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DEVELOPING A THIRTY-HOUR DISCIPLESHIP AND
COUNSELING COURSE FOR STRENGTHENING
MINISTRIES TRAINING INSTITUTE IN
PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

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DEVELOPING A THIRTY-HOUR DISCIPLESHIP AND
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PREFACE

At the outset of this project, it was my desire to assemble material to point God's people to the magnificence of His person and Word. The desire to give people hope was based upon the work God has started in me and the hope I had in Him to complete it (Phil 1:6). This project provides a vantage point from which to look back and see the preserving and persevering power of God within me and my circumstances over the last thirty years. It reminds me of the plans God had for my short life when He stepped into my sin and misery and gave me eyes to see Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. This project is the beginning of learning new things I did not even realize I did not know. Here I am, not exceptionally gifted, with God's Word in hand, which is sufficient to transform the most wretched sinner into a child of God.

I am thankful that God was pleased to expose me to the lives and teachings of men who were able to explain to me the process of heart change from the Scriptures. These men knew the applicational value of the Scriptures and fought for the truth to be preserved in a time when its value and power was diminishing in the sphere of pastoral counseling. These heroes of the faith recognized the times (1 Chr 12:3) and they acted; they worked tirelessly in using the Bible to explain God's solutions to life's problems. These men of valor contributed to the information used and applied in this project. Additionally, I give thanks to God for the continuation of my formal learning at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I give thanks to the seminary for allowing me to pursue the Doctor of Educational Ministry degree in Biblical Counseling. I especially appreciate Dr. Stuart Scott, my supervisor, who provided necessary guidance and wisdom, and I am thankful for his assistance in writing this project.

I give thanks to God for my dear wife, Beth, who comforted me with her presence and interest in my ministry and this project. Her constant reminders that this

project served a greater purpose beyond us encouraged me to move toward accomplishing this goal with joy. I am also thankful for the gifts of our children. The interest they have shown and the effort they have put into learning the meaning of new words and ideas has made the completion of this project a family achievement.

Finally, I thank God for His church: the saints who have come to love God and one another. Their desire to be taught from the Bible and their encouragement, which freed me up to be equipped even more, have been a constant characterization of their lives. May God bless the work in Africa and may He use this project for His pleasure.

Sybrand de Swardt

Pretoria, South Africa

May 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project developed course material to equip future students at Strengthening Ministries Training Institute (SMTI). The curriculum assisted participants in understanding the theological and practical implications of biblical discipleship and counseling in the local church in southern Africa. It sufficiently and clearly explained different discipleship and counseling approaches and biblically and practically interacted with their epistemology, methodology, theology, and anthropology in class lectures, group discussions, case studies, and role play.

The curriculum highlighted how a deficient view of Scripture and its teachings on various doctrines had resulted in the acceptance of unbiblical approaches and goals to discipleship and counseling in local churches, church associations, and congregational synods. This compromise had led to the increasing acceptance of ethnically constructed approaches, socially constructed norms, secular theories, integration models, and the dictates of certifying bodies, religious and secular training institutions, and civil authorities regarding discipleship and counseling. This background information highlighted the need for institutions such as Strengthening Ministries Training Institute (SMTI) to teach a biblical approach to discipleship and counseling. This project also showed the crucial need for churches to have their members trained in a biblical approach to discipleship and counseling, hermeneutics, and application so that they may identify, understand, and resist the increasing onslaught of false views of man, the Scriptures, and the church of Christ.

Finally, the curriculum equipped students to identify, expose, and explain how an unbiblical approach to discipleship and counseling will lead to a compliance to manmade theories and unbiblical social ideas instead of conformity to the likeness of

Christ. The equipping was based on a presuppositional approach to understanding discipleship and counseling. This approach not only defended the excellence and superiority of biblical Scripture but it helped people establish a personal framework and plan to grow and mature in Christlikeness so that Christians would also be able to help others embrace God's method for change.

Context

The Thirty Hour Discipleship and Counseling Course (30HDC) course material was presented at SMTI. SMTI was established in 2010 to promote excellence in biblical counseling in the local church in South Africa by training and equipping pastors and other Christians in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture. It further equips students to assist counselees in solving their non-physical problems and glorify God in how they handle organic problems as well. SMTI training seeks to promote growth in and usefulness for Christ in the church and the world.

The founder of SMTI, Wayne Mack, relocated to South Africa in 2005, to teach biblical counseling. At that time, he was the only biblical counselor in the country who was trained and certified by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). During those formative years, he trained over 250 men (mostly pastors) and women in biblical counseling. Some of his students pursued their master's degrees in biblical counseling through The Master's University in Santa Clarita, California; Faith Baptist Seminary in Lafayette, Indiana; and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Kentucky. The Faculty at SMTI were trained by Mack, certified with ACBC, and serve as teachers, graders, and course developers at SMTI.

Strengths of SMTI

SMTI is a credible and comprehensive biblical counseling training program that reaches a broad spectrum of nationalities throughout southern Africa and abroad. The SMTI program went through a rigorous vetting process to become an ACBC training

center, and it is the only certified center in Africa. The program has been operational for six years and has become known for promoting excellence in the field of biblical counseling.

The SMTI purpose statement describes how the program seeks to strengthen the local church in southern Africa by training and equipping pastors and other Christians in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture. This biblical use of Scripture will equip counselors to understand and present solutions to the problems people experience. In light of these goals, SMTI is a ministry of Lynnwood Baptist Church (LBC), a multi-cultural church that functions under the oversight of the elders. The program has sought to promote further growth within the local church by offering internships to students who have completed the SMTI training at both Strengthening Counseling Center (SCC) and Heartbeat Pregnancy Counseling Care Center (HP3C), both of which are oriented toward outreach in the local community while being under the oversight of the LBC elders. In addition, teaching positions are available for students who have completed the training and have met the required qualifications for teaching at a master's degree level. The reach of SMTI has grown, extending beyond the local church into other parts of southern Africa and the world, such as Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Cameroon, Brazil, and Holland.

The SMTI program currently presents classes in three formats. The first format consists of week-long classes presented through eight modules over a two-year period, with four modules per year. Each of these eight modules is presented over one full week, Monday through Friday, which means in-class interaction happens four times a year, while assignments are completed throughout the weeks between classes. The second format consists of evening classes presented through eight modules over a four-year period, with two modules per year. Each of these eight modules is presented over eighteen evening class sessions, while assignments are completed throughout the weeks between classes. In the third format, SMTI presents four online classes for distance learning students who

cannot attend the week-long and evening classes in Pretoria. SMTI seeks to develop a thirty-hour ACBC approved course in Afrikaans and English that will enable students to pursue certification with ACBC without attending the full two-year program.

The SMTI program is currently pursuing accreditation in South Africa with the Council of Higher Education (CHE), registration of a master's degree with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and registration of SMTI as a private higher education provider with the Department of Higher Education and Training. These qualifications ensure that students who complete the SMTI program will obtain a fully recognized and accredited master's degree.

A majority of the SMTI lecturers form a part of the steering committee for the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, Africa (ACBC Africa). ACBC Africa presents annual conferences at LBC; conferences over the years have included titles such as "Sex as God Intended," "Living and Active," "Theology of Psychology," "Racism: When Color Divides," "Your Family God's Way," and "Cracking the Hard Cases." These conferences include international speakers such as Heath Lambert, Ernie Baker, Charles Ware, Nicolas and Vanessa Ellen, Tedd and Margery Tripp, Jim Newheiser, and Wayne Mack, as well as South African speakers.

Weaknesses of SMTI

The first weakness of the SMTI is a high dropout rate due to extensive course requirements for the two-year program. The course material, with its extensive timeframe and heavy workload, can be excessive for those who have limited financial and other resources. A thirty-hour introductory course will not only make training attainable for many students who lack these necessities but will also enable them to complete a shorter course with the opportunity to pursue certification with ACBC. This project seeks to provide SMTI with a shortened ACBC approved thirty-hour course to accommodate and

enable churches with limited work force to send their Sunday school teachers, lay workers, elders, deacons, and pastors for training without compromising their ministries.

Second, the extensive SMTI program is inaccessible to those without an intermediate educational qualification. The SMTI program provides a higher educational degree that exceeds the further educational diplomas and certificates achieved by the majority of students in southern Africa. Even then, these lower-level qualifications typically do not include training in foundational biblical issues. Because the SMTI master's degree is highly theoretical and practical, it requires students to have both an educational and biblical foundation of understanding to meet the course requirements. This educational gap between the academic standards in southern Africa and the higher educational requirements of the SMTI program have generated the need to establish an intermediate qualification program such as higher certificate programs, bachelor's degree programs, or a thirty-hour diploma course. A thirty-hour class will be accessible for most lacking an intermediate educational qualification without compromising an outstanding education, especially for refugees from other countries surrounding South Africa and those in countries who did not have the privilege of an education.

A final weakness of the SMTI program is that it does not currently have a person of color as part of the teaching faculty. While the program currently maintains several qualified Caucasian lecturers who teach from a variety of cultural backgrounds in South Africa, there is a need for greater diversity among the teaching faculty to adequately introduce biblical concepts to the eleven different people groups represented in South Africa. In recent years, many men and woman of color have joined the program, which means southern Africans could have new certified ACBC members of African descent by 2021.

Rationale

Of the weaknesses outlined, the most critical issue to address is the development of an ACBC-approved thirty-hour course that considers the cultural diversity in southern

Africa. This course, presented either as a week-long class, evening classes, or online, will enable SMTI to influence a group of students with the accurate use of Scripture in discipleship and counseling. The material could also be presented by SMTI lecturers in various churches and provinces throughout southern Africa. The condensed format of the thirty-hour course is sufficient to introduce the students enrolling for the SMTI program to what the Bible teaches on discipleship and counseling and to encourage them to replace views shaped by worldly ideologies, secular media, social networking websites, socio-political rhetoric, and family values with a biblical view. This material will adequately help students recognize the insufficient approaches presented by ethnic customs and beliefs, integrationists, secular society, and psychology for the nonphysical struggles people face. The course will present a biblical understanding of discipleship and counseling that has its origin in scriptural promises that guarantee lasting change. The thirty-hour course will provide SMTI students with an understandable and easily accessible epistemology, methodology, and theology whereby to measure the effectiveness of their own ministries. The course will further help students repent of personal sin struggles, endure particular hardships and suffering, and become qualified to serve as biblical disciple-makers and counselors in their local churches and society.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a thirty-hour ACBC-approved discipleship and counseling course for a Southern African context that demonstrates a biblical approach to discipleship and counseling for Strengthening Ministries Training Institute at Lynnwood Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa.¹

¹ Southern Africa is the southernmost region of the African continent, comprising the countries of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Goals

Successfully developing a thirty-hour biblical discipleship and counseling course within the SMTI program required a concerted effort toward accomplishing three goals.

1. The first goal was to develop a Thirty-Hour Discipleship and Counseling course (30HDC).
2. The second goal was to administer surveys to the students before and after presenting the Thirty-Hour Discipleship and Counseling course.
3. The third goal was to increase student knowledge in terms of their worldview about biblical discipleship and counseling.

The success of these goals depended upon the research methodology explained in the following section.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to develop a Thirty-Hour Discipleship and Counseling course (30HCD). This goal was measured by an expert panel who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology and practicality of the 30HDC curriculum.² Further, the expert panel reviewed and confirmed that the work contained the essential elements that were both biblical and characteristic of Wayne Mack's work. The curriculum plan was applied to an African context, along with cross-cultural counseling case studies, videos, diagrams, and illustrative reading material that successfully engage with African related topics. The goal was considered met when 100 percent of the expert panel evaluated the curriculum as exemplary.

The second goal was to administer surveys to the students both before and after the presentation of the 30HDC class. This survey assessed the thinking regarding discipleship and counseling among new students attending the SMTI thirty-hour training.³ The Discipleship and Counseling Questionnaire (DCQ) was distributed to all

² See appendix 2.

³ See appendix 1.

students who enrolled in the 30HCD course. The surveys were completed by those who had no prior SMTI discipleship and counseling training. This goal was considered successfully met when the 30 participants attending the class successfully completed the DCQ.

The third goal was to increase student knowledge in terms of their worldview about biblical discipleship and counseling. The pre-course and post-course surveys were analyzed separately and then measured against each other to yield a clearer picture of the changes that occurred in the students' thinking and beliefs toward biblical discipleship and counseling. This goal was considered successful when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre-course and post-course survey scores.

The statistical analysis provided insight as to the effectiveness of the knowledge transfer during the thirty hours. Likert datasets are typical to survey-type statements and are ordinal, discrete, and limited in range. Survey statements that ask to indicate a level of agreement, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, create Likert scale datasets.

A paired sample *t*-test was used on the data form. The DCQ dataset was used to measure a data point of one sample group of thirty at two different times. This could, for example, be the test scores around the knowledge the students have on discipleship and counseling before and after the course was presented. The test score followed a continuous scale and range with a normal distribution. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre-course and post-course survey scores.

The goal of the statistical study was to verify that the thirty-hour training sessions would indeed increase the knowledge of the students as it related to their worldview of biblical discipleship and counseling.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain terms are used throughout this ministry project. Those terms are defined below to aid the reader in understanding the subject.

Biblical discipleship. For this project I use the following definition of discipleship from Keith Palmer: “Discipleship is the skill and practice of calling people to trust Christ, then ministering to and training them such that they grow in their relationship with Christ by learning to trust and obey Him in all areas of life as long as they live.”⁴ I will differentiate six kinds of discipleship approaches below that have a central goal but overlap with other kinds of discipleship.⁵

Preliminary discipleship. *Preliminary discipleship* calls sinners to repentance and faith in Christ, which serves as the only foundation upon which the discipleship process can occur throughout the believer’s life. This preliminary counseling involves preaching the gospel and anticipates conviction of sin, convincing of Christ, and reconciliation with God in Christ through faith and obedience, which is the first step toward making a disciple.⁶

Formative discipleship. *Formative discipleship* rests upon preliminary discipleship, which anticipates conversion. *Formative discipleship* seeks to teach essential foundational truths that enable God-orientated change to occur in the believer’s life. *Formative discipleship* focuses on how to observe (Matt 28:30) by admonishing toward completeness in Christ (Col 1:28) and speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15). It anticipates increased knowledge and preparedness in the life of the believer.⁷

Explanatory discipleship. *Explanatory discipleship* explains central truths while being aware of possible misunderstanding, limitations, and contradictory

⁴ Keith Palmer, “Discipleship” (unpublished class notes for 80552, Methodology of Biblical Counseling, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, January 2020).

⁵ Palmer, “Discipleship.”

⁶ Palmer, “Discipleship.”

⁷ Palmer, “Discipleship.”

viewpoints that might hinder growth. *Explanatory discipleship* anticipates that the hearer will understand the discipleship content and be able to more clearly understand the importance of change.⁸

Preparatory discipleship. *Preparatory discipleship* seeks to prepare the disciple for new phases in life. *Preparatory discipleship* uses the Bible to equip by setting in place truths as they relate to new circumstances in the believer's life.⁹

Preventative discipleship. *Preventative discipleship* uses the Bible to help the believer endure trials successfully and limit devastating consequences. This approach uses biblical truths, promises, and warnings to ensure the believer's success and help them avoid failure.¹⁰

Corrective discipleship. *Corrective discipleship* gathers extensive data about the inner motivations after each episode of sin. The Bible is used to give interpretations and solutions to the problems. *Corrective discipleship* anticipates repentance from heart orientations that result in relapses and collapses.¹¹

Biblical counseling. *Biblical counseling* is an intensive form of discipleship that is skilled at calling people to trust Christ then ministering to and training them such that they grow in their relationship with Christ by learning to trust and obey Him in a specific area of their life for a concentrated period of time.¹²

Sufficiency of Scripture. The *sufficiency of Scripture* is the belief that "Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life."¹³ The 1689

⁸ Palmer, "Discipleship."

⁹ Palmer, "Discipleship."

¹⁰ Palmer, "Discipleship."

¹¹ Palmer, "Discipleship."

¹² Palmer, "Discipleship."

¹³ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 618.

Baptist Confession of Faith reads, “The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.”¹⁴ A variety of Scriptures give evidence to its sufficiency for every situation the Christian will face. These testimonies are not only a promise made to obedient believers regarding the usefulness of Scripture but also a rejection of the belief that Scripture is insufficient or deficient for such use and thus needs to be supplemented and augmented by manmade theories to be of real help to the problems believers face (Pss 19:7-9; 119; 2 Tim 2:15-17). The *sufficiency of Scripture* can be divided into four categories of sufficiency: progressive sufficiency, completed sufficiency, formal sufficiency, and material sufficiency.¹⁵

Ethnic customs. *Ethnic customs* are practices unique to a particular ethnic group that relates with one another through a common set of traditions related to ancestry, language, history, society, religion, and social treatment.¹⁶ *Ethnic customs* are often handed down from one generation to the next through oral tradition. Many *ethnic customs* are opposed to biblical teaching.

Clinical psychology. also called “Talk Therapy”,

“is the psychological specialty that provides continuing and comprehensive mental and behavioral health care for individuals, couples, families, and groups; consultation to agencies and communities; training, education and supervision; and research-based practice. It is a specialty in breadth — one that addresses a wide range of mental and behavioral health problems — and marked by comprehensiveness and integration of knowledge and skill from a broad array of disciplines within and outside of psychology proper. The scope of clinical psychology encompasses all ages, multiple diversities, and varied systems.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Stan Reeves, *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2017), 2.

¹⁵ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 44-48.

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, “Ethnic,” accessed April 14, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnic#:~:text=%3A%20of%20or%20relating%20to%20large,or%20cultural%20or%20origin%20or%20background.>

¹⁷ American Psychological Association, “Clinical Psychology,” last modified September, 2002, [https://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialize/clinical.](https://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialize/clinical)

In short, *clinical psychology* is “the science of behavior and mental processes.”¹⁸ In this project *clinical psychology* is referred to as psychology which is viewed as opposed to biblical counseling. While biblical counseling is established on the presuppositions of Scripture, *clinical psychology* is based upon the Darwinian evolutionary understanding of man and his problems. The theories of *clinical psychology* were formulated through observing human behavior that developed into patterns over many decades. This observation and development resulted in over 300 different psychological theories, of which each theory has its own anthropology, methodology and epistemology with “justification of claims to knowledge,”¹⁹ cures, and standards for conduct.²⁰

Integration. “Integrationists seek to examine and extract psychological and psychotherapeutic principles and insights from many sources, including modern psychologies. Integrationists believe that much of secular psychology can be “redeemed.””²¹

This approach leads to pragmatism and eclecticism in counselling practice.

There are three limitations applied to this project. First, the pre-and post-course surveys were only given to adult students who attended the 30HDC. Second, the pre-and post-surveys were administered to those who were able to attend the classes in person. Students who could not attend in person were given access to recordings of the class

¹⁸ David G. Myers, *Psychology*, 10th ed. (Worth Publishers, 2011), quoted in Eric L. Johnson, ed., *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views* (Downers Grove: IL, InterVarsity Press, 2010), 49.

¹⁹ Epistemology is “an inquiry into the nature and source of knowledge, the bounds of knowledge, and the justification of claim to knowledge.” Paul Feinberg, “Epistemology,” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 382-83.

