additional homework assignment given at the end of class other than reviewing the seven evidences and bringing any questions or thoughts for class discussion to the following session.

Week 17

Session 7 began by distributing a case study for the participants to read and think about during the upcoming week. They were asked to underline the significant sentences and determine the important issues to be addressed. After the explanation of the homework, the rest of the class time was devoted to the topic of forgiveness.

The study on forgiveness began with a brief discussion of four New Testament passages. These passages were Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Luke 17:3-4, and Matthew 21-35. The emphasis derived from these Scriptures was that the willingness to forgive is an essential aspect of the Christian life. If a believer is not learning how to practice forgiveness, then he may be demonstrating that he is lacking in understanding regarding the gospel. This demonstrated lack of gospel understanding should call into question the sincerity and/or authenticity of his faith. In light of the strong warning concerning forgiveness, the remainder of the session was used to arrive at a working definition of godly forgiveness and the application of forgiveness in the believer's life. Three key words—gracious, conditional, and commitment—were used to help explain the principle of godly forgiveness. Three passages, Ephesians 2:8, Acts 20:21, and Romans 5:8-9, were presented in support of these concepts.

After discussing the key words with their biblical support I presented a working definition of godly forgiveness: A commitment by God to not hold those who repent and accept the truth of the gospel personally liable for the eternal consequences of their sin, and establish, or reestablish, a relationship with them that does not use that offense against them. The implications and application of this definition for believers were presented during the final minutes of the session.

The application of biblical forgiveness in the relationships of believers was outlined using five principles (1) the willingness to forgive a repentant person is a matter of obedience, (2) the extent of relationship that one should have with a repentant person who continuously offends is a matter to be determined based on grace and wisdom, (3) allowing the repentant person to suffer consequences for a forgiven offense should be based upon a desire for the offenders best interest, (4) consider the possible effects of public testimony when believers do not demonstrate a willingness to forgive, and (5) Christians should not demand *perfect* repentance in order to grant forgiveness. Following

the discussion on the topic of forgiveness, the class was reminded about the case study homework assignment and dismissed.

Week 18

During the week, between sessions 7 and 8, I received many requests for clarification regarding biblical forgiveness and also questions concerning specific application of the principles presented. Because of this, the first ten minutes of class were used to review the previous week's lesson.

After the review, class time was used to discuss the case study distributed in the last session. Most of the participants indicated that they had read through the study. They were asked to point out which facts and issues they considered to be most important to discuss and how they might treat each one. As the time was drawing to a close, the class was asked to describe what they considered to be the central issue that needed to be addressed before attempting to address the other issues. The discussion concluded with a reminder that believers should be motivated by a desire to honor and glorify God above all else. Focusing on problem solving is a secondary issue. The post-seminar BBCA was then given. Some of the participants completed the assessment at that time while others took it home and returned it during the week.

Week 19

In week 19 the post-seminar BBCAs were collected from the participants who did not have sufficient time to complete them during the session or who were not able to attend the final session.

Week 20

In week 20 the pre and post-course BBCAs were scored and examined to evaluate the course's strengths and weaknesses.

Conclusion

The preparation and teaching of this project were both rewarding and frustrating. It was rewarding to be able to communicate just a portion of how much I had learned over the previous three-year course of study. Many participants sought me out to express how much they had learned and appreciated the practicality of the lessons. During the course, many participants reported of specific instances in which they were able to personally apply or help someone else apply the principles they had learned in class.

This course was originally projected to be twelve weeks, but due to the church teaching schedule, eight weeks was allocated. I received many requests to continue the training into the winter/spring sessions, but this is yet to be determined by the leadership.

I was overly optimistic on how much material could be covered for each session. This optimism became clear by the second or third session. I therefore reorganized the topics that would be covered to demonstrate the practicality of biblical counseling and not spend as much time on theory.

One other frustration involved the inconsistent attendance of participants. Thirty-four people completed the pre-course BBCA but only fifteen completed the post-course BBCA. Some participants only attended one or two sessions while others were out-of-town during the final weeks of the project. Only the BBCAs of those who attended at least six of the eight sessions were used for the statistical analysis.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to introduce the life group leaders at Auburn Grace Community Church to the principles and practice of biblical counseling. Chapter 1 set forth the context and rationale for the project. AGCC is an active member of the Charis Fellowship. Both organizations proudly declare their commitment to the Scriptures as the ultimate source for truth and doctrine. However, even with this biblical devotion there is a prevalent lack of understanding and conviction concerning the Bible's sufficiency as a counseling resource. Many, if not most, of the congregants would affirm that the Scriptures are the principal tool Christians should use to guide themselves regarding how to help others with counseling needs. They would also confirm that when faced with personal issues they seek to find direction from the Bible. However, there is little conviction that the Scripture is a sufficient counseling resource that can effectively meet the church's counseling needs. The Bible is seen as the starting place for counseling, but professional psychologists or Christian integrated counselors should be consulted for more advanced, difficult cases. This project sought to address the lack of assurance in the Bible's ability to meet AGCC's counseling needs and transform the uncertainty into a growing confidence in its sufficiency. This project was instrumental in beginning this transformation. Among the AGCC staff and throughout the congregation there is a growing awareness, understanding, and confidence in the Scripture's applicability to both elementary and advanced counseling issues.

One of the primary reasons for AGCC's growing conviction in biblical sufficiency was the emphasis placed on the specific applicability of biblical verses and

principles to specific counseling issues. As participants observed the direct application of Scripture to real life situations, they began to comprehend that biblical counseling is more than memorizing verses and praying for strength to gain victory over problems. Learning how to “put off” old habits, thoughts, and beliefs and replacing them by “putting on” correct habits, thoughts, and beliefs has opened up a new realization of the practicality the Bible.

During the span of seven or eight years AGCC experienced rapid growth. This growth was due to the programs offered at AGCC, as well as the volatility in other area churches. This increase in attendees produced an eclectic congregation that demonstrated significant ignorance in the area of biblical counseling. Along with the influx of people came a broader exposure of eclectic beliefs regarding the Scripture’s role in counseling. This project also helped to diminish the negative impact of that exposure and channel it into an awareness of the differences between various counseling philosophies and the advantage of biblical counseling.

Another need that manifested itself in this climate of rapid growth was more comprehensive pastoral care. The recent implementation of small groups was one of the church’s strategies to better provide for the pastoral care and counseling needs of the church body. Training these small group leaders in the principles and practice of biblical counseling was an integral part of being able to meet those needs. The solid biblical foundation already at the center of AGCC’s ministry, together with the realized need for a more comprehensive pastoral care ministry that could be met through small group ministry, established the rationale for this project.

The small group leaders have begun to carry more responsibility of pastoral care. They are starting to see themselves as the first line of counseling. They are beginning to take the elementary steps of providing pastoral care and encouraging their small group members to minister to each other. There is a constant tendency for the meetings to revert to the typical model of small group Bible study, focusing on intellectual understanding

rather than personal and communal application. The leaders are realizing more and more that the goal of the gatherings is to produce accountability in application. This tendency to emphasize intellectual understanding over application is a challenge that will continually need to be confronted.

In chapter 2, the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20, was presented as the setting for Jesus assigning his followers their principal task to perform until his return. Christ's command to make disciples was the impetus to investigate four passages that provide the scriptural basis and validation for training the small group leaders to effectually perform the ministry of biblical admonishment. This passage together with Acts 1:6-8 confirmed that Jesus' followers would be thoroughly equipped to complete their assigned task.

Second Peter 1 presented the rationale for utilizing the Bible as the sufficient resource for biblical counseling. The prophetic Word has been given by God as the primary means the Holy Spirit uses to empower the believer to mature and develop in the knowledge of Christ. This increase in knowledge results in an ever-growing life of godliness, evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowered and inspired the prophets so they could make an authoritative recording of all that God desired. The Holy Spirit empowers believers today to apply the principles and practices that were recorded. Mutual teaching, mutual exhortation, and mutual admonition should be regular occurrences in the church. During the implementation of this project, special care was taken to give only assignments that would focus the participants on biblical content. I attempted to demonstrate the confidence that the apostle Peter sought to transmit to his first century audience.

The study of Colossians 3 demonstrated that the one-another ministry of the body of Christ is an expected manifestation of Christ's work in the community of believers. The ministry of mutual admonition within the body is both a privilege and a responsibility given to each one. The finished redemptive work of Christ gives both

possibility and certainty to the final complete redemption of every believer. Because of Christ's redemptive work, God imparts a new identity to the believer. He considers each one holy and now the object of His love. Being the recipient of God's love should motivate believers to love each other and practice one-another ministry.