²⁰ Clinical psychology cannot be seen as a true science because the formulated theories lack the four-step process of true science. “Science is the systematically arranged knowledge of the material world which has been gathered in a four-step process: 1) observations of phenomena; 2) collection of data; 3) creation of a hypothesis or theory by inductive reasoning; and 4) testing of the hypothesis by repeated observation and controlled experiments.” Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), 49-50.

²¹ Keith Palmer, “Christian Psychology: An Introduction and Biblical Analysis,” published March 28, 2017, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/essays/christian-psychology-an-introduction-biblical-analysis/>.

before the next in-person session was presented. Third, the accuracy of the final results of the pre-and post-survey depended upon the successful completion of the DCQ.

Conclusion

The Word of God must be used to save and direct the lives of all believers. It authoritatively explains life and sufficiently supplies solutions to resolve problems believers will face in a fallen world. The Word contains all that is needed for life and godliness and must be used to equip all believers to apply God's truth to all of life so that they may live productive, rich, and fulfilling lives before God in the church.

The following chapter will show that discipleship and counseling originated with God, Who created man with the ability to receive His truth and apply it in order to live an acceptable life before Him. Chapter 3 will compare the axiomatic assertions, theological formulations, epistemological conclusions, and integrationist ramifications of all integrated discipleship and counseling approaches with biblical discipleship and counseling. Chapter 4 will describe the project implementation of the 30HDC course. Chapter 5 will evaluate the project by outlining the statistical results of the pre-and post-survey that was completed after the 30HDC course was presented.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
PREACHING A BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF
DISCIPLESHIP AND COUNSELING

Five passages from both the Old and New Testaments disclose the mind and will of God as it pertains to discipleship and counseling. These passages are central, though not exclusively so, in the development of a thirty-hour ACBC-approved discipleship and counseling course for a Southern African context. As we will see, “Biblical counseling is just one form of Christian discipleship, and it’s meant to be a *temporary activity*”¹ while discipleship is an ongoing activity that pertains to all Christians.² The passages are addressed sequentially in this chapter which reveals God’s mind through His progressive revelation. The passages are Genesis 1-4, Psalm 19, Matthew 28:16-20, Ephesians 4:11-16, and 2 Timothy 3.

God-Focused Discipleship and Counseling (Gen 1-4)

Genesis 1-4 reveals God’s perspective on man’s need for counsel that will enable him to fulfill his God-given calling. When God acted and made man in the “image of God,”³ he was made to represent God on earth. God endowed man with the ability to understand, comprehend, and act upon His counsel to fulfill His cultural mandate.⁴ This

¹ Deepak Reju, “Counseling and Discipleship,” *9Marks*, (February 25, 2010), <https://www.9marks.org/article/counseling-and-discipleship/>.

² Reju, “Counseling and Discipleship.”

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the New American Standard Bible.

⁴ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 783.

need for godly counsel as well as man’s capacity to understand and act is God’s calling for mankind.

Deliberating Counsel (Gen 1:26-27)

John Calvin explains that God enters deliberation with Himself, who is “a most excellent adviser,” before He creates His most excellent work, Adam (Mal 2:15). This deliberation by God is an acknowledgement of the excellencies of man, “who has been called a certain pre-eminent specimen of Divine wisdom, justice, and goodness, so that he is deservedly called by the ancients ‘a world in miniature.’”⁵ Before the creation of man, God planned to endow human nature, not the animal world, with His image (Gen 1:27) so that man might engage in meditation of God in their minds and hearts while being dependent upon God.⁶ Richard Lints writes, “The language of ‘image’ argues for a dependence upon an ‘original.’”⁷

John Currid emphasizes that “according to our likeness” (Gen 1:26) explains what it means to be in “the image of God” (Gen 1:27). Such language communicates that mankind alone is adequately equipped to be faithful representatives of God on earth, ruling under His sovereignty over creation, while being concerned with reflecting His image.⁸ Lints explains,

The *imago Dei* captures this transitory identity—as an image is contingent upon the object for its identity, so the *imago Dei* is contingent upon God for its identity. Conversely the Scriptures use the language of “idolatry” when this dependence upon God is subverted in religiously significant ways. The idol may be ontologically vacuous but is still incredibly powerful. Its power lies in the transformation of the divine image bearer into the image of the idol. People, who are created as divine image bearers, are also capable of reflecting the created order. Thus humans may be

⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. John King (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2010), 91, Logos Bible Software.

⁶ Calvin, *Genesis*, 100.

⁷ Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 36 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 29.

⁸ John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18: A Study Commentary on Genesis*, *Evangelical Press Study Commentary* (Darlington, England: Evangelical, 2003), 84-90.

said to have a reflective identity. In some sense they find meaning outside themselves by virtue of what they reflect.⁹

Kenneth Mathews explains that the creation account shows an “ascending order of significance,” with human life at the pinnacle, who are unlike animals brought forth by kind (Gen 1:24).¹⁰ Man is a direct creation of God with his own unique place within the plan of creation (Gen 1:27). The phrase “Our image” (Gen 1:26) points to a divine plurality, while the phrase “His image” (Gen 1:27) shows the unity of the plurality in creation.¹¹ This initiative by God to create humankind and instruct them regarding their delegated authority as representatives over His creation is not only overheard within the divine deliberation between the godhead, but also communicated verbally to man.¹²

Directive Counsel (Gen 1:28-30)

Currid shows how the priority relationship between God and man in creation is characterized and solidified through communication from God that leads to thought processes in man. God’s imperatives are communicated to man who is rational, responsible, and capable of having a personal relationship with God. These imperatives explain man’s delegated position to “rule” over and “subdue” God’s creation, while the ability to “be fruitful,” “multiply,” and “fill” is given to all creation. God personally evaluates the whole of creation—which is managed by the directives given to man (who is to rule and subdue)—as “very good” (Gen 1:31). Unlike days 1 to 5, day 6 of creation is superior because it displays the pinnacle relationship of the creation: the relationship between God and man. God instructs man that in order to maintain this significant relationship between creature and creator, he is to act upon his God-given, delegated, and

⁹ Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 29.

¹⁰ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 160.

¹¹ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*.

¹² Mathews.

well-communicated responsibilities, activities, and functions within creation.¹³

Calvin explains that God created animals to live by brute instinct, while directing man to live by the counsel of God, which explains man's purpose, reason for living, work on earth, and significance as both a race and an individual. God gives man a set of five-fold imperatives, or directives, to "be fruitful," "multiply," "fill the earth," "subdue the earth," and "have dominion," and then He Himself bears the accompanying responsibility to provide abundantly and not sparingly all necessary nourishment and sustenance man will need to fulfill his call even before he was created (Rom 14:4). Thus, God alone communicates the boundaries within which man will operate and provides the necessary substance he will need to fulfill his purposes on earth. The completion of God's perfect creation and the directives given to man are pronounced by God to be the "highest perfection, to which nothing can be added"—it is very good.¹⁴

Preventative and Descriptive Counsel (Gen 2:15-17)

Bruce Waltke and Cathi Fredricks describe God's counsel to labor within the garden before the fall as man's priestly duty in a perfect world. The counsel was verbally communicated to man, who is given freedom to choose from many trees and prohibitions to stay away from one. The freedom given to man indicates his moral capacity and responsibility to actively obey what is commanded to prevent Satan's intrusion (Gen 3:1-4). However, this freedom to choose (Gen 2:16) is accompanied by divinely communicated prohibitions (Gen 2:17), which should be embraced by faith. God's preventative and directive counsel is given to man who is able to autonomously act upon his self-perceived knowledge. However, man's self-perceived knowledge is mere unbelief, which should be rejected as man can never know God's standard of morality by or in himself (Deut 8:3; Ps 19:7-9; Ezek 28:6, 15-17). The judgment for rejecting God's directive and preventative

¹³ Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, 90.

¹⁴ Calvin, *Genesis*, 100.

counsel is death. God clearly communicates the conditions under which Adam is to guard that which has been entrusted to him.¹⁵

Mathews shows that the description God gives man about himself provides safety. The purposeful existence God gave man includes oversight of his environment and living in a right relationship with both man and God, the One Who created him counsels him in how to fulfill his God-given assignments. The necessity for descriptive counsel implies that alternative counsel exists and undermines God's description of man. This alternative understanding of man is seen in the Mesopotamian account of human creation which describes man's existence as a workforce made by the gods to relieve selfish and lazy gods of their incessant labors. However, the biblical creation account describes God as a working and commanding God who designed man to be a working being. The biblical understanding of man as a co-laborer with God in Scripture not only shows God's provision for man but also Adam's willingness to co-operate with God's description of man as a working being, the result of which is personal satisfaction, the enjoyment of God's presence, and personal safety.¹⁶

Preparatory Counsel (Gen 2:18-20)

Mathews shows how God's counsel prepares Adam to appreciate His provision of a suitable helpmate for him personally (Gen 2:20). The need to create a helper for Adam teaches that a beautiful environment and honorable work are not the ideal for Adam on their own. This need for a helper is seen through God's declaration that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). The necessity for and the decision to create a fitting helpmate originates with God and highlighted man's need for social companionship. The purpose for creating the woman is not only to bring about a community of humans, but to complete what is lacking in Adam who was counseled to exercise authority over creation. This text

¹⁵ Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 87.

¹⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 160.

does not teach that singleness diminishes the value of a person, nor does singleness leave a person incomplete. The Lord Jesus speaks about singleness as a special gift from God. (Matt 19:11, 1 Cor 7:7). This Genesis text does teach that the cultural mandate given to Adam cannot be fulfilled without Eve. God prepared Adam for this union by explaining the suitability of the woman as a dignified person who is ideally fit to provide opportunities to correspond spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally, and to show their unity as a human family unit.¹⁷

Adam Receives Satanic Counsel (Gen 3:1-5)

Waltke and Fredricks note that Satan's counsel aims at getting God's representative, Adam, to believe that Satan knows better than God. He uses speech to introduce Adam to other content, which challenges Adam's reliance upon God's counsel. Satan relies upon Adam's God-given capacity to listen, conclude, and act as he introduces his own counsel that intentionally misrepresents God, emphasizes prohibitions, ignores privileges, undermines obedience, and ignores consequences. Satan's counsel sows doubt, anticipating that Adam will doubt God, question His sincerity, defame His motives, and contradict His truthfulness. When Adam yields to Satan's counsel, the entire human race yielded with him—except for one human being, Jesus Christ. This yielding to Satan is seen in human behavior, and is evidence that Satan was successful in convincing man's representative, Adam, to listen to alternative counsel that appealed to the internal processes of fallen human beings.¹⁸

Mathews states that the presence of a personal, created being speaking against the counsel of God points to the war-like intent of the counsel (Gen 3:1-7). Satan's aim in misrepresenting God's Word by changing the nuance of liberality found in God's counsel opens the door for another possible interpretation that might explain God as selfishly cruel,

¹⁷ Mathews.

¹⁸ Waltke with Fredricks, *Genesis*, 90-91.

lacking goodness and grace (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5). Satan's approach to counsel opens God's Word for another possible understanding that appears to Eve as new-found knowledge not previously known or possessed by her but only by God. Her desirous yielding to this deception did not produce the outcome she anticipated but instead resulted in their expulsion from God's presence (1 Sam 15:35-16:1).¹⁹ Gregory K. Beale observes, "When Adam stopped being committed to God and reflecting his image, he revered something else in place of God and resembles his new object of worship. Thus, at the heart of Adam's sin was turning from God and replacing reverence for God with a new object of reverence to which Adam became conformed."²⁰

Heath Lambert states that the divine image was not destroyed at the fall but distorted. The doctrine of the image of God continues to play a role in counseling and should continue to affect the way Christians disciple and counsel. Therefore, the goal of counseling must seek to facilitate restoration from a deceived position. This restoration must concern itself with the image of God and how man can be restored back to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28-29).²¹ Lambert concludes, "The goal of counseling should be to facilitate the restoration of the image of God to its proper functioning in all the practical ways that it has been shattered in the lives of those who come to see a counselor."²²

Adam Receives Post-Fall, Remedial and Corrective Counsel (Gen 3:8-24)

Currid states that God introduces His remedial counsel by directing a rhetorical question to Adam that highlights his guilt and need of forgiveness. God's approach

¹⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 236.

²⁰ Gregory K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 229.

²¹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 188-89.

²² Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 190.

provides opportunity for Adam and Eve's admission of failure. When the couple refuses to admit guilt, and instead blame others for the cause of their sin, God proclaims the beginning of a new order that will be characterized by hatred, animosity, and a desire for murder. In the midst of handing out the consequences of sin, God's counsel is filled with hope as He announces their salvation in a future redemptive act through a seed that will deliver a death blow to Satan at the cross (Gen 3:15). God's counsel contains hope in the midst of this dilemma, prior to their expulsion from God's presence, since a solution is given to their plight. This solution will also serve as a saving reality centered on a battle that will not only crush the enemy but also give grace to solve man's predicament with God for those who see their need of forgiveness.²³

Cain Receives Post-Fall Explanatory and Preventative Counsel (Gen 4:1-16)

Waltke and Fredricks remark that God's counsel to Cain not only appeals to Cain's God-given conscience (Gen 3:9), but it inquires about events to grant Cain the opportunity to confess his failure. Explanatory counsel that points to the lurking dangers of ruling temptations in the human heart seeks to give Cain insight into the processes of his own heart. Corrective counsel seeks to equip Cain with understanding on how and where to avoid temptation to prevent its devastating consequences. Even though God's counsel was sufficient, successful counsel occurs when God-given truth is applied to all aspects of the human heart and is lived out in subsequent behavior. Cain serves as an example of one who followed the suggestions of his own heart instead of being obedient to objective, God-centered counsel.²⁴

Mathews notes that God's counsel is addressed to Cain, the seed of the woman in whom the lamentable advances of sin are seen. The Lord rejected Cain's sacrifice because of his intentions and the lack of faith with which he offered the sacrifice. God's

²³ Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, 123-24.

²⁴ Waltke with Fredricks, *Genesis*, 98.

rejection of Cain's offering and the acceptance of his brother's instead provided the context and opportunity for Cain to sin. The Lord's preventative appeals are made to a rational and responsible Cain who chooses to reject the appropriate counsel for his sin struggle (Gen 4:7) and who chooses to allow far-reaching consequences, far more serious than the initial sin itself, to overtake him (Gen 4:7). When Cain rejects God's counsel and kills his brother, not only is he cursed by God (Gen 4:11), but he is driven from the Lord's presence (Gen 4:16) with his self-pity and resentment.²⁵

Genesis 14 four reveals the movement of God's description of man's condition as it progresses from being "very good" (Gen 2:31) to corrupt and wicked in every part of his being (Gen 6:5). The depth of human depravity in the heart that came about through rebellion greatly affected not only the mind of man but also his emotions, habits, character, and behavior. This depraved state continues to characterize the human race and will continue to describe man until Christ's second return (Gen 8:2; Rom 1:21; Col 1:21). However, it must be noted that the noetic effects of sin on the mind have not destroyed man's thinking capacity.²⁶ This truth means that the human mind, although effected by sin, can still be convicted by the Word of God, and this reality has significant consequences for counseling that seeks to use God's Word to encourage human change (Ps 19; Rom 10:14-18).²⁷

God Defined Revelation (Ps 19)

Derek Kidner asserts that Psalm 19, which focuses on the revelation of God, is arranged in two parts followed by the worshiper's response (Ps 19:11-14). The worshiper responds to the pointed revelation of God through the enthusiastic and extensive wordless

²⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 269-71.

²⁶ The phrase "noetic effects of sin" refers to the effects sin had upon human thoughts and thinking.

²⁷ Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 165.

revelation of nature (Ps 19:1-6) and the clarity and succinctness of God's written word (Ps 19:7-10).²⁸ He also explains that God's communication regarding Himself through general revelation is seen in the laws by which His creation operates. It is witnessed by man; and its revelation is understandable, unrestricted, and unhindered because it is extensively declared in heaven (Ps 19:1), earth (Ps 19:4), night (Ps 19:2), and day (Ps 19:5) within a particular order (Ps 19:4). Kidner also shows that Psalm 19 is used in Romans 1:18 to underlie the truth of God's eternal power and deity that are "clearly perceived in the things that have been made."²⁹

Calvin states that the first part of Psalm 19, God's creation, instructs all men clearly regarding His existence (known as general revelation).³⁰ Creation's wordless revelation does not give men precise nor extensive knowledge about God, nor does it teach man to fear Him, yet it provides man with sufficient proof of God's existence, which leaves him indefensible as to the existence of God. The second part of Psalm 19 provides a comprehensive explanation (known as special revelation) regarding the power of God's counsel and the brokenness of man. Nature cannot fully explain God; however, His Word does explain Him through the precise and detailed way it describes the nature of man and its usefulness to God in informing man, who has been affected by sin. This Psalm reveals the majesty of God and the comprehensive and effective use of His Word, which alone is able to restore man back into worshipful fellowship with his creator (Ps 19:11-14).

Peter Craigie expounds this truth when he states that the Lord did not leave man with the uncertainties of natural religion (Ps 19:1-7), but spoke clearly and specifically

²⁸ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 115.

²⁹ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 116.

³⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. James Anderson (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2010), 1:317, Logos Bible Software.

through His Word for the praise of the Lord (Ps 19:8-15).³¹ Willem VanGemereren explains that while nature reveals the glory of the Creator God, the revelation of the Law (Ps 19:7-11) is greater because of the comprehensive nature of the revelation and because it is given by the covenant of God, whose name is the Lord.³² The Law (Ps 19:7-10) reveals six theological aspects that are useful to counsel all men using the Word of God. The “law,” “testimony,” “precepts,” “commandment,” “fear,” and “rules” of God are characteristically “perfect,” “sure,” “right,” “pure,” “clean,” and “true” in contrast to manmade counsel which is not.³³ Kidner writes, “Together, these terms show the practical purpose of revelation, to bring God’s will to bear on the hearer and evoke intelligent reverence, well-founded trust, detailed obedience.”³⁴

Calvin explains that the various predicaments outlined in Psalm 19 regarding man are essential for discipleship. The Law of God can provide the information needed to revive the soul (Ps 19:7). The information provided by this Psalm is needed to humble the soul prior to experiencing the restorative benefits of the Law (2 Tim 3:15; Heb 4:12-13). The Psalm implies that man is unable to convert himself due to the lack of accurate information he has about himself. The objective truth of the Law alone is infinite, complete, and authoritative in nature. It adequately possesses the information to explain the true nature of subjective human wisdom, which consists of finite opinions and perspectives interspersed with obscurity, doubt, and mere suggestions because it is grounded in fallen human nature. David Dickson states,

No doctrine, no word save this divine truth, set down in Scripture, is able to discover the sin and misery of man, or the remedy and relief from it; no doctrine save this

³¹ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 2004), 181.

³² Willem A. VanGemereren, *Psalms*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 5, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 181.

³³ Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 181.

³⁴ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 117, quoted in Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 182.

alone, can effectually humble a soul, and convert it to God; or make a soul sensible of the loss it hath by sin, and restore it to a better condition than is lost by sin; for it is the property of this law or doctrine, to be converting of souls.³⁵

While the Law of God further displays the doctrines of Moses, which detail the terms through testimonies, precepts, commandments, and rules, the Law also reveals its superiority and dignity, which are able to produce ultimate vigor and strength in the soul of those who understand it, correctly implement it, and who have given themselves to its guidance and governance.³⁶

Calvin states that the phrase, “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps 19:7b), is a repetition of the previous thought (Ps 19:7a) while also highlighting the truthfulness of the Law, which restores the simplicity that exists within the human soul.³⁷ The simplicity of man is characterized by a natural lack of wisdom in life to produce prudence in speech and decisions, discernment between good and evil, insight and understanding regarding situations, and past and future events. The acceptance

³⁵ David Dickson, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 94.