In my discussions with small group leaders and participants, mostly outside of class time, there is a general questioning of whether believers are truly giving authority to interfere in the maturation process of other believers. Encouraging them that the body truly has the authority and responsibility to admonish each other will be an ongoing element of small group development.

The study of Romans 12-15 demonstrated the apostle Paul's confidence that the believers in Rome were capable of effectively ministering to each other. Using their gifts to benefit others in the body was a demonstration of God's grace. They were capacitated with spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit. They were able to learn from the supreme example of sacrificial living in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The spiritual growth Paul had observed in his own life and the life of the Roman church supported his confidence in their ability to accomplish the one another ministry of the body. The body's unity was to be displayed through its diversity of gifts. Paul was motivated by his desire for God to be glorified through his own and the church's testimony. Their unified diversity combined with godly submission to the ordained authorities would result in a powerful testimony to unbelievers.

The final passage, Ephesians 4, revealed that every believer has been equipped by God to contribute to the building up of the body of Christ. Each one has been individually gifted. The gifts are assigned to believers by Christ and the quantity of each gift given is also at his discretion. The purpose of the gifts is for mutual growth. They are to serve the body and are not self-serving. However, using one's gifts appropriately is personally beneficial. It was important to remind participants that although personal benefit may result from each one using his or her gifts to serve others, personal benefit is not the

aim. Mutual growth is the goal.

The body has also been gifted by God with capable officers. The role of these officers is not to personally meet all the needs of the body, but rather, to equip other members of the body to employ their gifts to do so. When the body is properly functioning, it will be characterized by doctrinal stability and loving cooperative interaction.

Some AGCC members are accustomed to the idea that the pastor is the one who should minister to the body. This project is one of the instruments being used to change this mentality. Church deacons and small group leaders have experienced a new satisfaction and sense of fulfillment in being encouraged and commissioned to use their gifts to meet the needs of the local body.

Chapter 3 established a pragmatic and theologically consistent approach to biblical counseling. Biblical counseling was compared to the approach of Larry Crabb. Crabb's approach has had an influence on AGCC and the Charis Fellowship. Several areas of agreement between Crabb's integrated counseling approach and biblical counseling were presented. Crabb affirms the role of the pastor as an equipper—one who helps in the training of the body to minister to each other. He also asserts the local church as the primary context in which counseling should occur. A few points of concern related to Crabb's integrative methodology were then discussed. Crabb's understanding of anthropology and the subtle influence his secular training in psychology has had on his approach are the most troubling.

Crabb believes that man is primarily driven by his innate needs to be significant and to have a relationship with God. Specific passages were presented (Jer 17:9, Rom 3:10-11, 1 John 4:10, Eph 2:1-10) in an attempt to show that the desire to be in fellowship with God is intrinsic to man in his unregenerate state. It was demonstrated that while the Bible affirms the existence of such needs it does not teach that these innate needs provide the ultimate motivation of human behavior and consequently the root of psychological complexities. Crabb's assertion about innate needs influences his teachings on the

distinctions that can be made regarding men and women. He asserts that men are primarily motivated by a search for significance while women primarily seek security. Chapter 3 attempted to demonstrate that though this may indeed be Crabb's personal experience, it is not scripturally validated.

Crabb refers to several well-known secular writers and practitioners to provide both support and clarification of his approach. While referring to secular authors does not invalidate his teaching, it can cause ambiguity about what it means to be a biblical counselor. It can also dissuade the beginning counselor's confidence in his or her ability to become a masterful biblical counselor. A variety of counseling philosophies and schools of thought combine biblical and theological principles together with secularly derived ideologies. However, this integration is unnecessary and can complicate the equipping process.

During the teaching portion of the project, mentioning, promoting, or speaking in favor of any counseling methodology that could not be derived directly from the Scriptures was purposefully ignored. The goal was to demonstrate that being equipped in biblical counseling does not require any training or knowledge of secular theories. Mastering biblical content is required. Christians can and should attain proficiency in it. The Bible can be used to validate other approaches to counseling, but biblical counseling seeks to derive its methodologies directly from Scripture as opposed to simply using it to endorse them.

Chapter 4 describes the development and implementation of the eight-session course that was prepared with this goal in view. The project involved a period of twenty weeks. The project began by assessing the current small group leaders' awareness and understanding of biblical counseling. The curriculum was developed using the BCAS as a reference for possible lessons.

Using the input from the BCAS, the curriculum was developed with a principle focus on the practical application of the material. There was a strong desire to convince

the participants of the sufficiency and utility of the Scriptures. Four specialists were consulted during the curriculum preparation. Two of these specialists, those who were not pastors, contributed significantly with the teaching methodologies used to communicate the material. The Curriculum Evaluation Rubric was utilized by the specialists to aid in improving and modifying the lesson plans.

The biblical and theological foundations for biblical counseling were the focus of the beginning sessions. General principles for application; what it means to *put on* and *put off* and the concept of *taking every thought captive* were presented during the middle of the course. The final weeks were dedicated specifically to the topics of repentance and forgiveness. Second Corinthians 7 formed the basis for presenting the seven indications, or evidences, that a person is truly repentant. The discussion of forgiveness was built upon the previous topic of repentance. Arriving at a biblical definition of forgiveness and its application was the emphasis of the final sessions.

The subsequent sections of this chapter present an evaluation of the effectiveness of this project to reach each of the four goals presented in chapter 1. There is also a critique of some of the course's strengths and weaknesses with suggested improvements. The chapter concludes with a theological reflection and a personal reflection regarding the project's impact on my personal life and ministry.

Evaluation of the Project's Effectiveness

The first goal of the project was to assess the life group leaders' awareness of biblical counseling. This goal was considered successfully met when 66 percent of the distributed surveys were returned and analyzed. One common area of weakness that was revealed on the BCAS concerned the application of specific Scriptures to specific problems. This area of weakness had a significant influence on the preparation phase of the course work. Discussions and illustrations concerning scriptural and theological application to specific questions were included and given greater emphasis based upon input from the survey. The BCAS also revealed a lack of clarity on distinguishes secular

counseling from biblical counseling. This lack of clarity was expected, but that it was clearly evidenced on the survey ensured there would be added focus.

The second goal of the project was to develop an eight-session introduction course to biblical counseling. The primary development phase of the course lasted for ten weeks. The curriculum was continually revised during the teaching phase of the project. It became more and more evident with each session that the expectations of how much information could be communicated during the course was too great.

Four specialists were sought out to help with expertise during the development phase. Each one contributed to maintaining the course's theological and scriptural integrity and ensured that appropriate teaching and evaluation methodologies were employed. The specialists utilized an evaluation rubric (BCCE) to aid with feedback. One example of incorporating feedback was the rephrasing exercise at the beginning of session 12 which was used as a review technique for the previous lesson. This technique was implemented on the recommendation of one of the four specialists. In another instance was a discussion about "mind transformation" that was added due to specialist's input.

The third goal was to increase the participants' knowledge in the principles of biblical counseling. A variety of teaching methodologies were used to accomplish this goal. Reading assignments, lectures, role play activities, case studies, and personal testimonies were all employed to reach this goal. The success of goal 3 was measured by the completion of a pre-course and post-course BBCA that was subjected to a *t*-test for dependent samples. The *t*-test determined that there was a statistically significant change ($t(16) = 2.64, p = .0088$) between the pre-course and post-course BBCA results. This indicated an overall growth in the participants' knowledge of biblical counseling principles. The success of this goal was also informally measured through the many out-of-session discussions with participants. Almost every week I was sought out for clarification or confirmation regarding the previously covered material.

The fourth goal of the project was to increase the participants' competency in biblical counseling. This goal was considered successfully met when I observed the class's interaction with the case study, which was distributed at the end of session 17 and interacted with in session 18. The class's interaction with the case study demonstrated a limited but growing ability to apply the biblical counseling principles presented throughout the course.

Weaknesses of the Project

The most evident weakness of the project was the limited number of sessions allotted for the teaching portion. This time restriction was primarily due to the Wednesday night teaching calendar established by the church's senior leadership. There was the possibility of offering extra sessions on other days, but it was determined that attendance would be highly questionable. Many participants have requested further opportunities to continue with the material and non-participants have asked if the material will be offered again. There are plans to require or offer an introductory course in biblical counseling to all new life group leaders.