³⁶ It is vital to understand the three ways in which the Law functions. *The Reformation Study Bible* contains 96 theological articles on a wide variety of subjects. It explains what is commonly called the threefold use of the law:

Scripture shows that God intends His law to function in three ways, which Calvin crystalized in classic form for the church’s benefit as the law’s threefold use. Its first function is to be a mirror reflecting to us both the perfect righteousness of God and our own sinfulness and shortcomings. As Augustine wrote, “the law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace.” The law is meant to give knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11), and by showing us our need of pardon and our danger of damnation to lead us in repentance and faith to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24). A second function, the “civil use,” is to restrain evil. Though the law cannot change the heart, it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgement, especially when backed by a civil code that administers punishment for proven offenses (Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3, 4). Thus, it secures civil order, and serves to protect the righteous from the unjust. Its third function is to guide the regenerate into the good works that God has planned for them (Eph. 2:10). The law tells God’s children what will please their heavenly Father. It could be called their family code. Christ was speaking of this third use of the law when He said that those who become His disciples must be taught to do all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20), and that obedience to His commands will prove the reality of one’s love for Him (John 14:15). The Christian is free from the law as a system of salvation (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19, 3:25), but is “under the law of Christ” as a rule of life (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). R. C. Sproul ed., *The Reformation Study Bible* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2015), 285-90.

³⁷ Calvin, *Psalms*, 1:319-20.

of the sure witness of the Lord will secure ongoing salvation for those who see their own simplicity and their need to embrace God's testimonies, which are trustworthy, dependable, unquestionably reliable, and altogether beneficial.

Calvin also shows how man is unable to produce for himself (Ps 19:8a) inner peace and tranquility because he naturally delights in sin, which proceeds from a defiled conscience and results in joylessness. Alternatively, the psalmist shows that acceptance of the Lord's precepts will produce heartfelt joy.³⁸ This promise of joy is given to God's covenant people when they live in obedience to the precepts of the Lord, which contain rights, requirements, and directives for man. Moreover, such obedience will also result in a pleasing and acceptable life before God once the heart has been enlightened by the Law and understanding has enabled him to distinguish between good and evil (Ps 19:8b). The blindness of God's people to the Lord's commandments will result in immorality, corruption, bondage, and death. Such a veiled existence will hide the light of the gospel and the covenant promises of God until man turns toward the guidance of God's commands. Obedience to the commandments of the Lord (Ps 19:8b) cannot be separated from God's grace, which is fully revealed in God's obedient servant, Christ, who enlightens man's eyes. The law of Moses is unprofitable without the person and work of Christ because apart from Christ it produces hatred toward God and His Law. David praises the whole doctrine of the Law, which includes the Law's role as a tutor that drives people to see Christ clearly. Timothy George clarifies what Paul writes in Galatians 3:29: "In Galatians 3 the law is a stern disciplinarian, a harsh taskmaster. Yet in its very harshness there is a note of grace, for the function of discipline, as opposed to mere torture, is always remedial. 'With its whippings,' Luther said, 'the law draws us to Christ.'"³⁹

³⁸ Calvin, *Psalms*, 1:320-22.

³⁹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 266.

John Frame states that “the fear of God is that basic attitude of reverence and awe that inevitably carries with it a desire to do God’s will.”⁴⁰ Calvin similarly explains that the lack of the fear of God and the lack of desire to do God’s will is an attitude and human predicament that dominates mankind after the fall.⁴¹ This attitude causes him to be less than convinced by the enduring truth of God’s Word that ensures everlasting happiness. This hesitancy of man to fear God presents an opportunity for him to add his impure inventions to the truth of God’s Word. This view of blindness creates false religion that blights the validity of worship as God instructed it to occur. The addition of strange innovations to the way Scripture explains God pollutes man’s view of Him and is therefore condemned by David who calls the fear of God “clean” (Ps 19:9). Tampering with the eternal truth of God by merging it with manmade suggestions and the opinions of man shows no regard for the Law of God or His rule. Such integration of error and falsehood dilutes, impairs, and opposes that which instills the fear of God in man (Lev 10:1-11; Col 2:8). Attempts to merge the enduring and eternal with the temporary and changeable undoes the enduring, convincing, and justifiable law of God. The phrase “and right all together” (Ps 19:9), which explains the fear of God, shows that His Word is in no need of additions because it is already faultless and perfect, from the least of them to the greatest.

Calvin explains that the Word of God, with its law, testimony, precepts, commandments, given by God, is true and therefore worthy to be obeyed. Observing the Word of God will equip, enrich, and strengthen the believer with the necessary truths to make judgments about life. God never intended for mankind to live independently from His Word. He created them with the ability to receive instruction and live by Scripture’s instruction. However, due to the fall and the effect of sin on the heart content and processes, all believers should actively seek to be continuously renewed by the

⁴⁰ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 706.

⁴¹ Calvin, *Psalms*, 1:322.

Scriptures.⁴² The highly refined wealth of God’s Word will not only remove the immoderate desire for earthly wealth, but will replace it with a love for, a delight in, satisfaction with, and a submission to the wealth and sweetness of God’s Word. Those who wish to be disciplined by the Word must know the warnings it offers, yield to its governance, and note the directives which will result in great reward from God (Ps 19:11). When the psalmist asks a rhetorical question, it shows the extensiveness of his sin and his inability to discern personal errors by himself (Ps 19:12). By asking questions he acknowledges that he is unable to discern all his error. By way of application, he is stating that discerning faults without Scripture would merely redefine his faults, minimize their danger, and create a desperate despair within his soul. VanGemenen states,

Just as nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun (v.6) and even as the “voice” of the natural revelation penetrates to “the ends of the earth” (v.4), so God’s word with all its perfections (vv.7-9) penetrates and examines man. The godly man stands, therefore, in fear before his Creator-redeemer, knowing that he may have “hidden faults” or “errors” (v.12) that he has not yet discovered.⁴³

The Word of God alone can expose faults correctly, interpret behavior, and accurately instruct on its nature, whereas man is deficient in these areas. The question “who can discern his errors?” (Ps 19:12) also serves as a quest for forgiveness that prepares the way for a request to be kept by the Lord (Ps 19:13).

The Word of God gives great insight on personal sin, personal incapacity, and the ongoing willingness of the flesh to be ruled by sin. This propensity to sin is caused by proud disrespect and ongoing stubbornness that gives sin an advantage. However, discipleship that is concerned with developing a determination within the disciple’s heart to know, trust, and meditate upon God’s Word is acceptable to God (Ps 19:14).⁴⁴

VanGemenen notes that the psalmist closes the Psalm with echoes of verse 2. Just as the heavens “declare,” “proclaim,” “pour forth,” and “display,” so God has revealed

⁴² Calvin, *Psalms*.

⁴³ VanGemenen, *Psalms*, 183.

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Psalms*, 1:333.

His written Word in speech and written records to be read and understood by man. The psalmist therefore prays that the expressions and unspoken words of his heart may be acceptable to his covenant-keeping God (Deut 6; Ps 19:14; 139:23, 24; Prov 1-7).⁴⁵

God's Command to Disciple and Counsel (Matt 28:16-20)

Michael Green states that the commission to the disciples to do worldwide missions was given after Jesus had trained His disciples, successfully ended His earthly ministry, and commenced His heavenly ministry. His heavenly ministry includes laboring alongside His apostles and empowering them for the work He began on earth. Luke reminds believers that Jesus began “to do and teach” (Acts 1:1) and continued to do so through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2) by the hands of His disciples (Acts 5:12). The manual Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 10, the content of five great sermons, as well as the explanations regarding Himself communicated during His post-resurrection appearances (Luke 24:28, 44-45), became relevant to the disciples as they began their work of discipling under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, King of the Jews, Messiah, and Son of God who had authority in heaven and on earth.⁴⁶

Craig Blomberg shows that the Lord's command to His disciples, to teach the gospel to all, is a culmination and combination of all of Matthew's central themes and includes a promise of His enduring and powerful presence in the activity of the church on earth. The church, who is called to fulfill her mission, can be assured of His presence while equipping disciples with “everything” the Lord provided for mankind to live by.⁴⁷ Blomberg states, “Matthew's Gospel concludes with the ringing call for believers to evangelize all the nations, based on the absolute, universal, and divine sovereignty of

⁴⁵ VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 184.

⁴⁶ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, The Bible Speaks Today: New Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 320-21.

⁴⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 34.

Jesus, thus assuming that no other religion adequately satisfies the deepest of human needs either for this life or the life to come.’⁴⁸

Warren Wiersbe explains that the resurrected Lord (Matt 28) defines Christianity as a lifestyle of missionary faith that does discipling work. This lifestyle is lived out while the believer goes about life. This lifestyle must reflect the nature of God as the church enters the lost world to seek and call sinners to obedience in Christ (Matt 20:28), Who always seeks to draw lost men and women to Himself. While the church works, Christ Himself, Who has all authority, promises to come alongside the church with His enduring presence through the Spirit, through whom Christ will accomplish the task (Phil 2:12-13). The discipleship approach demonstrated to His disciples went beyond the task of making converts and extended into the realm of apprenticeship where the disciples-in-training identified with the Teacher to learn His skill while living with Him and for Him. The discipleship process entails believing upon Christ while remaining among believers, where the truth of the faith is disseminated to others so that they too may be equipped in the pattern of discipleship taught by the Teacher Himself.⁴⁹

Craig Keener shows that obedience to the commission and worldwide mission of the Lord focuses on making disciples of all nations. This process starts with baptizing believers under the Lordship of Christ after conversion. After this conversion, the young disciples are strengthened through teaching. The teaching of Jesus is connected but different from Old Testament teaching. While the Old Testament was expecting and preparing for the Messiah to come, the New Testament explains the fulfillment and completion of Old Testament promises. Jesus taught the fulfillment of God’s promises in Himself. This teaching should be deliberate and ongoing in the discipleship process.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 34.

⁴⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Matthew-Galatians*, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 106-8.

⁵⁰ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1997), 402.

Blomberg states that the Gospel of Matthew is addressed to Jewish Christians who are instructed to use the gospel message among their own ethnic groups to win them for Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, a man all knew, was the topic of discussion between Jewish believers and the Jews in the synagogues at the time of the early church. He explains how the gospel message provided strength and courage to Jewish Christians who were viewed with hostility by their Jewish acquaintances. Christ provided His disciples with information how to make disciples in the church. These requirements not only minimized the hierarchical order of the Old Testament worship system but presented the new covenant church as an egalitarian family serving others with a discipleship agenda under Christ Who alone was the exalted head (Matt 23:8-12). The climactic commissioning in this chapter given by the exalted Christ is incumbent upon all Christians who are to be unified in the same goal in their worship and understanding of Jesus and the role of His Word in the commission (Matt 28:19-20).⁵¹

Keener explains how the discipleship commission is accompanied by instructions consisting of initiating baptism into the burial and resurrection of Christ which signified unity with Christ. Those unified through Christ stand under the Lordship of Christ through faith. This initiated body is together built up and strengthened through the teachings of Jesus' message. The message about Christ, His person and work, serves as a manual for initiated members and helps members understand reconciliation to Christ, victory over sin, and usefulness among God's people for the glory of the King. This commission is accompanied by a promise of the enduring presence of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the process of discipleship throughout all ages. Alternatively, Peter's unfaithfulness serves as an example to Christians of the possible sinful actions that could be encountered in the process of discipleship. It also highlights the patience of the Lord to forgive and restore while demonstrating the Lord's approach to discipleship that helps others overcome personal failures through repentance and faith (John 21:15-25). The

⁵¹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 47.

process of discipleship after a restorative process (Matt 18:15-18) includes training in theology and observing everything commanded by God and interpreted and fulfilled in Christ, which is accompanied by the enduring grace of God, which when believed and applied (Matt 8:10-13; 9:18-22) will prevent “workless faith” and “works-righteousness” (Matt 5:17-6:18; 7:13-27).⁵²

Leon Morris explains how the resurrected Lord charges His disciples in His final meeting to go make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:16). Jesus clarifies the differences between His earthly ministry, which was characterized by His being a penniless preacher limited by His incarnated body, and His heavenly ministry, which is characterized by supreme universal authority (Matt 28:18). The revelation of Christ’s authority over all things precedes the charge to make disciples and is consequential for all believers who, under Christ’s authority, are whole-heartedly committed to obeying the Master who serves them by ransoming them through death and Who is now calling them to the task of discipleship.⁵³

God’s Equipping Strategy (Eph 4:11-16)

F. F. Bruce states that corporate maturity will be characterized by an acceptance of the discipleship ministries provided by Christ (Eph 4:11). This acceptance by all will result in the preservation of the peace given by God to Christians (Eph 4:3). The corporate application of God’s Word will result in a common faith (Eph 4:13) and a corporate pursuing of a private faith, and corporate expression of faith in Christ will amalgamate the body to God and to one another. Corporate maturity among God’s people is established where discipleship is seen as a process and characterized by an ongoing

⁵² Keener, *Matthew*, 399.

⁵³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 748.

alignment to the standards of Christ personally, intellectually, behaviorally, and experientially (1 Cor 3:1-2; Heb 5:13; 1 Pet 2:2).⁵⁴

Peter O'Brien states that Ephesians 4 focuses on the ministers of the exalted Christ who are men able to prepare other believers for service in the church. This ministry of shepherding among Christ's people was given to equip saints for the work of ministry.⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ William Hendriksen asserts that the ministry of discipleship was given to gifted men, some of whom were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph 4:11) who were sovereignly chosen and endowed with delegated authority to function in specific roles as writers and witnesses of Christ in the church. The bestowal of the discipleship ministry was a distribution of what Christ received from God the Father (Acts 2:33; Eph 4:10). The recorded writings of the apostles alone serve as the only foundation for the discipleship ministry in the church as long as it exists on earth. The ministry of prophets, who were "occasional organs of inspiration" (Acts 13:1) and "who spoke to the congregation on the basis of revelation"⁵⁷ in the past because there was no written revelation (1 Cor 14:29-32), had their role to play in disciple-making ministry. It must be noted that although the church no longer possesses the charismata of the early church, it is fully furnished to equip the saints through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, the complete written Word, and the elders, deacons, and ministers who oversee the local congregation with their giftedness. The ministry of evangelism assisted and continues to represent the apostles in this discipleship task, which serves the church in varied and flexible capacities. Philip served

⁵⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 348.

⁵⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 301-4.

⁵⁶ In 2016, accusations of plagiarism were leveled against several works by Peter T. O'Brien. After a careful investigation by the respective publishers, it was concluded that—whether intentional or not—the volumes in question failed to conform to the appropriate standards for the use and documentation of secondary resources. *The Letter to the Ephesians*, is included among those works.

⁵⁷ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 196.

as an evangelist to the Ethiopians as well as a deacon in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5; 8:26-40; 2 Tim 2:5). Pastors and teachers, who are closely associated and authorized to teach and exhort, function as one group to fulfill the task of discipleship in the past as well as in the present (2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15).⁵⁸

O'Brien expresses that gifted men are to equip the saints for the work of discipleship. The word "equip" includes an ongoing process of training that incorporates repairing (Matt 4:19; Mark 1:19), preparing, and completing so individuals will be adequately and sufficiently equipped to do the work of ministry in the service of one another in the body of believers.⁵⁹

John Stott explains that the word "ministry" (*diakonia*) used here does not describe the ministry of pastors and teachers but all of God's people without exclusion. The Word has far-reaching implication for God's people and negates the idea that Christian service is the sole responsibility of the *clerical elite*. Instead, ministry is the privilege and responsibility of all of God's people. It must be noted that this approach to ministry does not advocate that there is no room for the pastoral ministry of pastors and teachers; it simply explains its character.⁶⁰

O'Brien further explains that the word "work" is reliant upon the on-going training of saints to prepare them for on-going service to others.⁶¹ This service to others happens within the church (1 Cor 15:58; Phil 2:30; 1 Thess 1:3; 2 Tim 4:5) through the ministry of the Word to both unbelievers (1 Cor 16:15) and believers who will be trained and equipped to labor (Rom 11:13; 2 Cor 6:3-10) for the growth of other believers. Stott states, "If the sixteenth century recovered 'the priesthood of all believers' (every Christian

⁵⁸ Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, 198.

⁵⁹ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 301-4.

⁶⁰ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, *The Bible Speaks Today: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 167.

⁶¹ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 301-4.

enjoying through Christ a direct access to God), perhaps the twentieth century will recover ‘the ministry of all believers’ (every Christian receiving from Christ a privileged ministry to men).”⁶²

Stott explains that the “building up of the body of Christ” involves all believers. This ministry is what was done by the apostles and the prophets for the church, as well as what is now done by the saints who use their giftedness to grow others in their faith and service.⁶³ This building imagery communicates spiritual growth, which is God’s goal for all believers and every church (Jer 24:6; 31:4; 33:7). Jesus Christ intended for this goal to be accomplished by men and women who discover, develop, and exercise their gifts within the church.⁶⁴ Klyne Snodgrass explains that Paul’s concern for the edification of all believers may result in some “adult wholeness”—a completeness in the present that will only be completed after the parousia.⁶⁵

O’Brien highlights Paul’s encouragement to replace an individualistic approach to discipleship with a corporate approach. The truth of God is used to equip the saints. This should occur where the church is gathered so that the corporate acceptance of God’s truth may result in corporate growth, seen in a corporate knowledge and practice among the same body of believers (1 Cor 2:6; 3:1; Heb 5:13, 14). This corporate knowledge will result in a corporate mature and stable church that is not directionless and vulnerable to any wind of doctrine, human manipulation, or Satanic cunning. Those who retain an individualistic mind will give attention to varying religious philosophical views that will inevitably undermine, dilute, and threaten the apostolic gospel and further dislodge the individual from a firm and biblical conviction of true faith. Paul describes those who are

⁶² Stott, *God’s New Society*, 168.

⁶³ Stott, *God’s New Society*, 167.

⁶⁴ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 301-4.

⁶⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 205.

independent, immature and vulnerable to deceit, manipulation, and trickery as having given way to the cunning of Satan. He uses this method in the church to lead the immature away from the truth (Eph 6:11).⁶⁶

Snodgrass states that ministry is truth spoken in love and it is active (Eph 4:15).⁶⁷ The verb-like nature of verse 15 translates as “truthing in love.” This applicational approach to truth always results in maturity that puts truth in action. Truth in the Semitic understanding will always be reliable and practiced relationally (Matt 5:38-48; John 3:21; Jas 1:22).⁶⁸ This means truth will not only remain in the abstract, but will always translate into action, behavior, and a change in thinking. Truth always lives out covenant responsibilities which increasingly conform to Christ Who is the influence and standard for every area of life. Snodgrass further states, “Living the truth in love is both the means of growth and the result of growth.”⁶⁹

Similarly, Stott describes Christians as wise people who behave in accordance with their knowledge. Discipleship helps believers care about their manner of life as it relates to everything in life. Christians who take great care in discipleship make the most of their time in order to take full advantage of discipleship opportunities. Jonathan Edwards stated, “Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.”⁷⁰ Jonathan Edwards was a wise man, for the first sign of wisdom which Paul gives in this passage is a disciplined use of time. Christians also take great care in equipping disciples to discern the will of God. The wisdom they are after is found in the will of God and nowhere else. Additionally, Christians seek to discover and do

⁶⁶ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 308-10.