A second weakness of the project was the lack of opportunity for participants to observe biblical counseling taking place. During the initial planning of the curriculum the church purchased several training videos for the participants to watch and interact with, but after the first class session it became apparent that more time was needed to devote to introducing and explaining the biblical counseling principles before the participants could appreciate seeing them in practice.

A third weakness of the course was the inconsistency of attendance by many participants. This weakness was to be expected as inconsistent attendance is customary for the Wednesday evening gatherings, but it was especially detrimental when the material being presented built upon each previous week's lesson. Also, there were a few instances when a participant's interaction during the review portion would not have been necessary had they attended the previous class. It caused some otherwise unnecessary redundancy.

A fourth weakness of the course was the lack of guidance for the participants' interaction with the reading assignments. Some of the materials presented ideas and concepts that caused confusion due to vocabulary or previously observed secular presentations of counseling principles.

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of the project was the willingness and enthusiasm of the church's leadership to support the introduction of biblical counseling into the ministry of AGCC. The senior pastor, administrative pastor, both assistant pastors, and the elder board in general gave their full endorsement to the project.

A second strength of the project was the receptivity of the participants. Many expressed urgency in their desire to be better equipped to biblically counsel fellow believers.

A third strength of the project was the emphasis on the practicality of biblical counseling. Many participants expressed that the principles being presented were immediately helpful in interactions within their own families as well as in their life groups.

Suggestions for Improvement

The first suggestion for improvement would be to lengthen the course to a minimum of twelve sessions. Due to Southern Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program requirements, the timing for the project fell within the church's fall teaching schedule. If the course had fallen within the spring teaching calendar it would have been extended to at least twelve weeks and possibly fifteen. With the increased number of sessions there would be more opportunity to include observation of training videos or role play of counseling sessions. In addition, more occasions for presentations by other instructors would be afforded.

A second suggestion would be to extend the sessions by another fifteen minutes and utilize that time to show a video of a counseling session in progress. The sessions could be selected to demonstrate the principles presented in that week's lesson.

Third, there could have been a simple guide provided for each of the reading assignments. Some of the participants had not been engaged in an academic type endeavors for quite some time and they would have benefitted from more guided interaction with the texts. A few key concepts to watch for, simple definitions of terms, or a question or two to be answered from each assignment would have increased comprehension and encouraged more consistent study.

Finally, the seating arrangement of the students could have been more conducive to group interaction. Because of classroom size limitations the seating was arranged in a lecture-style setting. This was fine for the introductory sessions, but it limited some of the participants' involvement. It also reduced interaction with one another. It was not feasible to break up into smaller groups in that classroom.

Theological Reflection

I still remember the first time I attended an ACBC conference and was confronted with the implications of the Bible's sufficiency as applied to the field of counseling. I had professed belief in the doctrine of sufficiency in its application to justification, but I had never been challenged in its application to ongoing sanctification. Second Peter 1 states that as we grow in our knowledge of Christ, as revealed in the prophetic Word, we are supplied with all things that are necessary to live a God honoring life. At that instance I was convicted and challenged as a pastor about my doubts and ignorance concerning the practicality of Scripture in the counseling ministry. I have been theologically and experientially convinced of the Bible's sufficiency as a counseling resource.

This course of study has also done its work of convincing and convicting in the area of pastoral or practical theology. I have always felt the tension that exist between

those who view the pastor as a specialist who should always be the first responder of any need within his congregation, and those who see him primarily as an equipper whose job it is to push others into meeting those needs. This study has fully persuaded me of the latter position. Not only has it renewed my enthusiasm for the equipping ministry, but it has relieved my guilt for not being able or even desiring to meet the constant pastoral needs at AGCC.

My perspective regarding the body of Christ, ecclesiology, has obviously therefore been changed. Paul's professed assurance regarding the Roman believers' maturation process and aptitude for body care was motivational. It is easy to become discouraged when dealing with struggling believers. Futility has been expressed by many pastors and by me personally when reflecting upon counseling expectations. Paul's teaching serves as motivation to carry on in faith that God is transforming the church into the perfect bride of Christ without spot or wrinkle.

Through chapter 3's study of Crabb's approach to counseling I was forced to scrutinize the implications of anthropology for the counseling ministry. The effects of Adam's fall are far reaching. Depravity is real and its prime result is the destruction of the God-man relationship. I had never considered the counseling ministry as a means of establishing or reestablishing that broken relationship, except perhaps as a method of evangelism.