⁶⁷ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 205-8.

⁶⁸ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 143.

⁶⁹ Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 207.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Edwards, quoted in John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, *The Bible Speaks Today: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 167.

the will of God. In seeking to discover it, they distinguish between God's general and particular will. The former relates generally to His people and is the same for all believers: to be conformed to Christlikeness. However, His particular will relates to the distinctive qualities of the believer's personal life, such as career choices, marriage partners, and marriage status. Stott concludes, "The exalted Christ bestows diverse gifts on his church, the teaching gifts are primary because they equip God's people for the ministry of building others up in the body of Christ."⁷¹

God's Process of Change (2 Tim 3)

Stott shows how Paul's instruction prepares Timothy to disciple his flock during an age that characteristically opposed the truth of God (2 Tim 4:1-4).⁷² Timothy had to understand that these "last days," the period between the first and second appearance of Christ, were ushered in by Christ Himself (Acts 2:14-17; Heb 1:1-2) and would be increasingly characterized by seasons of difficulties for the church. Evil men would impose their immoral conduct (2 Tim 3:2-4), religious observance (2 Tim 3:5), and proselytization (2 Tim 3:6-9) to advance the spread of their evil heresy and dead religion inside the church. Their actions would make the discipleship work increasingly painful and dangerous because those men would oppose the truth from their fallen, perverted, and godless hearts (Rom 8:7). Timothy was encouraged and praised for being different and standing alone against the tide of evil (2 Tim 3:10-15). Timothy had to remember that every Christian is saved from the world but also called to be different than the world (Rom 12:2). Stott states that the Christian must stand against the "insidious, pervasive atmosphere of secularism which even seeps into the church."⁷³

Luke Johnson describes Paul's discipling influence on Timothy's character and

⁷¹ Stott, *God's New Society*, 168.

⁷² Stott, *Guard the Gospel*, 82.

⁷³ Stott, *Guard the Gospel*.

practice (2 Tim 3:10-11) and his encouragement to “continue in what you have learned” (2 Tim 3:14).⁷⁴ Paul praises him for having adopted his workable practices, manner of life, and teaching along with his purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings. These things were not only taught by Paul but also demonstrated by him (2 Tim 3:10) through a unique discipleship relationship in which the Scriptures and the gospel play a central role. Paul also mentions the maternal influence Timothy experienced at the earliest stages of his development that introduced him to the sacred writings (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). The writing Paul refers to are the books of the Old Testament, which are able to make one wise unto salvation because they originate with God who revealed the knowledge of man’s predicament and Christ Jesus. Paul underscores the fact that the Old Testament must be used to start the discipleship process. The revelation of God testifies about Christ the Savior (John 5:39) Who died to release man from his sinful predicament, thus making Scripture useful for various purposes because of its nature, profitability, and adequacy.

The Nature of Its Content

The Word of God is comprised of both the Old Testament, also called the “sacred writing” (2 Tim 3:15), and what would be known in the future as the New Testament. The New Testament contains quotes of Jesus from the Old Testament to show what was written about Him through types, shadows, and promises, so that He may explain His nature and purpose of the work He came to perform on earth (Luke 24:27, 44). The Baptist Confession of Faith states, “The Holy scriptures are the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule for saving knowledge, faith and obedience.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, The Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2008), 419.

⁷⁵ Andrew Kerkham, trans., *Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Imprint, 1999), 9.

The Scope of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16)

For New Testament believers, the term “scope of Scripture” refers to the entire content of the Bible. The Apocrypha, however, is not the Word of God, although it contains some truth that has been used by biblical authors (Jude 9, 14-15). So, while Paul uses “Scripture” to specifically refer to the Old Testament (2 Tim 3:16), the Apostle Peter states that Paul’s writings are also a part of the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:15-16). We even see that the letters Paul wrote to Timothy form part of the scope of Scripture for all believers. As Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin state, “If we affirm that each part of Scripture is inspired, we come eventually to assert that its entire content is inspired.”⁷⁶ This means that all Old and New Testament Scripture is the inspired Word of God.

The Origin of Scripture

All Scripture is “breathed by a God,” or “divinely inspired.”⁷⁷ Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin state, “The basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.”⁷⁸ God has breathed His character into Scripture so that His will can be clearly known. The abiding character of Scripture “owe its origin and distinctiveness to God himself.”⁷⁹ The God inspired nature of Scripture affirms that it is infallible, inerrant, and authoritative.⁸⁰ John Stott states, “All Scripture is God-breathed. It originated in God’s mind and was communicated from God’s mouth by God’s breath or Spirit. It is therefore rightly termed ‘the Word of God,’ for God spoke it. Indeed, as the prophets used to say, ‘the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.’”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 235.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 420.

⁷⁸ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.

⁷⁹ Lea and Griffin.

⁸⁰ Lea and Griffin, 235.

⁸¹ Stott, *Guard the Gospel*, 102.

The Usefulness of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16)

Paul emphasizes the usefulness of the inspired Scriptures by explaining what they are useful for. He highlights their usefulness for teaching doctrine in light of the prevalent onslaught of false doctrine upon the lives of God's people. Paul is referring to the usefulness of the Old Testament Scripture with its key doctrines that pertain to, the origins of man (Gen 1-2), the fall of man (Gen 3), and the nature of salvation (Isa 53). These key doctrines in the Old Testament also form the basis of the New Testament writings. However, Scripture clearly teaches that doctrine is not enough; it must be applied to the way believers live life (1 Tim 4:16; Jas 1:22-25).

Paul explains the usefulness of teaching by pointing to the rebuking or reproof nature of the Scriptures. The words "rebuking" or "reproving" refer to the ability of Scripture to show the errors of false teachers. While reproof may refer to exposing false doctrines, it also refers to exposing believers' personal failures in their thoughts and conduct. This reproof clarifies the sinful nature of thoughts and behavior that are contrary to the will of God.⁸² The usefulness of Scripture for rebuking would be incomplete if it refrained from directing the believer, who is in need of rebuking, back to the will of God. Lea and Griffin state that it is helpful to use Scripture to "negatively rebuke" the disobedient saints, and "for convicting the misguided and disobedient of their errors and restoring them to the right paths."⁸³

Paul explains a third use of Scripture: "correcting" the believer's doctrine or personal practices. The believer is called by Scripture to be corrected in order to be aligned with God's standards. Lea and Griffin write, "Correction is one means God uses in order to restore people to spiritual positions they have forfeited. This emphasis frequently appears in the wilderness experience of Israel"⁸⁴ (Deut 8:2-3, 5).

⁸² Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

⁸³ Lea and Griffin.

⁸⁴ Lea and Griffin.

Finally, in Scripture Paul explains the importance of “training” that leads to righteous living. The “training” in the believer’s life is the practice of forsaking the reprobated error and embracing new corrective instruction on an ongoing basis. The word “training” is also used in other parts of Scripture to refer to a form of discipline that produces character (Eph 6:4). In this text, however, it points to the practice that leads to a holy lifestyle that is characteristic of the man of God.⁸⁵

The Outcome of Scripture (2 Tim 3:17)

The use of the words “fully” and “thoroughly equipped” refer to the preparatory nature of Scripture when it is used in the way outlined in verse 16. The progressive nature of the usefulness of Scripture will prepare “the man of God” for the task given him by God and will use the equipped man to equip other men and women. Stott states, “Scripture is the chief means which God employs to bring ‘the man of God’ to maturity.”⁸⁶ The use of Scripture is not only useful for “the man of God” but will produce men of God. Verse 17 not only holds true for Christian leaders as a qualification, but as a goal for all disciple-making training that seeks to have men “thoroughly equipped.” Biblical discipleship prepares men for the tasks God has called them to perform (2 Tim 2:2).⁸⁷

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the theological basis of counseling and discipleship. It highlighted the need for counseling and training in light of the pending danger that believers face. Five passages from both the Old and New Testaments showed the will of God as it relates to life-long discipleship and biblical counseling, which is a concentrated

⁸⁵ Lea and Griffin.

⁸⁶ Stott, *Guard the Gospel*, 103.

⁸⁷ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237-38.

form of discipleship. The following chapter will consider ways educators in a cross-cultural context hinder the usefulness of Scripture.

CHAPTER 3

HINDRANCES TO CROSS-CULTURAL BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

This chapter will explore the contextualization of biblical counseling and discipleship training, taking into consideration the diverse political, cultural, social, and theological factors that could hinder cross-cultural biblical counseling and discipleship education in Southern Africa. Lecturers could hinder the acceptance, assimilation, and application of biblical counseling and discipleship principles if they are ignorant of the historical background bolstering the diverse cultures and worldviews of their students. This chapter will only highlight a few aspects that can hinder the assimilation of information in the cross-cultural setting of Southern Africa. Finally, this chapter will refer to the need for lecturers to adapt their approach and content to accommodate cross-cultural settings, as well as demonstrate the need for a thirty-hour biblical counseling and discipleship training program that contextualizes biblical counseling principles for Southern Africa.

Contextualization

It is important for lecturers to apply biblical truth to life by continuously highlighting biblical counseling and discipleship principles alongside theology and practical examples of application. Application allows students to see the relevance of those principles and apply them in their own lives and the lives of Christians in their culture. David Hesselgrave defines contextualization as an “attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelations, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of Holy Scripture, and that is

meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential context.”¹ Lecturers must be aware of the development of the term *contextualization*, its historic connotation, and its relation to other terms such as *indigenization*, *inculturation*, and *paternalism*.

Indigenization

The term *indigenization* is derived from Latin and means “to bear or produce within.”² In the past, the intentions for indigenizing Christianity were linked with Christianity becoming *native*, which simply means that Christianity ceases to be a foreign entity and the gospel takes on the skin of the culture, embodying its values and beliefs. Many believe that such an approach will result in self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting churches. Biblical counseling educators need to be cautious about transferring ownership to one specific ethnic group if that group distances itself from other ethnic groups in their immediate proximity.³ This separation is the tendency among certain Christian communities in a historically segregated society. While Scripture supports the practice of biblical counseling and discipleship in the local church (Rom 15), great care must be taken to prevent biblical counseling from being captured by one ethnic group who lives and ministers in isolation from other ethnic groups.

Lecturers who reside outside the Southern African context should seek to support certified biblical counseling centers that are not only aware of the dynamics of an historically segregated culture but are both working with various ethnic groups within Southern Africa and connected with international certified agencies such as the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). This relationship will promote

¹ David Hesselgrave, “Contextualization That Is Authentic and Relevant,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 3 (1995): 115.

² Richard J. Gehman, *African Christian Theology Revisited* (George, South Africa: Oasis, 2018), 18.

³ Naomi Chazan et al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 291.

contextualizing biblical counseling and discipleship training while maintaining national and international cooperation.⁴

Further, lecturers who teach cross-culturally in Southern Africa could hinder the development of the biblical counseling movement on a national level if they seek to exclusively indigenize one ethnic group or denomination while ignoring the broader ethnically and denominationally diverse population who could greatly benefit from biblical counseling and discipleship education. To avoid this exclusive indigenization, lecturers must seek, where possible, to incorporate students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds in their training. This inclusive approach to education will show consideration for the nation's historical past where people were divided along ethnic and cultural lines. Additionally, students who prefer to operate independently will be encouraged and helped to work with others and so weaken the mentality of segregation that many South African Christians strive to abandon.

The exclusive education of a singular ethnic group has been promoted by the online and electronic availability of biblical counseling training, which ultimately does not consider partnering with existing institutions and associations who teach contextualized biblical counseling and discipleship principles. As a result, the facilitation of biblical counseling principles and applications has often been far removed from the African cultural context. Additionally, the availability of biblical counseling training online grants access to individuals who may be part of various cults and who do not actively serve in Bible-believing churches within the Christian community in Southern Africa. These individuals

⁴ Strengthening Ministries Training Institute (SMTI) is the primary biblical counseling institution available in Southern Africa. Information on SMTI and the courses offered through the program can be found at Strengthening Ministries Institute, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://smti.co.za/>. The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) is the primary certifying agency that is internationally recognized. Information regarding certification can be found at Association of Certified Biblical Counsellors: Africa, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://acbcfricaco.za/>.

often seek to be known as biblical counselors after their training.⁵ International lecturers may preserve the reputation of the biblical counseling movement in Southern Africa and prevent it from being fractured, disconnected, and given over into the hands of cults by partnering with ACBC certified biblical counseling training centers and ACBC certified individuals.

Inculturation

Contextualization has also been associated with *inculturation*, which can be defined as “the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values.”⁶ This process involves both the lecturer as well as the students: lecturers diligently teach their Christian beliefs along with their personal culture in order to duplicate it in a different culture, and students willingly receive and assimilate the words, thoughts, values, language, symbols, rituals, and patterns of their lecturer’s faith and culture into their own culture.⁷ Lecturers should place their confidence in the ability of God’s Word and the Holy Spirit to achieve the necessary conviction among the students rather than working to inculturate students and enforce their own personal cultural practices upon a different ethnic group. In addition, after presenting the biblical truth, lecturers could ask students to offer examples of case studies that provide an opportunity for the truth of Scripture to be applied to a real-life case study from the indigenized culture.⁸ The use of local case studies in contextualized education could prevent inculturation, which can hinder the students’ ability to assimilate biblical truth

⁵ SMTI receives regular applications to complete the biblical counseling course from members of cults such as: The Zion Christian Church, The Seventh Day Adventist Church, Independent Apostolic churches, and Word of Faith churches. The Church of The Nazarene is often seen as a cult because of its local expression.

⁶ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, “Inculturation,” accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enculturation>.

⁷ Gehman, *African Christian Theology Revisited*, 23.

⁸ There is a need to develop a Christian counselor’s casebook.

into their own cultures.

Paternalism

Related to contextual education is the practice of *paternalism* in Christian education. Paternalistic education plagued the missionary endeavors of early settlers. Churches sought to regulate the conduct of congregants and students to affect them as individuals as well as their relationships with authority figures. For instance, European missionaries previously forbade Africans from adopting European ways and customs. Lecturers who teach biblical counseling principles in a cross-cultural setting must regard their students' right to *acculturate* and decide for themselves which applications made by the lecturer might promote Christlikeness and further enrich, enhance, and promote biblical change in their own cultural setting. Lecturers should allow that students may adopt certain practices from a different culture into their own if those practices will promote Christlikeness among the Christians of their specific culture.

Communication Approaches

Clarifying Differences

Biblical counseling has become a viable alternative to Christian counseling, a method which has dominated the counseling approach of many churches in Southern Africa. Therefore, it is crucial for lecturers to always communicate the distinctions between biblical counseling and Christian counseling principles. When defining biblical counseling principles, lecturers should use multiple biblical texts for support in addition to providing practical applications to clearly demonstrate the superiority of the biblical counseling model. This process of distinguishing between biblical counseling and Christian counseling should be done graciously, with great care, and without misrepresenting other forms of counseling to promote biblical counseling. Lecturers should strive to exemplify the fruit of the Spirit while communicating the various approaches used by different counseling disciplines (Gal 5).

Modes of Teaching

When teaching biblical counseling and discipleship principles in a cross-cultural setting, educators must avoid two pitfalls: total fluidity and total rigidity. The first, total fluidity, is a deficient mode of teaching in which the lecturer allows the context of the culture to override biblical counseling principles. The idea that biblical counseling principles only become real when they are taught in a cross-cultural setting communicates that presuppositional truths and directives do not exist within the authoritative Scriptures.⁹ Total fluidity will also prevent students from seeing the need for change that is necessary for the believer. As a result, students are taught to apply situational ethics, which could lead to pragmatism and eclecticism that undermines the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

A second mistake to avoid is teaching biblical counseling and discipleship principles without considering the cross-cultural setting in which classes are presented. This total rigidity approach to education may contain precisely formulated principles and accurate terminology but comes across as stale jargon, concepts, or images that are unrelated to the cross-cultural context.¹⁰ Rather, lecturers should consider how to evaluate the context in which education occurs to make it easy for students to understand and apply biblical counseling principles to their own situation. Shoki Coe's definition of *contextualization* gives helpful insight into the students' response to contextualized Christian education. He states that *contextualization* is "the capacity to respond meaningfully to the gospel within a framework of one's situation."¹¹ For this response to happen, lecturers must adapt their approach from a formal teaching mode to a

⁹ John R. Stott, "The Bible in World Evangelization," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1981), 5.

¹⁰ Stott, "The Bible in World Evangelization," 5.

¹¹ Shoki Coe, "In Search of Renewal in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 9, no. 5 (1973): 235.

conversational teaching mode that will create opportunities for meaningful engagement between the lecturer and students.

Student Expectations

Lecturers should be aware of students' expectations in cross-cultural settings. First, lecturers should ask, "Do the students have a low tolerance for ambiguity in education or a high tolerance for ambiguity?"¹² A low tolerance for ambiguity means that students expect the lecturer to have clear objectives for the material presented, a timetable for every hour of teaching, visual presentations to accompany their lectures, and well-crafted student notes. Alternatively, students with a high tolerance for ambiguity allow for an informal class where the lecturer is given freedom to determine the schedule, content, timing, and objectives while teaching. Those who have a high tolerance expect interactive lectures that include discussion, listening, and mutual learning.¹³ Lecturers who understand the different educational expectations of their students in cross-cultural settings will be able to consider various ways in which those expectations provide opportunities to answer questions related to the unique circumstances their students face. This approach to cross-cultural diversity gives the lecturer the opportunity to demonstrate how biblical counseling principles are practically applied in a new cross-cultural setting. This could be enhanced by using case studies that local students can relate to—lecturers can illustrate how to apply certain methods of biblical counseling. The application of these methods includes illustrating how to build involvement, how to inspire the counselee by giving hope, and how to gather good information by demonstrating the importance of asking good questions (Prov 18:15). In the inventory stage of the counseling process, the lecturer can demonstrate how biblical counselors should gather data rather than act on assumptions, speculations, or imagination by asking the students who provided case

¹² James Plueddeman, *Teaching across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 57-58.

¹³ Plueddeman, *Teaching across Cultures*.

studies to clarify the customs and beliefs found in them. Lecturers must emphasize the importance of gathering a wide range of information that will be sufficient to make the necessary interpretation of the information. In this way the lecturer demonstrates the skill of asking good questions and applying God's truth to new life situations while simultaneously developing contextualized case studies for future use in cross-cultural settings. An interactive approach to education in a cross-cultural setting has the advantage of bolstering students' confidence in the practicality of Scripture for their context because they are not required to first filter out Western life experience or go through the process of adjusting to Western norms and customs before applying the Bible to real-life situations.

Traditional Beliefs That Uphold Ethnic Customs

When teaching students the procedures of counseling a specific problem, lecturers must be aware of the customary beliefs that uphold the practice. In a cross-cultural setting, topics of in-laws, marriage, child-rearing, finances, and work ethic need to be approached with great caution. Ignoring beliefs that uphold cultural beliefs regarding these issues in education will hinder the transmission of biblical counseling and discipleship principles. Lecturers who ignore a culture's beliefs and solely focus on what the culture is doing wrong will not only be opposed but also seen as judgmental and arrogant. Lecturers who allow the Word to expose a custom's underlying beliefs will make significant progress over time. Real progress is only made once students have been convinced by the truth. This takes time, but once they are convinced, the lecturer can begin to address the supporting beliefs, desires, and motivations that uphold unbiblical practices. Lecturers who teach in a cross-cultural setting should never be satisfied by mere behavioral change. Biblical change, regardless of cultural or ethnic uniqueness, always begins with a change in the beliefs, attitudes, and motivations that uphold a way of life. To avoid mere outward change, lecturers should carefully gather information

regarding the cultural values that drive behavior, customs, and ceremonies. This information will allow the lecturer to inform students from Scripture regarding the divine purposes God designed to drive such institutions as marriage, child-rearing, family relations, and customs. Consequently, students will be fully equipped to challenge their cultural beliefs and introduce changes that will replace unbiblical practices on a behavioral level.

Problems and Procedures Topics in Southern Africa

In-law relationships. In-law relationships are an example of how lecturers should seek to understand some of the beliefs that underscore particular practices in a cross-cultural setting. There is a tradition within many African groups where the husband never leaves his family of origin when he gets married, while the wife-to-be does leave her family and is incorporated into the husband's family. She will serve her in-laws by fully submitting herself to them, which implies that the new family unit never leaves the father and mother but is rather joined and assimilated into the husband's family. Further, if the newly married couple has marital problems, the community elders, which includes the uncles, father, and grandfathers, will serve as counselors to resolve the conflict. This cultural practice clearly opposes the scriptural command in Genesis 2:24 because it prevents children from leaving their family's home and forming a new independent family unit. When addressing such a topic, lecturers must have great wisdom and understanding as they uphold the supreme authority of Scripture over culture, while also remaining aware of the pressure the students are under to obey God rather than these man-made practices, traditions, and customs. Lecturers must listen carefully to understand the various expectations found in different cultures; and when asked to give practical guidance, they must underscore their answers with scriptural examples. The lecturer that listens to understand will be able to explain and demonstrate the need for conformity to

Christlikeness in all matters of life through other Christians who preceded them in previous centuries.

In addition, lecturers must teach the biblical instructions regarding the leaving and cleaving principles. Their instruction should be accompanied by discussion, not to negotiate whether such a command is appropriate or not, but to explain Scripture, outline possible cultural reactions and personal implications, and clarify a possible approach to change that is in line with biblical counseling and discipleship principles. These discussions could be further enhanced with in-class assignments in which students are asked to write a letter to their culture or their parents. This letter would explain biblical expectations, along with how the individuals involved desire to obey Scripture and start relating biblically to both their parents and their culture in that regard. Lecturers could use the book *In Laws: Married with Parents* by Wayne Mack, who suggests such an activity for couples who are about to get married. This letter may or may not actually be given to the parents. This exercise of penning beliefs could equip students to answer cultural objections to leaving and cleaving and clarify their own position, which would later be used to evaluate, instruct, and correct counselees in the biblical view set forth in Scripture.¹⁴

Marriage. The institution of marriage in an African context serves a different purpose than in many other places in the world. The purpose of marriage in Africa is mainly centered on childbearing. The expectations placed on a male child (that he has been born to secure his father's lineage, ensure his father's honor as an ancestor, and secure the future) serve as the driving force for some men of these cultures to enter into marriage with one or many women.¹⁵ Lectures should not focus on the custom of marriage in African culture but rather the beliefs and commitments that undergird it. Failing to do so might be due to an attitude that dismisses indigenous practices as inferior while

¹⁴ Wayne A. Mack, *In-Laws: Married with Parents* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 22.

¹⁵ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 13, Kindle.

maintaining an attitude of superiority.¹⁶ Lecturers must avoid the temptation to see African customs as “perversely irrational and ghost-ridden”¹⁷ and instead see these customs as an opportunity to ask questions regarding underlying beliefs and motivations. They must understand the commitment many have made to certain institutions which have been handed down from one generation to the next, and which are still practiced by the current generation. Failure to address beliefs forfeits an educational opportunity that provides mutual, clarifying insight, that in turn leads to an opportunity to teach on the biblical text that explains the biblical standards for union between a man and a woman. Lecturers in cross-cultural settings should not fail to further show how a man and woman can experience the exclusive, unified, and one flesh union of marriage sexually, financially, rationally, and in social interaction with in-laws, communities, and children.

Cross-cultural educators must be open and willing to hear statements regarding the reactions and opposition students experience from within the culture. Additionally, educators must be willing to answer complex questions by referring to Scripture to introduce and suggest biblical replacements for the old morals and customs related to marriage that have been passed down through oral traditions with their taboos, myths, legends, stories, and songs as well as proverbs, riddles, and wise sayings, which have become the unwritten scriptures of specific people groups, and which are upheld by elders and wise men in that culture.

The temptation to return to and uphold the expectations of culture is strong because African Christians belong to ethnic groups that have traditions, customs, and expectations that form the underlying structure of their culture. Within this context, it is believed that traditional beliefs and customs keep the culture together and the ancestor’s content. Neglecting to take the time to understand essential beliefs can cause confusion.

¹⁶ Gehman, *African Christian Theology Revisited*, 25.

¹⁷ Basil Davidson, *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History* (Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 1970), 80.

The earliest missionaries who outright rejected these bedrock beliefs regarding marriage in the African context and who attributed the presence of many children and wives (polygamy) to sexual immorality in turn contributed to a morality-based Christianity in Southern Africa. Those training biblical counselors ought to make efforts to understand the cultural motivations and values of African customs before addressing any unbiblical customs in order to effectively, accurately, and precisely address the thoughts and intentions rooted in African beliefs which support ethnic customs. Failure to recognize the established African morality or its customs and practices will make counseling unsuccessful and may result in the establishment of Christianity as a formulated morality, which only leads to a partial change in the values intrinsic to the African view of marriage and procreation, sexuality, and immortality.

Samuel Kunhiyop explains that many in Africa believe that the “purpose of marriage is child-bearing. Therefore, when there are no children, the marriage is meaningless.”¹⁸ The expectation exists that a marriage will produce a child (specifically a male child) who would continue his lineage and bring honor as an ancestor. In the past, missionaries have considered the presence of multiple wives as merely polygamy that is due to sexuality and immortality.¹⁹ This attitude has not only forfeited opportunities to understand the cultural belief regarding children but also opportunities to teach on the biblical purpose of marriage. The practice of gathering cultural information to understand cultural motivations and beliefs reinforces the principle that it is critical that lecturers take great care to understand cultural beliefs so that they may effectively communicate biblical teaching on marriage, sexuality, adultery, and the providence of God in a cross-cultural setting.

¹⁸ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 12.

¹⁹ Kunhiyop, 13.

Theological Practices

Another aspect in which lecturers can hinder education is if they do not understand the hermeneutical principles the students personally employ to understand Scripture. If they can identify these principles, then they should take measures to enhance the students' confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture by introducing them to a correct method of interpretation. Solid hermeneutical principles will help students understand the true meaning of the original author's intent and the recipients' background.²⁰

The lecturer can further help students overcome their deficiencies in hermeneutics in the same manner used to teach biblical counseling principles: the constant employment of a biblical hermeneutic. While a hermeneutics class is helpful at the onset of one's biblical counseling curriculum, a demonstration of its principles throughout the remainder of the biblical counseling educational process can be of great help. The lecturer can accomplish this by highlighting the entire context in which a specific counseling related topic occurs by pointing to what preceded and succeeded the principle, and outlining how the principle relates to the rest of Scripture and how it translates to biblical living. The lecturer should inform students of the ways many cultures have used biblical texts as proof texts, not only to support unbiblical cultural practices but also to justify unbiblical cultural expectations. Further, lecturers should point to the danger of having a culture-based hermeneutic that relies primarily on traditions, experiences, cultural values, and ethnic particularities to interpret Scripture. The lecturer should show the importance of words and phrases, including their meaning and tense, so that students see how easy it is to impose a cultural belief upon a text rather than extracting the God-ordained meaning from it. Added to these ideas, the lecturer should seek to improve students' ability to observe, interpret, and apply the text practically. These practical principles, along with the necessary hermeneutical principles, will not only help the students arrive at the biblical

²⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 108.

interpretation of the text but will also serve as a vital skill to be employed throughout their studies.

As lecturers grow in understanding their students' abilities, they can teach hermeneutics in a biblical counseling training course simply by emphasizing the context, author's intent, original audience, and usefulness of the text for teaching, reproof, correcting, and training the twenty-first century saint. The students' skills can also be enhanced by providing assignments that require following the hermeneutical principles taught in class. Further insight into the students' hermeneutical understanding and scriptural knowledge can include assessing the students' understanding of the purpose and connection between the Old and New Testaments, their grasp of a basic overview of the Bible, their understanding of different genres found in Scripture, and their understanding of the application of hermeneutical principles to different genres such as narratives, prophecies, wisdom literature, and epistles.

Theologies and Identities

Lecturers might be aware of the political past of South African history but overlook the theological perspective that drove those political views. These theological perspectives are still influencing many Christians to maintain segregation even among believers, which has resulted in the proverbial white church and black church dichotomy. The various ethnic groups, especially those who were oppressed from 1947 to 1994, were caught up in a system of apartheid defined and undergirded by theology, science, philosophy, and historical events. Many of the oppressed sought a theology that would ensure their freedom from such oppression. For the purpose of this section, I will focus on two distinct, major theological streams which lecturers should be aware of as they teach biblical counseling and discipleship related classes in Southern Africa. The first theology within South Africa is *apartheid theology*, which justifies theological and cultural segregation between people of color and white people, and the second is *liberation theology*, which opposes all forms of oppression, whether it be political, cultural, or

patriarchal rule.²¹ Liberation theology justified the struggle for freedom, which was subdivided into two groups: one wing of liberation theology sought war and the other sought peace and reconciliation through negotiation. The latter was spearheaded by the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in South Africa, Desmond Tutu, who was called “A Theologian of Liberation.”²² Lecturers will hinder biblical counseling education if they take sides with either of these theologies because both, while based on the Bible, are a misrepresentation of the Christian message because they are presented using a hermeneutic process based mainly on Old Testament passages and are devoid of the gospel hope found in the person of Christ and the reconciliation described in the New Testament.

Although these theologies were developed by two separate groups within the South African context, both camps have used a similar hermeneutical principle to reach their conclusions. They compared themselves to Israel, the recipient of national promises made by God about inhabiting a particular section of land and freedom from oppression.²³ This misrepresentation of Scripture resulted in the development of apartheid theology in South Africa and liberation theology that developed in America and was then imported into the South African struggle. Both theologies use a nationalistic hermeneutic of Scripture which influenced their soteriology and missiology. The outcome of these theologies has greatly affected various Christian groups in South Africa; it also played a role in determining the political solutions many Christians embraced during the 1940s in Southern Africa. Lecturers should be cautious and mindful that such theologies continue to have an influence on seminaries, churches, and the students who attend biblical counseling training with Strengthening Ministries Training Institute in Southern Africa. However, counselors should be most cognizant of the effect these theologies have had on

²¹ Gehman, *African Christian Theology Revisited*, 48.

²² Buti Tlhagale and Itumeleng J. Mosala, eds., *Hammering Swords into Ploughshares: Essays in Honor of Archbishop Mpilo Desmond Tutu* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 45.

²³ Richard Mayhue, *How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1986), 90.

relations between white and black Christians because the hermeneutics used by apartheid and liberation theologies developed a nationalistic identity. Robert R. Vosloo explains that various biblical texts were used to develop a nationalistic identity that gave “an implicit or explicit understanding of the relationship between self and other, between sameness and difference, between identity and otherness.”²⁴ Such use of Scripture not only misrepresented God’s Word but inevitably established a white nationalistic nation in which many had an unbiblical understanding of identity. These erroneous identity constructs might have influenced the beliefs of many students attending biblical counseling training. The lecturer should consider four identity constructs while teaching in a cross-cultural setting in Southern Africa.

Beleaguered identity.²⁵ The way in which proponents of segregation read the Bible can be identified by a constant emphasis on the survival of the white, colored, or black identity. This beleaguered identity considers societies outside of itself as a threat to the preservation of its identity. The need for cultural preservation can replace the greater need for a biblical focus on the threat sin has on believers and its ability to affect their identity in Christ as well as their relationship with God and others. When the Scriptures are read as a mere *survival text* through a nationalized hermeneutic, the result will inevitably be a distorted gospel and eventually a distorted identity.²⁶

Fixed identity. Another way proponents of nationalistic hermeneutics read the Bible is through the belief that identity is fixed, which is maintained and preserved through

²⁴ Robert R. Vosloo, “The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid in Reformed Circles in the 1940’s in South Africa: Some Historical, Hermeneutical and Theological Remarks,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1, no. 2 (2015): 209, <https://ojs.reformedjournals.co.za/stj/article/view/1257/1769>.

²⁵ Vosloo, “The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid,” 209-10.

²⁶ See the sermons of C. R. Kotzé in C. R. Kotzé, *Die Bybel en ons Volkstryd: Preke Tussen 1930 en 1946 Geskrif en Gelewer Deur* (Bloemfontein, South Africa: Sacum, 1955), 37. In these sermons one finds the recurring emphasis on the need for strong walls to keep the nations apart. See, for instance, his sermon on “Die Volksmure” (“The Walls of the Volk”) using Isa 60:18.

an aversion to blood mixing and bastardization.²⁷ This fixed identity will not only unite a pure group in hostile situations, but will create a genetic interrelatedness, which connects them to each other while separating them from others. This belief could replace the interconnectedness every Christian has in Christ and which God expects to exist among all believers through a bond of peace (Eph 4:3). The nationalized hermeneutic that proposes a fixed identity does not allow for a fluid or hybrid identity where people from different ethnic backgrounds come together to worship God. Vosloo states that this identity is undergirded by the origins of the Afrikaaners: “This fixed understanding of identity is often coupled with the romanticizing of the Afrikaaner bloodline, the so-called blood of the Huguenots and the Geuzen.”²⁸ Many Old Testament texts have been used to create a worldview affirming pure identity over mixed identity. Ultimately, this worldview rejects the truth that all nations were created through the blood of one; nations were established through the mixing of blood (Acts 17:26). This wrong view of identity could question whether the blood of the only Redeemer is meant to save people from every nation and tribe (Rev 7:9).

Isolationist identity. The proponents of segregation who use a nationalized hermeneutic often embrace an isolationist identity. Isolationists make no room for the personal ministry of anyone except their own kind, even when the context is cross-cultural. This view leads to isolation, which promotes a lack of self-introspection or the examination of one’s faith. The separation enforced in the church and the nation as a whole did not come about through biblical directives, but by the polarizing ideology of apartheid or liberation theology—systems of belief that structured the Christian community along cultural and color lines.

²⁷ Kotzé, *Die Bybel en ons Volkstryd*, 41.

²⁸ Vosloo, “The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid,” 210.

Polarized identity. The use of a nationalized hermeneutic will bring about a polarized identity, which will result in a strong *us* versus *them* debate. Proponents of nationalizing the biblical message, such as Totius,²⁹ “could affirm the need to keep together what God has put together.”³⁰ This biblical text with many other texts were taken out of context to establish a basis for keeping the “volk” (nation) unified, and to separate what God has separated (the white and black ethnicities in South Africa).³¹ All other worldviews that do not promote a polarized identity are considered as dangerous due to the belief that polarization should be maintained between ethnicities so that no equalization takes place between nations.³²

Communities of Liberation

Liberation theology is a broad theology that includes all forms of theologies that oppose oppression, whether it be political, cultural, or patriarchal rule.³³ The liberation theology found in South Africa is rooted in the liberation theology that developed in the United States. Bonganjalo Goba quotes Desmond Tutu, who called upon the church to be actively involved in “the serious occupation of being a community of liberation.”³⁴ Tutu, along with other freedom fighters, introduced the idea of *The Struggle* against oppression. He comfortably stated that the church primarily existed to worship and adore God, but it

²⁹ Totius is the pen name of Jacob Daniël du Toit, an Afrikaner poet. J. D. Du Toit and S. Du Toit, *Die Afrikaanse Rassebeleid en die Skrif: Artikels van prof. dr JD du Toit en prof. dr du Toit* (tweede druk) (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege, 1955), 14, quoted in Vosloo, “The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid,” 199-200.

³⁰ Vosloo, “The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid,” 211.

³¹ “Volk” is translated as “nation” and is often used to refer to the Afrikaaner nation which is now an ethnic minority in Southern Africa.

³² Vosloo, “The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid,” 211.

³³ Gehman, *African Christian Theology Revisited*, 48.

³⁴ Bonganjalo Goba, “An African Christian Theology,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 27 (1979): 3-12.

should never become a form of escapism from the realities of oppression.³⁵ The wide divide caused among Christians by various nationalistic hermeneutics continues to impact some student relationships. Therefore, it remains important for lecturers to be informed about the underlying influences of race relations in the Southern African context.

Guardianship and Imperial Attitudes

The backdrop of apartheid theology is still prevalent in some churches who have come from a tradition of *guardianship*. This term was developed by the fathers of apartheid theology and was used to justify apartheid. Guardianship was seen as a God-given calling upon the developed white race to be guardians over the natives of South Africa while they came of age.³⁶

In a speech given to the National Congress in 1944, Totius referred to the term guardianship to describe the Dutch Reformed Church's belief that they were superior, a belief which had been formed over a long period of time. Totius stated, "Fellow South Africans, here is the calling from God on high, namely to nurture the native in his coming of age . . . the wonderful God who guided our fathers as torch bearers for black Africa will also lead and inspire us under possibly even more difficult conditions to be bearers of light where the darkness still prevails."³⁷

Scripture and Oral Tradition

To avoid cross-cultural education being ineffective, great care must be taken to understand the origin of cultural knowledge. It is important to know whether original manuscripts exist in order to trace the development of knowledge over time. In Southern Africa, the origin of knowledge can be traced back to its European roots, while other

³⁵ Desmond Tutu and Mthobisi Mutlootse, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches*, ed. John Webster (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 84.

³⁶ Vosloo, "The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid," 199-200.

³⁷ Du Toit and Du Toit, *Die Afrikaanse Rassebeleid en die Skrif*, 19-20, quoted in Vosloo, "The Bible and the Justification of Apartheid," 199-200.

groups rely upon the verbal transmission of truth from one generation to the next, the process of which develops into traditional customs and beliefs. Kunhiyop writes, “The major source of information about African ethics is the oral transmitted tradition, that is, the many stories and legends by which knowledge is transmitted across generations by way of the spoken, as opposed to the written, word. This tradition includes myths and stories, liturgies, songs and proverbs.”³⁸ While Jesus relied upon oral tradition during His earthly ministry, the information He shared can be traced back to the Old Testament writings where He is revealed in the promises and covenants they contain. When teaching, it must be shown that biblical counseling and discipleship are biblical in their reliance upon the written Word. There is no room for integration of oral traditions with Scripture, which is sufficient.