My understanding of biblical repentance and forgiveness has also increased through the preparation of the class material. I simply had never invested the time to adequately explore the evidences and results of true biblical repentance. This study also impacted my understanding of forgiveness and increased my appreciation for the forgiveness God offers through Christ's sacrifice.

Personal Reflection

This project has the potential to greatly impact the future ministry of AGCC. The church's leadership welcomes the introduction of a comprehensive biblical counseling

emphasis throughout the church body. It seems to be a divine coincidence that just as I was feeling the ministerial need to become better equipped as a counselor and was beginning to pursue that training, AGCC was also moving forward in implementing a small group ministry. God is providing me with the privilege and opportunity to be part of the equipping process for those small group leaders.

The senior pastor, with the support of the elder board, has a vision and desire for AGCC to open a biblical counseling center that will service the needs of the church and the community. For that vision to be realized there will need to be a functioning biblical counseling ministry among the life groups. The curriculum for the eight-session course will help prepare them as group leaders. They will also be the recruiting ground for future biblical counselors at the counseling center.

This project has already greatly impacted my own life and ministry. I have become more convinced of the practicality of being personally equipped and helping to equip others in biblical counseling. It is an attainable goal. There are sufficient resources available at the lay level for training in biblical counseling. This project is a significant introductory step in equipping the body at AGCC to be capable biblical counselors.

Conclusion

This is the culmination of approximately five years of study, personal evaluation, and ministry reorientation. Five years ago I had an extremely limited understanding of biblical counseling. I had no concept of any distinction between biblical counseling, integrative counseling, or Christian counseling. My bibliology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and anthropology were also inadequately developed. I felt an urgency to become better equipped as a counselor but was overwhelmed at the prospect of returning to intensive academic studies. It has been extremely challenging while at the same time encouraging and liberating to more fully realize the sufficiency of Scripture to equip me and help me equip others to do the work of the ministry. AGCC is primed and ready for the implantation of a biblical counseling ministry.

A variety of counseling philosophies and schools of thought combine biblical and theological principles together with secularly derived ideologies, but this integration is unnecessary and can complicate the equipping process. The Scriptures affirm that biblical counseling, discipleship, is the work of the body and not just the professional counselor or pastor. The church has been given all that it needs—the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, gifted leaders, and each other—to accomplish the task of disciple making.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL COUNSELING AWARENESS SURVEY

Auburn Grace Community Church is committed to preparing the Life Group leaders to meet the many personal and relational needs that will undoubtedly arise as you minister to the body of Christ. This survey will help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of our prospective leaders thereby increasing the effectiveness of our training curriculum. This survey will not be used for the selection of Life Group leaders but only in the preparation of the training materials.

Please complete to this survey and return it to the AGCC office or to Pastor Greg by _____. We prefer that you include your name so that we might contact you regarding clarification of any of the responses. If you prefer to be anonymous, however, we still value and appreciate your participation.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Questions:

1. Do you feel confident in your knowledge of the Scriptures when it comes to sharing the gospel with unbelievers?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat

2. Do you feel confident in your knowledge of Scriptures when it comes to giving counsel concerning relational problems?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat

3. What do you see as your biggest weakness concerning your knowledge of the Bible?

4. Have you ever been involved in helping someone in a counseling relationship? If so, how did you feel about your effectiveness?

a. Yes: _____

b. No

5. Have you ever received any training in counseling?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, what kind of training have you received?

6. How would you define or describe psychological counseling?

7. How would you define or describe biblical counseling?

8. Do you see any difference between biblical counseling and Christian counseling? If so, please explain the difference.

Thank you for your participation. Please return this to the AGCC office or to Pastor Greg as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scriptures is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The sufficiently covers the basics of biblical counseling.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses counseling methodology.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, role play, and homework.					
Practicality					
The curriculum provides opportunities to practice counseling applications.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to counsel others biblically.					

APPENDIX 3
BASICS OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate.

The assessment you are about to complete is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of biblical care and counseling of the participant. This assessment is being administered by Greg Hummel for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project.

The information gleaned from these questions will be utilized for a project designed to equip Life Group leaders at Auburn Grace Community Church in the basics of biblical counseling.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in both the assessment or the class is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Date: _____ Please designate a four-digit ID number: _____

Directions Please answer the following multiple-choice questions by choosing the most appropriate response.