Great care must be taken to understand the oral traditions that dictate certain behavior within ethnic groups. To apply Scripture to the behavior originating from oral traditions, lecturers must not only understand the oral tradition but also carefully interpret it with the help of others who live in the immediate context of that particular oral tradition. This understanding of oral traditions will ensure that one rightly understands the internal thought processes that are informed by tradition (Col 2:8), and thus accurately apply appropriate Scriptures. Specifically, this accurate application must take place in the discipleship relationship remembering 1 John 1:1-4, which speaks of the oral communication given by Jesus to His disciples then imparted to first century churches.

God and Traditional African Religion

It is essential that lecturers in cross-cultural settings do not underestimate the impact traditional African religion has upon the lives of those who live in close proximity to its practice. These theological beliefs and practices do not deny the existence of God, in fact, such a debate would be considered absurd “because God is the creator of man, he

³⁸ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 10-11.

therefore dictates a moral path which is the fruit of religion.”³⁹ Lecturers must still constantly question whether they and the students are engaging about the scriptural explanation of God.

It is imperative that lecturers emphasize foundational truths regarding the sufficiency, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture in a context where knowledge of God has been formed by the observation of general revelation and common grace and where that knowledge was then verbally transmitted from one generation to another. Lecturers should underscore all their teaching with Scripture but must emphasize that no man can know God or have a conviction of the gospel and the assurance of salvation without the written Word.

Further, due to ceremonies and rituals established around oral traditions that are intricately woven into the fiber of African thinking, lecturers need to emphasize that Scripture alone must regulate the content and form of worship and must play an exclusive role in renewing the Christian’s mind. Lecturers need to show from the Word that man formulated ideas to appease God through ceremonies, liturgies, invocations, and prayers, which are not sufficient to please the One Who Christians worship and therefore need to be replaced by the regulations outlined in the written Word. Kunhiyop states,

African religion has a rich tapestry of invocations, prayers, rituals and sacrifices addressed to the gods, spirits and ancestors. Worshipers pray for a good hunting season, the birth of a child or protection from harm, or they give thanks that their prayers have been answered. The words they use reveal much about their beliefs, values and morality.⁴⁰

These regulations regarding worship in traditional African religion were developed out of revelations received from the spirit world through chiefs, elders, and sangomas. Kunhiyop explains, “God, the ancestors, and the spirits are all powers or forces that impinge on human life in one way or another. In that sense they are all moral agents.”⁴¹

³⁹ Olódùmarè Idowu, quoted in Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 26.

⁴⁰ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 14.

⁴¹ Kunhiyop, 15.

As stated, at no point can the teacher underestimate the impact of traditional African religious worldviews upon the students who constantly live in close proximity to their practices. In some cases, the constant pressure placed upon Christians by the surrounding culture has led to Christians being rejected from their families. In other cases, Christians have assimilated to African traditional religion as a result of the external expectations of families, leaders, and the culture.

Lecturers must understand that a departure from African traditional religion is seen as a sin against the culture because the ancestors cannot be pacified by the whole but rather by only parts of the culture. It is therefore essential for lecturers to ask students for an explanation on how distancing themselves from their traditional understanding of God impacts them personally, relationally, and socially.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted a few political, cultural, and theological issues that could hinder the acceptance, assimilation, and application of biblical counseling in cross-cultural education in Southern Africa. Many other issues can influence education in a cross-cultural context that I have not mentioned. These issues include epistemology, contextual theology, the decolonization of Christianity, Ubuntu theology, and lobola.⁴² These issues could be considered by lecturers who seek to be involved with certified biblical counseling training centers in Southern Africa.

⁴² For more information regarding African ideologies and practices see: Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this project was to develop a thirty-hour ACBC approved discipleship and counseling course for a Southern African context that demonstrates a biblical approach to discipleship and counseling for SMTI. The 30HDC curriculum was taught over three consecutive weekends. The weekend classes were comprised of ten lecture hours. The class was presented to two categories of students: those who have had no prior training in biblical counseling and those who had some previous training in biblical counseling. In both categories there were also students who wanted to audit the course without pursuing certification with ACBC. The curriculum introduced students at a basic level to the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture in understanding and solving the problems of people in a culturally diverse context, thus promoting growth in and usefulness for Christ in the church in Southern Africa and the world. This goal was strengthened through this project's training of individuals through the 30HDC curriculum. The Thirty Hour Contextualized Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Training was partly based upon the material developed by Wayne Mack for a master's degree program. This 30HCD course met the minimum training requirements for phase 1 of certification with ACBC. This curriculum was presented through SMTI and adjusted to the culturally diverse context of the African continent. The students who completed the 30HDC course were encouraged to pursue certification with ACBC prior, during, and after the classes were completed. They were also advised to pursue their Continuing Education Units (CEU) after certification through the advanced SMTI track that has been vetted by ACBC and adjusted to a South African context.

Preliminary Consideration

Over the last fourteen years important groundwork has been laid by American missionaries who have taught biblical counseling in South Africa from a first world, American perspective. Several of these missionaries have extensively taught and prolifically published biblical counseling related books from South Africa for an American audience and customs. Their important work, while valuable, exposed the need for cross-cultural biblical counseling literature, training courses, and resources that address culturally specific issues in Southern Africa. In order for biblical counseling to be effective in the Southern African cultures it needs to address such issues as the practice of circumcision, lobola, in-law relations, procreation, tribalism, and race relations. This project attempted to advance education by giving the biblical counseling movement roots in an African context.

The term “African context” does not exclusively refer to black African culture but rather to all the people groups in South Africa and their unique customs. It is important to understand the various cultures, their history, and their customs. The different people groups in Southern Africa are made up of white South Africans, who came from Holland, Germany, France, and England as settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These white groups were predominantly Calvinistic Reformed and Anglican. The colored community shares an ancestry made up of white settlers who intermarried with the Koi, Koi San, and slaves from South and Southeast Asia, Madagascar, and Mozambique. Indians were brought from British controlled India to Natal, South Africa, between 1860 and 1911, to work as laborers in plantations, mines, sugar cane fields, and laying railway lines. The black tribes of Southern Africa are made up of various culture groups and consist of the Zulu, Xhosa, Bapedi (North Sotho), Tswana, South Ndebele, Basotho (South Sotho), Venda, Tsonga, and Swazi. While these groups predominantly speak southern Bantu languages and their cultures and customs are generally similar, differences in language and customs exist that need to be considered when teaching. The different ethnicities seek to preserve their own cultural distinctives, whereas in a country like the United States,

immigrants lose much of their ethnic distinctives and cultural diversity after the second or third generation. People in the African context have a strong connection to their ancestry and land of origin.

When this program is duplicated in Africa or any cross-cultural setting, significant time must be spent ascertaining culturally specific aspects of each ethnicity. Neglecting this could in some way challenge the assimilation of biblical truth. Because of the rich diversity of people groups in Southern Africa, the 30HDC course sought to include examples throughout the teaching material, although not exhaustively, of the unique beliefs, motivations, and customs of different people groups that drive certain habits and customs. In the past, students expressed the need for culturally diverse illustrations and contextualized applications in biblical counseling, publications, training, and resources. While the 30HDC course sought to consider the contextualized diversity, all differences could not be addressed in a satisfactory manner due to time constraints of the 30HDC course. To address the cultural differences successfully in the future, consideration might be given to add pre-recorded lectures on culturally specific issues on the student platform. This could provide more time to discuss and answer questions related to culturally specific issues.

Those who consider duplicating this 30HDC course should seek to understand the motivations and beliefs that drive cultural practices. An understanding of cultural motivations will enable the lecturer to focus on the real reasons behind customs and so keep themselves from transmitting their own thoughts and interpretations on a given culturally specific practice. For example, when missionaries came to Africa, they wrongly understood that polygamy was purely motivated by promiscuity. Their failure to understand the cultural belief and purpose of offspring led to a failure in addressing the issue of polygamy. It is imperative to ask what cultural beliefs are behind this sinful act that is clearly forbidden in Scripture.

Research, Teaching Methodology and Updates

The first three chapters of this project provided information regarding the purpose of the 30HDC course. The rationale found in chapter 1 evidenced the need for SMTI to provide a 30HDC course that is attainable for students who lack the abilities and resources to complete the two-year program with its extensive distance, heavy workload, and financial implications and responsibilities. Chapter 2 explored the theological considerations for cross-cultural discipleship and biblical counseling mandate given by Christ to the church. Chapter 3 of this project highlighted cross-cultural pitfalls, particularly within the SMTI educational framework that often employs foreigners to teach. The chapter also considered the need to present culturally inclusive biblical counseling training, which was considered in the design of the 30HDC course.

The research and teaching approach of this 30HDC course sought to overcome the difficulties some students face because of a lack of resources to attend eight weeks of training that happens over two years. An attempt was made to develop and present the 30HDC course in person at the SMTI training center in Pretoria and also make the classes virtually available to students at SMTI learning centers. Past students of the SMTI extensive program were trained to oversee learning centers in their local churches. These students that served as proctors assisted enrolled students for the 30HDC course in registering for the 30HDC course online, joining the student platform, and registering successfully with ACBC. When the 30HDC course was presented in person at LBC, students at learning centers gathered in three locations: Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province; Hillcrest, Natal Province; and Leondale, Gauteng Province. The learning center initiative not only helps students in local communities to pursue and complete certification with ACBC together, but the learning centers also encourage certified counselors to promote biblical counseling in their local communities.

After the 30HDC course was presented, I realized that the learning centers that were developed out of necessity could play a vital role in furthering biblical counseling training in other parts of Africa. I explained the concept of learning centers to past students,

and several have sought to be trained in how to facilitate learning centers in their areas. SMTI seeks to establish learning centers in Worcester and Cape Town, Western Province; Klerksdorp, Northwest Province; Windhoek, Namibia; Nairobi, Kenya; and Yaoundé, Cameroon for the next 30HDC course, which will be presented from February to April 2023. Individuals who seek to duplicate this 30HDC course should consider establishing learning centers in remote locations prior to presenting the course with the help of other ACBC certified biblical counselors. To ensure effective learning centers, working documents must be developed to assist proctors in how to manage a learning center and promote education in isolated places using the internet.

After the completion of the 30HDC course, an ACBC exam preparation class was presented on Zoom and in person. The class sought to prepare students with no intermediate educational qualifications to pursue certification with ACBC. The success of the 30HDC and ACBC exam preparation class demonstrated that with some planning and facilitation, biblical counseling could be advanced through learning centers. The cooperation between the SMTI training center and the SMTI learning centers facilitated by certified biblical counselors can play a pivotal role in making biblical counseling training available to Christians from various socio-economic groups and geographic locations throughout Africa.

Students who registered for the 30HDC course were given information on how to access the SMTI student platform prior to the classes. The student platform provides students with additional online resources, observation videos, relevant reading, and video recordings of each lecture. The student platform enabled students who attended the three weekend classes in person or online to go back and re-listen to the lectures. The SMTI Training Center and the SMTI learning centers helped students understand the purpose of the student platform and how to access additional resources.

Prior to the class, students were encouraged to register with ACBC online as an introduction to ACBC and to get an understanding of the relationship between SMTI

and ACBC. Additionally, they were given additional information about the various phases towards ACBC certification and the value of ACBC certification. This certification shows that a counselor possesses certain knowledge, skills, and competencies, and it proves that they meet a specific set of standards or requirements. Further, ACBC certification is recognized internationally and can be easily ascertained.

After the students completed the 30HDC course, the SMTI staff noticed that some students had not registered on the SMTI student platform. To resolve this problem for future classes, I decided to develop a short student handbook with clear instructions on how to register on the student platform. Additionally, I created screenshots to show the process of registration and access to the student platform. These screenshots will be sent to students through email and WhatsApp after they register for the 30HDC course.

I noticed after the 30HDC course was presented that some students who wanted to pursue ACBC certification had not registered with ACBC. The SMTI training center exists to help people move toward certification with ACBC and is therefore committed to maintaining and promoting a relationship with ACBC. To introduce students to the importance of ACBC, SMTI will send links of short videos from the ACBC website to registered students that introduce various aspects of ACBC. By helping students register online, SMTI desires to help students who are not familiar with using the internet to develop skills that will help them take full advantage of this technology as an information platform and teaching medium.

After presenting the 30HDC course, some students were confused about completing phase 2 toward certification with ACBC. To help students get an understanding of phase 2, an ACBC Exam preparation class was scheduled and presented two months after completion of the 30HDC course. The class explained the details pertaining to the open book exam. Of the 73 students who attended the 30HDC course, 26 students registered for the ACBC Exam preparation class. Ten students attended in person and 16 attended online. Many of these students who attended the ACBC Exam

preparation class have completed their reading assignments and watched the observation videos provided by SMTI for observation on the student platform.

After the first 30HDC course was presented, the SMTI team made a few adjustments to the course material, student platform, and frequency of new classes in the future. Instead of hosting the 30HDC course over three consecutive weekends, the class will be presented over a three-month period. There are several advantages to this change. Students will be able to better assimilate the material if the classes are spaced out. These interim periods between classes will help students be less overwhelmed with the large amount of information that needs to be processed over a short three-weekend period. Additionally, these changes will help students be better prepared for upcoming classes by completing required reading before classes commence. The student platform will be redesigned to make provision for the changes before the next 30HDC course that will be presented from February to April 2023.

Curriculum Development

The curriculum was developed around three ten-hour lessons to be taught in person over three consecutive weekends at Lynnwood Baptist Church (LBC). Live streaming was available for international students on South African Standard Time; however, students were not allowed to make exclusive use of the recordings to complete the 30HCD course. Students were required to attend classes online or in person on the day of presentation. Students who enrolled for this project were given access to the student platform a week prior to the commencement of classes. They continue to have access to the recordings and other resources after the classes were presented. The availability of resources on the student platform will help students who want to use it as a reference in completing their ACBC Theology and Counseling Exam to become more familiar with the material.

The curriculum was developed to address the unique culturally diverse challenges that are encountered when counseling in a cross-cultural setting. While the

30HDC lectures were designed to teach a cross-cultural approach to biblical counseling, the instruction is given at an introductory level. This level of teaching with its limited time constraints cannot give in-depth attention to all the cross-cultural beliefs, motivations, and customs that may be present in the counseling room.

The course was developed considering differences that exist between various ethnicities. It also focused on areas influenced by an unbiblical worldview, such as cultural or ethnic theology, cosmology, hamartiology, and epistemology. There was also a focus on culturally specific practices that might differ from one tribe to another, such as marriage roles, child rearing and discipline, in-law relations, and the influence of extended families. The purpose of marriage and how to maintain its priority was explained. Attention was then given to the consequences of rejecting the biblical position and suggestions were made to regain the priority relationship in a marriage where in-law relations are sinful. Due to time constraints, I was not always able to adequately address many other difficulties that might exist between married couples who seek to hold to a biblical understanding of marriage but find themselves in a situation where family members hold to a more traditional understanding of in-law relationships. After completing the 30HDC course I made several changes to the curriculum so that more time could be spent on culture-specific topics in future classes. One change to the curriculum that could allow for more in class discussion on culture-specific topics would be to upload pre-recorded lectures that are not culturally specific onto the student platform. The topics that are not culturally specific are an introduction to biblical counseling and the theology of biblical counseling. These classes that are not culturally specific could be uploaded on the student platform and observed before class so that there would be adequate time in class to discuss culturally specific topics. Topics that are culturally specific include the different gender roles in marriage, in-law relationships, and the Problems and Procedures class. Further, the additional information gained in class discussions would provide the lecturer with additional information on cultural issues that can be assimilated into the class notes

for the next 30HDC class. It must be noted that discussions regarding cultural issues should center around the beliefs and motivations of the custom. In this way, the beliefs underpinning the behavior can be dismantled, which weakens the unbiblical custom. Finally, the lecturer must not neglect teaching on the best practical ways to communicate biblical principles and biblical applications to counselees who might need to abandon some cultural practices while experiencing the pressures of living in a culture that holds to unbiblical principles.

In future 30HDC classes I, as a white South African, will not lead all culturally specific discussions. Instead, an ACBC certified colleague from one of the same cultural backgrounds as the students, and who faces similar culturally specific challenges, will lead the discussion on how to communicate biblical principles to family members who hold to particular cultural beliefs and customs. This discussion could help students who are trained to be biblical counselors gain insight on culturally specific responses to biblical teaching. The outcome of these discussions may provide students with information that can be added to the class material to further promote the contextualization of the 30HDC classes.

Before the 30HDC was presented, the curriculum plan was submitted to an expert panel for review. The feedback I received led to some adjustments to the curriculum. Two experts asked whether the course length was realistic due to cross-cultural application being added to the presentation time. This observation led to shortening the introduction of the class by highlighting the first eight sections: (1) What Is Biblical Counseling?; (2) God Is a Biblical Counselor; (3) Counseling Is Every Church's Responsibility; (4) Jesus Christ Is the Biblical Counselor's Primary Example for Counseling; (5) The Goal of Counseling Must Be Distinctly Biblical; (6) The Bible Must Play the Central Role in Counseling; (7) The Gospel Is the Ultimate Answer to Man's Problems; and (8) The Bible Accurately Explains Why People Behave in Ungodly Ways. The lecture time was further shortened by condensing and combining the following

sections: (9) The Real Counselor in Biblical Counseling Is the Holy Spirit; (10) Prayer Must Play a Central Role in Counseling Efforts; (11) Counseling Must Be Relational in Nature; (12) Counseling Must Be Person Centered; (13) Counselors Look at the “Big Picture”; (14) Biblical and Secular Ideas Should Not Be Integrated; (15) Useful but Unnecessary Psychologies for Biblical Counselors; and (16) Counseling Should Be Heart Directed.

Another expert suggested that the term “African context” should be clarified. That change was made in both the teaching notes as well as this chapter. The clarification of this term also influenced a change in the overall title of the course. The previous title was Thirty Hour, Cross-Cultural Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Training for A South African Context; however, the new title is Thirty Hour, Contextualized, Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Training. By removing the phrase “African context,” the diversity of South Africa is highlighted and confusion about the meaning of “African” was resolved.

The 30HDC is divided and presented in three sections presented over three weekends. Topics in session 1 include:

1. What Is Biblical Counseling and Discipleship?
2. Essential Elements of a Biblical Counseling Worldview
3. Methods of Biblical Counseling

Topics in session 2 include:

1. Theology of Biblical Counseling and Discipleship
2. Marriage and Family Counseling and Discipleship

Topics in sessions 3 and 4 include:

1. Problems and Procedures
2. Psychotropic Drugs
3. Helpful Forms

Selection of Participants

The first section of this project explained that SMTI was established to train and equip pastors and other Christian workers from various cultural backgrounds in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture. While this ministry statement of SMTI is well-known, applied, and upheld by every member at LBC, SMTI seeks to extend its reach beyond LBC into the South African church community. Therefore, the design of the curriculum was for the benefit of all LBC members as well as for pastors and Christian workers outside of LBC through the SMTI program. 30HDC course participants included attendees at LBC and members of other churches who were divided into two groups. One group had no prior training in biblical counseling and discipleship; the second group had previous training in biblical counseling. The anticipation was that twenty participants would be willing to take the pre-course survey, attend the classes, and complete a post-course survey. When students were asked whether they would be willing to complete the questionnaires, 57 students responded. From this number, 42 students had no training and 15 had previous training in biblical counseling. This number of participants ensured a wider distribution result of this project. The pre-course surveys were explained and distributed on the first day of class, prior to the teaching, along with short explanations about the goals of the project and the time allotted to complete the survey. Pre-course surveys were completed through Google Forms. A few in-person students chose to complete the questionnaire on a hardcopy form prior to the class. The completed forms were collected by LBC workers and transferred onto Google docs. The post-course surveys were administered after the 30HDC course was completed on Google docs and some hardcopies were distributed. Thirty-three post-course questionnaires were received for students who had no prior biblical counseling training, and 15 post-course questionnaires were received from students who had prior biblical counseling training.