1. On average, how often do you read Scripture?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Several times a week
 - c. Weekly
 - d. Monthly
 - e. I do not regularly read Scripture

2. On average, how frequently do you pray?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Several times a week
 - c. Weekly
 - d. Monthly
 - e. I do not regularly pray.

3. Are you currently being disciplined by anyone?
a. Yes
b. No

If yes, how often do you discuss personal struggles or problems with your discipleship mentor/mentee?

- a. Several times a week
b. Weekly
c. Monthly
d. I do not discuss personal struggles with my mentor/mentee
e. Not Applicable

4. Are you currently serving as a mentor in a discipleship relationship?
a. Yes
b. No

If yes, how often do you discuss personal struggles or problems with your discipleship mentor/mentee?

- a. Several times a week
b. Weekly
c. Monthly
d. I do not discuss personal struggles with my mentor/mentee
e. Not Applicable

5. Approximately how many conversations have you had in the last month where someone has approached you for guidance regarding a personal problem?
a. None
b. 0-3
c. 4-7
d. 8-10
e. 10 or more

Provide a short definition for the following terms.

6. Discipleship.

7. Biblical counseling.

8. Secular counseling.

Please answer the following questions by choosing the answer that most closely describes your opinion.

9. To what degree is the church responsible to make disciples?
 - a. Not responsible
 - b. Partially responsible
 - c. Completely responsible

10. To what degree does church leadership (elders, deacons, and staff) bear responsibility to equip the church for discipleship and counsel?
 - a. Not responsible
 - b. Partially responsible
 - c. Completely responsible

11. To what degree do church members bear responsibility to pursue discipleship and provide counsel for one-another?
 - a. Not responsible
 - b. Partially responsible
 - c. Completely responsible

Please respond 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. Christians should disciple one another.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2. Christians should counsel one another.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3. The Bible contains all the necessary information for providing wise, godly counsel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4. The Bible is a sufficient resource for all forms of counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5. Christians possess the necessary spiritual resources to counsel one another.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. I am confident in my ability to disciple another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. I am confident in my ability to comprehensively counsel another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

8.	The heart is the focus for all forms of discipleship and biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I know how to ask questions designed to uncover heart issues related to discipleship and biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	I possess a biblical method for discipling or for offering biblical counsel to another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	If approached by a friend struggling with anxiety or depression, my first response would be to encourage him or her to talk to a pastor or professional counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	If approached by a friend struggling with sexual temptation, my first response would be to encourage him or her to talk to a pastor or professional counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	If approached by friends struggling in their marriage, my first response would be to encourage them to talk to a pastor or professional counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	If approached by a friend struggling with anger, my first response would be to encourage him or her to talk to a pastor or professional counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	If approached by a friend who recently received a psychiatric or psychological diagnosis (ADHD, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, schizophrenia etc.), I would feel equipped to provide loving, biblical care and counsel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	The Bible does not address every problem people experience	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	Sin is the ultimate cause of all personal problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	Our past personal relationships determine how we live our lives today.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

19.	Anxiety and depression are problems that originate with a chemical imbalance in the brain.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	Certain forms of secular counseling are necessary to adequately address some problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21.	The Bible provides principles that help believers respond to every type of problem in a godly way.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22.	I would like to learn how to provide biblical counsel to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23.	I would like to learn how to disciple other believers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24.	I would like to learn how to apply Scripture to my own struggles.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25.	Auburn Grace Community Church effectively equips its leaders in discipling others and providing biblical counsel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCING LIFE GROUP LEADERS TO THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT AUBURN GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH IN AUBURN, CALIFORNIA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
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The purpose of this project was to introduce the life group leaders at Auburn Grace Community Church to the principles and practice of biblical counseling. Chapter 1 presents the context and goals for the project. Chapter 2 is a presentation of four biblical passages (2 Pet 1:3-21; Col 3:12-17; Rom 12:1-15:19; Eph 4:7-16) that establish the theological foundation for the church body to participate in the one another ministry of biblical counseling. Chapter 3 is a theological and pragmatic assessment of Larry Crabb's approach to counseling. Chapter 4 details the preparation and implementation of an eight-session course used to introduce life group leaders and other to the principles and practice of biblical counseling. Chapter 5 discusses the project's effectiveness in reaching the specified goals.

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