Session Lessons

Each session was taught over three consecutive weekends at LBC. The classes

were presented on Friday from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (consisting of two and a half hours of teaching) and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (consisting of eight hours of teaching). The sessions were also transmitted to three locations throughout South Africa, and to three international students from Uganda, Zambia, Kenya through Zoom.

Session 1

The first session was spent answering two questions: “What is biblical counseling and discipleship?” and “What is the method of effective biblical change?” The discipline of biblical counseling and the methods of biblical counseling were defined and explained with biblical support. The historical alternatives to biblical counseling and biblical change were explained philosophically, and their presuppositional departure point were highlighted and then contrasted with the presuppositional departure points of biblical discipleship and counseling. I showed how the Bible was sufficient to equip the saints for “one another” ministry in the local church. The material covered in session 1 included:

1. What Is Biblical Counseling?
2. God Is a Biblical Counselor
3. Counseling Is Every Church’s Responsibility
4. Jesus Christ Is the Biblical Counselor’s Primary Example for Counseling
5. The Goal of Counseling Must Be Distinctly Biblical
6. The Bible Must Play the Central Role in Counseling
7. The Gospel Is the Ultimate Answer to Man’s Problems
8. The Real Counselor in Biblical Counseling Is the Holy Spirit
9. The Bible Accurately Explains Why People Behave in Ungodly Ways
10. Prayer Must Play a Central Role in Counseling Efforts
11. Counseling Must Be Relational in Nature
12. Counseling Must Be Person Centered
13. Counselors Look at the ‘Big Picture’

14. Biblical and Secular Ideas Should Not Be Integrated
15. Useful but Unnecessary Psychologies for Biblical Counselors
16. Counseling Should Be Heart Directed

The second session that provided a biblical method of counseling explained the counseling process that can advance biblical change. Students were provided with an authoritative framework of eight procedures that demonstrates their practical use in understanding the human experience. The students were also shown how to transition from one procedure to another in the counseling process. I illustrated from Scripture how this framework of counseling could be used by the Holy Spirit to motivate, empower, and direct individuals in life and godliness. The material covered included:

1. Involvement
2. Inspiration
3. Inventory
4. Interpretation
5. Instruction
6. Inducement
7. Implementation
8. Integration

After presenting session 1, a few alterations were needed. The section called “Biblical and Secular Ideas Should Not Be Integrated” became the conclusion for the section called “The Bible Must Play the Central Role in Counseling.” The section titled “Counseling Should Be Heart Directed,” was changed to “Anthropology Two,” and it was added to “The Theology of Biblical Counseling” in session 2 of the 30HDC classes. Additionally, in the class notes for “Biblical and Secular Ideas Should Not Be Integrated,” various secular theories and approaches were listed that relate more to a Western perspective, so I added a list of cultural beliefs, practices, and ideals to make the class material more relevant to an African context. The new cultural ideas I added included: African Renaissance, Sangomas (witch doctors), and traditional elders as opposed to

church elders. The title of this section was changed to “Biblical Ideas Should Not Be Integrated with Secular and Cultural Ideas.” This new title shows that the 30HDC course considers the influences of Western psychology as well as traditional African beliefs.

Session 2

The second session was spent considering:

1. The Theology of Biblical Counseling and Discipleship
2. Biblical Counseling and the Family
3. Biblical Counseling and Family Topics

First, session 2 was designed to challenge students to consider the theological realities that form the basis of a proper approach to biblical counseling. Specifically, this session attempted to develop a biblical understanding of the nature of God and man while giving careful attention to the specific application of these principles to real life issues.

The material covered included:

1. Anthropology Part One
2. Worldly and Godly Sorrow
3. Guilt
4. Repentance
5. Conversion: Faith and Repentance
6. Progressive Sanctification
7. Anthropology Part Two

Second, session 2 was also designed to consider the biblical understanding of marriage and the key factors that make up a biblical and harmonious marriage. It considered the different roles within marriage, their functions and interrelatedness to one another, and the responsibilities and privileges in a biblical marriage. It highlighted certain aspects that relate to an African context. The material covered included:

1. A Biblical Understanding of Marriage
2. Roles of Husband and Wife

3. Divorce and Remarriage

Third, session 2 was designed to give a biblical perspective on issues that hinder harmonious and biblical marriages in an African context. This section showed the most diversity between Western and African cultures. It is therefore essential to explain the issues that would hinder marriages from becoming biblical. The material that was covered included:

1. The Problems with In-Laws
2. Communication
3. Parenting

Session 3

Session 3 was spent considering:

1. Problems and procedures
2. Medical issues
3. Observation and Practicum

First, session 3 started with a brief reference to the biblical principles taught in the “Methods of Biblical Change” in session 1. Students were taught how to counsel these issues and how they translate into an African context. The material that was covered included:

1. Forgiveness
2. Depression
3. Anger
4. Anxiety and Worry
5. Pain and suffering
6. Pornography

Second, session 3 showed how physical illness can affect the human soul. Additionally, this session considered the cultural beliefs undergirding the use of witchcraft and sangomas in rural settings to deal with matters such as depression, anxiety, and pain.

This session also considered the theory undergirding the use of psychotropic drugs and the procedures involved in assisting counselees who have been given a psychological or cultural label. In many ethnicities people might be labeled demon-possessed instead of schizophrenic, for example. The procedures involved may be explained from a different position whether psychological or cultural, but the procedure of assisting them through biblical counseling will be similar. The material covered included:

1. Physical Illness and Biblical Counseling
2. Psychotropic Drugs and Biblical Counseling

Third, session 3 was designed to help students understand how to complete the observation videos. Students were given access to observation forms and observation videos, which helped students identify the process of biblical change taught in week 1, session 2. The material referred to included:

3. Counseling Observation Videos
4. Counseling and Observation Forms

Further Considerations

Those who seek to duplicate this 30HDC course in a cross-cultural context should consider several aspects of cross-cultural education that are often overlooked which in turn can lead to a less effective training program.

Those who seek to duplicate the 30HDC course should seek to understand the cultural diversity, practices, and formulations which have become part of the cultural fiber. It is essential to study cultural beliefs so that lectures do not miss the nuances of them. The interaction between lecturer and prospective students before the class commences could supply information about the cultural practices that can enrich the classroom experience and enhance the 30HDC course material. When teaching in an African context, lecturers should be cognizant that spiritual problems are often recognized by the culture, but the cause and the cure of the problem may reflect cultural beliefs that do not match the causes given by westerners who witness the same behavior. For instance,

in a first world context, behavior such as schizophrenia is diagnosed using the *DSM-5*.¹ The same behavior that is diagnosed as schizophrenia and treated with psychotropic drugs in the west may be described as demon possession, or in other cases, curses inflicted by the ancestors, which is resolved in the culture by consulting a witchdoctor. The lecturer would do well to research the cultural belief in and fear of witchcraft. It might also be beneficial to know how demon possession is recognized so the lecturer may have a clearer understanding of the methods employed to diagnose and cure it.

When teaching the 30HDC course in a cross-cultural context, the lecturer must be careful to not merely teach in order to eliminate unbiblical practices and customs. The lecturer should seek to understand the false beliefs regarding anthropology, theology, epistemology, and phenomenology. Once false beliefs have been identified, the lecturer may undermine these false beliefs with the truth from God's Word. This approach allows the Holy Spirit to do the convincing through God's Word and safeguards the lecturer from being identified as superior, which might more effectively cause people to abandon sinful customs.

When duplicating this 30HDC course, it is imperative that the lecturer explain Scripture's standard of normal behavior and beliefs, as opposed to abnormal or, rather, sinful behavior and beliefs. In some settings, the issue of what is acceptable and normal can easily become sinful when cultural customs are evaluated biblically. In situations where cultural beliefs and practices override scriptural directives, lecturers should focus on the acceptable or God-ordained behavior outlined in the Word of God, regardless of cultural acceptance or pressures. A passage that outlines God's acceptable beliefs and conduct for mankind is found in the historical events of Genesis 1 and 2. Other passages that describe God's acceptable beliefs and practices are found where the person of Christ is described. The lecturer must make the distinction between biblical principles and

¹ *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* is the most widely accepted nomenclature used by clinicians and researchers for the classification of mental disorders. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

personal preferences and help students recognize the differences. The lecturer should be ready to give an acceptable biblical answer using appropriate Scripture when confronted with matters pertaining to cultural preferences in a cross-cultural setting. Topics that can be problematic in such a setting are theology, anthropology, marriage, marriage roles, child rearing, gender, work, and in-laws.

The lecturer can help students evaluate their culture by asking specific questions and answering them from Scripture. These questions could be applied to any individual in the same culture who seeks to distinguish between what is biblical and what is cultural. Some questions are: How does this culture or person see the world? How does this culture or person understand the purpose of the world? How does this culture or person explain problems? How does this culture or person go about restoring what has gone wrong in their world? What role does the culture or individual play in understanding the world and resolving its problems? These questions not only equip students to evaluate their culture but will help them ascertain the theological, anthropological, and epistemology beliefs of the culture so the secular ideas may be compared to and distinguished from a biblical theology, biblical anthropology, and biblical epistemology.

Those who seek to duplicate this 30HDC course in a cross-cultural context should seek to understand cultural beliefs so they are prepared to influence the students' content, thinking processes, and commitments that often hinder cross-cultural education and assimilation.

Conclusion

This curriculum was developed for Strengthening Ministries Training Institute and serves to equip pastors, church leaders, Sunday school teachers, and laymen in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture in understanding and solving the problems of people in a culturally diverse context and, thus, promote growth in and usefulness for Christ in the church in Southern Africa and the world. This project developed a 30HDC course that demonstrated a biblical approach to discipleship and

counseling in a Southern African context. The course enables students to pursue certification with ACBC after they have successfully completed the 30HDC, which meets the minimum training requirements of phase 1.

In chapter 5, the outcome of this project will be examined, and the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum will be explained. This examination will help uncover beneficial adjustments that can be made to the curriculum so that it will be best suited to establish biblical counseling on the African continent.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Scripture states that man was created in the image of God to represent Him on earth (Gen 1:26-27). This “image” of God in man is not a quality, trait, or attribute.¹ Instead, the image of God relates to man’s representational function on earth.² Therefore, unlike animals, “man’s splendor is his likeness to God.”³ The duties involved in man’s representative role were clearly communicated to man by God as they related to his God-given dominion (Gen 1:26-2:5), human relationships (Gen 1:27), offspring (Gen 1:28), God’s provision (Gen 1:29-30), Sabbath blessing (Gen 2:3), and God-given restrictions (Gen 2:16). The instruction given to God’s representative before the fall has implications of how one determines what normal human representation of God looks like. John Kilner states that understanding man (the image of God) as a representative of God has “significant implications for how the image should be viewed and treated.”⁴ This also has serious implications for how man is viewed and treated in the discipleship and counseling process.

After the fall, God purposefully provided mankind with additional information about the consequences of the fall (2 Tim 3:15), salvation through Christ Jesus (Titus 2:11), freedom from the effects of sin (Titus 2:12), and eternal life (Titus 2:14). The

¹ Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 29.

² John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 120, quoted in Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 29.

³ D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 54, quoted in Strachan, *Reenchanting*, 30.

⁴ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 120, quoted in Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 29.

information God provides through His Word is to be assimilated (Matt 7:24) by His people and disseminated (Titus 2:15) for the good of the church through counseling and discipleship ministries. Further, God is working in His people to work out their salvation (Phil 2:12-13). He is also using all circumstances to conform the church into a specific standard, the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28-29).

According to the command of Christ (Matt 28:18), the church is assigned to make disciples of all nations. The church is called to use the instructions given by Christ and the apostles. The modern notion that the church can fulfill the discipleship mandate apart from Christ and His Word is a human construct not found in Scripture. Both Old and New Testament Scriptures give clear instruction regarding the usefulness of Scripture and its sufficient and authoritative nature. The church of the living God has been given the privilege and responsibility to uphold and support the truth of God (1 Tim 3:5), which is sufficient for the work of discipleship and counseling. The presuppositional exclusivity of Scripture must not only be upheld but centralized in the church, where everyone is to be renewed in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior (2 Pet 3:18), because even the converted man can be tempted to default to following after manmade ideas about life and godliness (Gal 2:11-14).

The 30HDC course was developed for students in an African context who want to be instructed through SMTI in the effective use of God's Word in discipleship and counseling. Regarding the church and counseling, many students have witnessed the church lose its footing, surrendering, and slipping into erroneous views. They forsake the Word and instead claim their authority from secular psychology, modern ideologies, and cultural beliefs. This 30HDC course sought to equip and train students in the knowledge and skills necessary to help others who have fallen prey to the ideas of man that are contrary to Scripture.

This course was presented to 83 students. While 57 students were willing to complete the DCQ, I decided on a sample size of 30. Five students had previous training

in biblical counseling, while 25 students had no previous training in biblical counseling. After completing the 30HDC course, which serves as the phase 1 toward certification with ACBC, 26 students showed interest in pursuing certification with ACBC.

Evaluation of Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a thirty-hour ACBC approved discipleship and counseling course for an African context that demonstrates a biblical approach to discipleship and counseling for SMTI at Lynnwood Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa.

Before and after the 30HDC was presented, pre-course and post-course surveys were handed out to students. The surveys were tallied, differences calculated, and the results were recorded. The 30HDC course content was edited and streamlined after consideration was given to the weaknesses that were highlighted through the pre-course and post-course surveys. As the director of SMTI, I was encouraged by the positive feedback regarding the informative nature and usefulness of the 30HDC course. It appears as though the strengths of the 30HDC course outweighed the weaknesses, which makes this course beneficial for extending the biblical counseling movement in Southern Africa. In light of this, it was determined that the purpose of the course was met and fulfilled.

Evaluation of Project Goals

This project had three goals that measured the success of the project. These goals helped guide the curriculum's basis, which was designed specifically for SMTI. These goals also provided substantive guidance for the pre-course and post-course surveys administered to the students who enrolled for the 30HDC course presented by SMTI.

The first goal was to develop a thirty-hour discipleship and counseling course. This goal was considered successful when the 30HDC course was assembled and contextualized for an African context while reflecting the unique spirit of Wayne Mack's

life work, which is characteristically rooted in Scripture. Further, the 30HDC curriculum sought to introduce SMTI students to a basic introduction of biblical counseling that fulfilled the minimum requirements for phase 1 training needed for ACBC certification. Despite my initial concern about the extensive scope of the material, students expressed appreciation for the extensive, progressive, and interrelated order of the material that was presented to clarify the essential nature of biblical counseling. The material highlighted the differences between biblical discipleship and biblical counseling, along with their similarities and interrelatedness, and showed why both forms of discipleship are needed in the believer's life. Further, after evaluating the outcome, I also realized that the content and scope of the 30HDC course has the essential teachings needed for a well-rounded discipleship and counseling program. The essential teaching consists of nine foundational topics: (1) Introduction to Biblical Counseling, (2) Methods of Biblical Counseling, (3) Theology of Biblical Counseling, (4) Marriage and Family Counseling, (5) Marriage and Family Counseling Topics, (6) Problems and Procedures, (7) Medical Issues and Biblical Counseling and Psychotropic Drugs, and (9) Observation and Practicum. The 30HDC curriculum was developed over a period of five weeks and then submitted to an expert panel for examination and recommendation.⁵ The expert panel was comprised of pastors who have completed the SMTI two-year program, some of whom are certified with ACBC. These individuals were well-suited to examine the 30HDC course because they were familiar with Wayne Mack's course material. After I received the evaluation instrument (see appendix 2) from the expert panel, their recommendations were considered and adjustments and revisions were made to the title and course content. The first goal was considered a success because the course material reflects the unique nature of Wayne Mack's life's work applied to an African context, and because 100 percent of the evaluators found the material to be satisfactory. The material was presented on July 1, 2022.

⁵ See appendix 2.

The second goal was to administer surveys to the students prior to presenting the Thirty-Hour Discipleship and Counseling course and after completing the course. The DCQ consisted of forty-five statements.⁶ It was presented as a pre-course survey as an important diagnostic tool to assess the students' understanding of various topics related to biblical counseling before the 30HDC course was presented. The pre-course survey also provided a vehicle to measure the change in knowledge that occurred during the presentation of the 30HDC course. Thirty-eight students completed the DCQ satisfactorily before the onset of the class. This second goal was reached through the assessment of the students' understanding of discipleship and counseling through the administration of the DCQ pre-course and post-course surveys.

The third goal was to analyze the data collected from both surveys to verify the extent to which the thirty-hour training sessions increased student knowledge in terms of their worldview about biblical discipleship and counseling. The information gathered from both DCQ surveys showed the extent to which the 30HDC sessions increased student knowledge. The instrumentation chosen for the survey was the Likert Scale, which assigned a value to each part of the scale. Each statement in the DCQ allowed for six possible options: strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, strongly agree.⁷

The DCQ post-course survey allowed me to see statistical changes that transpired through the class sessions compared to the DCQ pre-course survey. The measurement for the survey was a *t*-test with one tail to evaluate the significant changes. With the sample size of the survey being thirty, and assuming a population mean of zero change from the pre-course survey to the post survey, the *t*-value was calculated to be 3.170868 and the value of *p* was 8.18811e-07 according to calculations, the results were

⁶ See appendix 1.

⁷ 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 this ministry project.

considered significant considering $p < 0.01$. The null hypothesis can be rejected with confidence.

The pre-course survey and post-course survey were precisely the same; therefore, both were scored by the same method. The survey had a total of forty-five statements, with each statement calculated to be worth 2.22 percent of the total percentage of the survey. The questions were categorized into six main categories: (1) anthropology, (2) biblical counseling, (3) the church, (4) the Scriptures, (5) psychology, and (6) cross-cultural counseling. Table 1 shows the six categories of statements that were used in the the DCQ. The DCQ was handed out as a pre-course survey and a post-course survey.

Table 1. Statement categories with statement numbers

Anthropology	12, 14, 24, 25
Biblical Counseling	7, 9, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45
The Church	4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 33
The Scriptures	1, 2, 3, 5, 16, 18, 31, 34
Psychology	13, 15, 17, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40
Cross-Cultural Counseling	19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27

Table 2 outlines the statistical data related to the pre-course and post-course surveys administered to the 30HDC students. There was a standard deviation in the pre-course survey of 19.40268971 and a variance of 376.4643678.

Table 3 shows a standard deviation in the post-course survey as 17.94451858, which had a variance of 322.0057471.

Table 2. Pre-course survey with sample size of thirty

Mean Score	187.5333333
Mean %	83.34814815
Sample Size	30
Sum Σx :	5626
Variance, σ^2 :	376.4643678
Standard Deviation σ :	19.40268971
SEM (Standard Error of Mean):	3.542430276
Sum of Squares:	10917.46667
Mean Absolute Deviation (MAD):	14.9

Table 3. Post-course survey with sample size of thirty

Mean Score	202.8333333
Mean %	90.14814815
Sample Size	30
Sum Σx :	6085
Variance, σ^2 :	322.0057471
Standard Deviation σ :	17.94451858
SEM (Standard Error of Mean):	3.27620587
Sum of Squares:	9338.166667
Mean Absolute Deviation (MAD):	13.4

The pre-course survey mean was 187.53 points out of a total of 225 points, which calculates to 83.35 percent. The post-course survey mean rose to 202.833 out of 225, which calculates to 90.14814815 percent. The overall mean showed a considerable improvement of 6.8 percent. This percentage rise indicates a positive change in the understanding of the 30HDC students after the curriculum was taught.

Evaluation of Project Strengths

The first strength of the project was seen after the post-course survey was tallied and compared to the pre-course survey. A student with no prior biblical counseling training got a score of 100 percent in statements related to the Scriptures and biblical counseling. This strength indicated that the material related to the sufficiency of Scripture and biblical counseling was able to convince students of theological and anthropological errors and help them to replace error with truth.

The second strength was seen when a significant number of students who initially had no interest in being certified expressed their desire to be certified with ACBC after the 30HDC course was presented. Because of the emphasis placed on the need for certified counselors in Africa, students realized the need in their church context, and therefore communicated their interest in pursuing certification with ACBC. This change can be attributed to the study material that highlighted the danger of secular counseling and cultural beliefs that can easily override biblical principles in the discipleship and counseling process. This class response affirmed SMTI as a training center that exists to help Christians be certified as biblical counselors in places where compromise has occurred. This was an encouragement because students became convinced from the Word regarding their responsibility to serve in the context God has placed them.

A third strength was uncovered when two full-time pastors who attended the 30HDC course expressed their desire to equip their elders with the 30HDC. The 30HDC course places emphasis on the philosophical dangers of secular counseling, the influence of cultural beliefs, and the differences between Christian and biblical counseling, which showed these two pastors the need to train their leaders. To assist the two pastors to do training in their churches, recordings of the 30HDC course were made available on the student platform, and permission was granted to use the recorded classes in their leadership training. The desire of pastors to educate their co-elders and congregations indicates that the 30HDC material is not only suitable for SMTI students, but for all

believers in local churches because its main emphasis is in line with the task of the church: discipling God's people.

A fourth strength of the curriculum was that students received an overview of biblical counseling worldview, methods, theology, and practice. The 30HDC course highlighted the deficiency in many churches that neglect person-focused counseling. It also emphasized the importance of a counseling ministry existing alongside biblical teaching and preaching ministries (Col 1:28). The course's emphasis on the importance of a biblical philosophy of ministry was noted by many students who expressed the need to align their current church philosophy with a biblical model (Acts 20:17-35).

A fifth strength was that many LBC members participated in the 30HDC course training. Their interest showed that after many years of teaching about biblical counseling, many members have become convinced of the importance of training. Many have expressed a desire to be certified in order to serve as counselors at LBC's counseling center. This meant that SMTI is viewed by church members as an integral part of LBC's ministries. This also indicates that LBC members have already been convinced of the importance of working with their leadership in establishing LBC as a training center. This project helped solidify the biblical concept that churches exist to equip pastors and church members in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture.

Evaluation of Project Weaknesses and Proposed Changes

Though the project had many strengths, some weaknesses were noted. The data collected from the pre-course and post-course surveys indicated that a significant increase in understanding biblical discipleship and counseling principles took place during the 30HDC course. The collected data provided important information that could assist in making the 30HDC course more suitable for an African context. To improve the course, particular clarity should be given to the following issues.

The first weakness of the course was a failure to highlight the differences that exist between an African and an American context. The 30HDC course should highlight these differences and help students recognize the differences in the students notes, recommended books, and observation videos. Students who read prescribed books by American authors should be helped to identify biblical principles while recognizing the application for an American culture. After extracting the biblical principle, they should ask what the implications will be if the biblical principle were applied to an African context. While differences exist between cultures, biblical principles remain the same for all cultures.

The second observed weakness was the failure to highlight the unique cultural diversity that exists among South African cultures. While the 30HDC course could not sufficiently address all the varied differences that exist between different cultural groups in Southern Africa, great effort can be made to address some differences that exist among various tribes in future classes. The weakness can be resolved if African case studies that consider the African context are recorded and used in class. The in-class discussion around these contextualized case studies can provide valuable information on the differences that exist among different ethnicities. The information gathered can be incorporated into the lecture notes.

The third weakness was the lack of confidence and willingness to communicate biblical principles to counselees who hold to secular and cultural beliefs and practices. Many students are fearful of pointing out wrong beliefs and customs to people belonging to other cultures. In-class interaction with African topics from a biblical perspective will be a useful way to help counselors understand what the Scripture has to say about the beliefs that underly these customs. Further, time can be spent considering the methodology that would make cross-cultural confrontation of sin productive. The information about customs and their underlying beliefs along with a contextualized methodology can help future students learn to interact with other cultures.

A Southern African data base that lists African customs and the beliefs that uphold them should be made available to students. Further, developing a local methodology of African issues would improve the receptivity of biblical counseling principles as a whole. The development of such a resource will truly bring biblical counseling to Africa. This resource, with its culturally specific information would not only highlight the differences existing between different cultural groups but also increase the success rate of cross-cultural counseling in Southern Africa.

The fourth weakness of this project was seen in the danger of addressing complex issues such as, Ubuntu Theology, in a superficial way in class. This was due to the volume of course material that must be taught to meet the minimum ACBC certification requirements. To resolve this issue of superficiality, an additional ten hours of pre-recorded classes on crucial theological issues could be uploaded on the student platform. These additional class hours could be observed as pre-class assignments so that more time could be allocated during class to discussions, teaching, and answering questions about culturally specific issues. Such a change to the 30HDC course could deepen the students' comprehension of biblical counseling and culturally specific issues.

The fifth weakness of this project was the vast distances and limited resources of students to get to the training center. Many students were unable to travel to South Africa to attend the 30HDC course in person. Several students from Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, and Cameroon could only attend the classes virtually. Students who were unable to attend class will remain unknown by the lecturers of SMTI. This means that the character of foreign students cannot be personally assessed, their doctrinal beliefs cannot be evaluated, and their church affiliation cannot be known. The inability to evaluate international students is a weakness of the program and allows for many individuals who belong to cults to be in attendance. This can create a situation in which members of a cult promote themselves as biblical counselors and therefore mislead people in their communities and affect the reputation of biblical counseling and ACBC in Africa

negatively. To overcome this problem, SMTI could have an extensive application process or limit its teaching to South African students who can easily be assessed. SMTI could also make use of past SMTI students to establish learning centers where students can be evaluated. Another way to solve this weakness is by requesting that all international students travel to South Africa to attend classes in person. Further, this issue of distance highlights the need for more ACBC certified training centers. It also highlights the need for ACBC to be more aware of the possible pitfalls that African training centers face.

Theological Reflections

The mind of Christ regarding discipleship and counseling is clearly revealed in the progressive nature of the Bible. Man, created in the likeness of God, is the only legitimate representative of God on earth. To represent God, man was created as being in need of divine counsel so that he could represent God accurately. The divine counsel of God, rightly understood and accurately applied, is the basis for biblical living in the world in which God placed man. This calling of God was severely interrupted when man fell from his lofty position before God because of sin. Despite the fall and effects of sin, on man, he is made to live by the knowledge that is from God. The knowledge of God is opposed to the secular ideas and ideals of man's wisdom (Jas 3:17). This is the basis of God's understanding of discipleship and counseling. Consequently, every discipleship and training program must be carefully weighed against the Word of God. All discipleship and counseling training stands or falls by the presuppositional certainties revealed through the revelation provided by God (Ps 19). This project confirmed again that the Scriptures alone can revive the soul, make the simple wise, rejoice the downcast, enlighten those who lack wisdom, restore the soul of the believer, and warn the servant so that he may discern his errors (Ps 19:7-12). This project also highlighted the foolishness of persuasive arguments, captivating philosophies, empty deceptions, man-made traditions, and the elementary principles of the world that have invaded biblical discipling and counseling (Col 2:4-8). This project affirmed that the job description of the pastor is to disciple his

people by closing the door to secular descriptions of man, the cause of man's problems, and how to resolve them. The project highlighted the importance of shepherds instructing their flocks in a deep understanding of a biblical anthropology by teaching the presuppositional truths of Scripture and by exposing erroneous secular descriptions of man. Further, pastors must solidify the authority of Scripture in their discipling and counseling ministries by demonstrating the usefulness of Scripture, exposing the subpar methods of change and describing the attempts made by integrated approaches to counseling to blur the dividing lines between secular and sacred. This essential teaching remains the privilege and responsibility of the elders in every local church that seeks to prepare its members to live life in a world that has rejected God's ordinances. It is also essential that certified training centers like SMTI provide excellent resources to those who desire training to become more effective in discipleship and counseling.

Many seminaries in Southern Africa have failed to teach a biblical anthropology and biblical theology simultaneously. Many of these institutions have willingly yielded to the theories and methods of secular counseling approaches. Many training organizations seek to merge a biblical theology with a secular anthropology, which results in mass confusion around pastoral counseling. Similarly, churches followed this trend because they were introduced to integrated views of counseling by pastors who had been trained in integrated pastor care and discipleship. This sad situation calls for a reformation in the area of human psyche through biblical discipleship and counseling training. This project highlighted the need for seminaries in Africa to take a deliberate stance in rejecting the blending of biblical theology with secular anthropology in educating pastors. It is essential for theological training to provide an education that places biblical theology classes next to biblical anthropology training to ensure a truly biblical pastoral care program. Promoting biblical theology alongside a biblical anthropology will remove confusion regarding counseling and help theology students understand their God-given responsibility to counsel their congregants from the Word. The 30HDC course could be

used as an introductory course at seminaries who want to replace counseling courses that are integrated or secular.

Personal Reflections

When looking back over my ministry, I am filled with thankfulness to God for allowing me to be exposed to biblical counseling early on. I began my training in 2005 when I attended the first biblical counseling classes presented in South Africa by Wayne Mack. My training with Mack, and my relocation to Pretoria where I served as an elder with him, was all part of God's plan for calling me to teach the Word. I see my years working with Mack at LBC as God's greater plan to develop me so that I might make some small contribution to introducing Africans to biblical counseling.

The difficulties that confronted the LBC elders over the years as we sought to train congregants in the sufficiency of Scripture exposed us to many questions that were great learning opportunities. This process of teaching and training a church, that largely believed the right kind of preaching would be sufficient to change people, was the best learning opportunity for a young pastor. These difficulties, which often appeared as inconveniences, came in the form of arguments and attacks against the Word of God. The responses that came from the elders had to be formulated from the Word and described to a congregation in an African context. The elders witnessed how God used these opportunities to learn how biblical counseling would work in an African context. The successes that God gave and the failures we created served as the best training ground for this project. The 30HDC course developed for this project is a combination and culmination of many hours spent teaching, reflecting, defending, discussing, and applying the Scriptures.

As elders, we not only trained students through the SMTI program in how to be effective biblical counselors, but we also sought to incorporate preaching, teaching, and counseling into a workable philosophy of ministry that would drive ministry at LBC. The church we were shepherding was not completely on board with the biblical counseling

views held by the elders at LBC. It has been hard work convincing the church of the necessity of preaching, teaching, and counseling as part of a biblical philosophy of ministry because many South African Reformed Baptists tend to have a low view of counseling, often viewing it as unnecessary and only beneficial for those who have serious problems. The years spent working toward this philosophy of ministry were often filled with criticism from both inside and outside the church. The lessons learned during those hard years have not only been woven into this 30HDC course, but they have given practical illustrations for how to introduce biblical counseling into the local church in Africa. Three people were present in the task. Two of those people were mere men who worked well together at establishing biblical counseling: Mack and myself. Then there was the Lord, who despite our weaknesses and failures worked in us and through us to achieve His purposes. He preserved us and helped us persevere in taking the next steps of obedience toward establishing what God had called us to.

The philosophy of ministry held by SMTI, consisting of preaching, teaching, and counseling as explained in several places in Scripture has become the integrated philosophy of ministry at LBC (Acts 20; Col 1:28). The LBC congregation has been convinced from Scripture regarding the interrelatedness between preaching, teaching, and counseling. The ministerial outwork of this philosophy has produced a congregation who is not only convinced of biblical discipleship and counseling but is the driving force behind SMTI as a ministry of LBC.

When considering the future, I realize that a foundation for the advancement of biblical counseling in an African context has been established. The time has come for Africans to advance the work in Africa. The 30HDC course can play an important part of the advancement of biblical counseling because, while it serves to introduce Christians to the effective way of counseling, it also convinces Christians of the usefulness of Scripture and ineffectiveness of secular and cultural approaches to solving problems. Those who

are thus convinced of the reliability of Scripture may consider seeking advanced biblical Counseling training through SMTI.

I pray that this 30HDC course, however small, will play a role in challenging error and contributing to a solid, biblical foundation of soul care on the African continent. Africa has been plagued by many false doctrines in the past but the recent rise of secular ideas and the ideals of psychology in universities has become mainstream, and psychologists and Christian counselors have become the preferred place where pastors send congregant to solve their spiritual problems. The use of secular therapeutic approaches is well-established and practiced in many churches on the African continent. My prayer is that this 30HDC course that is designed for an African context may serve as a beacon of light in a dark place. My prayer is that through the SMTI training many Christians will become committed to the sufficiency of Scripture and the immense source of hope found in its pages. Further, this 30HDC course presented by SMTI may reach Christians in far off places in Southern Africa. Those in remote places can utilize SMTI learning centers that have been established by the SMTI training center to receive their biblical counseling education and be equipped to pursue ACBC certification.

Conclusion

It is with thankfulness to God that there are men and woman in Southern Africa who share the biblical understanding of counseling expressed in this project. LBC members have been convinced and have embraced a philosophy of ministry that includes training biblical counselors. SMTI students have already gained from the development of the 30HDC training course, and they have indicated their desire to be trained in how to use and teach this material to Christians who have been misled to think that Christian counseling can draw from sources outside of Scripture. SMTI has played a major role in establishing certified biblical counselors in Southern Africa. The more than four hundred men and women who have been trained through SMTI are best suited to use the 30HDC

material developed through this project to convince other Christians to be trained in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture.

This project was developed while standing on the shoulders of faithful men who have laid the foundations of biblical counseling. One of these men, Wayne Mack, was the only certified biblical counselor in South Africa for many years. A number of SMTI students have since been certified and many more are in the process of being certified with ACBC. May this project be used by God for His purposes, which are to strengthen the church in Southern Africa.

APPENDIX 1

DISCIPLESHIP AND COUNSELING QUESTIONNAIRE (DCQ)

The SMTI program seeks to strengthen the local church in Southern Africa by training and equipping pastors and other Christians in the theologically accurate and practical use of Scripture in understanding and solving the problems of people, and thus promoting growth in and usefulness for Christ in the church and in the world.

In light of these goals, SMTI seeks to develop a thirty-hour curriculum to train students in the affective use of the Bible in cross-cultural discipleship and counseling. This survey for 30HDC students will help the developer of the course assess the thinking of students both before and after teaching the curriculum.

This DCQ is meant to be used by 30HDC participants from different cultural backgrounds, genders, and Christian traditions as a pre-course and post-course survey.

Agreement to Participate

This research is being conducted by Sybrand de Swardt for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary and individuals are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, participants are providing informed consent for the use of their responses in this project.

It is preferred that participants include their name below rather than completing the survey anonymously. However, if you prefer to be anonymous, please use the last four digits of an identification document or phone number for future reference.

Date: _____

Name (or 4-digit code): _____

Gender _____ Age _____

Denomination _____

Directions: These statements ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD – Strongly Disagree

D – Disagree

SLD – Slightly Disagree

SLA – Slightly Agree

A – Agree

SA – Strongly Agree

5. Biblical discipleship is clearly commanded in Scripture.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

6. Biblical counseling is clearly commanded in Scripture.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

7. According to Scripture, pastors are instructed to preach, teach, evangelize, counsel, and pray.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

8. According to Scripture, every church should be a *counseling* center.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

9. According to Scripture, counseling is equally as important to the church as preaching and teaching.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

10. It is vitally important for a church to offer biblical discipleship and counseling training to its members.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

11. Female biblical counselors must be equipped and willing to counsel men.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

12. Biblical counseling and discipleship are not the responsibility of all believers.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

13. Biblical counseling is a form of discipleship that has a definite beginning date and end date.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

14. Biblical discipleship is not a lifelong process for every believer.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

15. Discipleship and counseling are the responsibilities of both pastors and believers.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

16. A comprehensive and accurate description of man is formulated by integrating the beliefs of psychology, culture, and the Bible.

SD D SLD SLA A SA

17. Since “all truth is God’s truth,” the discoveries of secular counselors are part of God’s provision to help Christians.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
18. Medical doctors are trained to solve physical problems, psychologists are trained to solve soul problems, and pastors are trained to solve spiritual problems.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
19. Psychological terms are the correct way to describe the spiritual problems Christians encounter.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
20. The discoveries of secular counselors and cultural beliefs are part of general revelation.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
21. The medical model for describing mental issues, such as depression, is beneficial in helping counselees.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
22. The Bible is not enough (sufficient) to solve our non-physical problems.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
23. Cross-cultural discipleship and counseling will be effective where trust relationships exist.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
24. Culture alone defines a person’s identity.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
25. Biblical counsellors can only effectively counsel counselees from their own ethnic and cultural background
SD D SLD SLA A SA
26. According to Scripture, counselors can effectively counsel Christian counselees from different ethnicities and cultures.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
27. According to Scripture, certain ethnicities are more superior to other ethnicities.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
28. Generational curses are the cause of destructive spiritual problems in born again believers.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
29. Demons in born again believers will hinder them from resolving deep hurts from the past.
SD D SLD SLA A SA

30. Circumstances are not the cause of sinful responses, but they play a contributing factor.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
31. Neglecting the customs of forefathers will have serious implications for individuals and their communities.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
32. A person's thinking reflects his or her personal beliefs and will result in behavior.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
33. A Christian can repent of sinful emotions.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
34. A person's unfulfilled desires will lead to certain emotions.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
35. According to Scripture, all behavior is a manifestation of heart content and processes.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
36. Changed behavior is the end result of changed thoughts and beliefs, emotions, desires, and commitments.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
37. The integration of secular ideas, cultural beliefs, and scriptural truths are essential components for a comprehensive biblical discipleship and counseling training program.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
38. According to Scripture, believers should not integrate cultural beliefs with biblical truth to live peacefully in a secular society.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
39. Psychologists and pastors should work together in counseling because they have their own field of expertise.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
40. Serious psychological problems such as schizophrenia, anxiety, and ADHD can only be successfully counseled by secular counselors.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
41. Serious psychological problems such as schizophrenia, anxiety, and ADHD can be successfully healed by psychotropic drugs.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
42. The goal of biblical counseling is to assist counselees in becoming better versions of themselves.
SD D SLD SLA A SA

43. Attending secular therapy and biblical counseling concurrently will ensure comprehensive and successful treatment of nonphysical problems.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
44. All counseling approaches—secular, integrated, or biblical—are acceptable as long as they are able to solve spiritual problems.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
45. Biblical counseling exclusively aims to change sinful behavioral patterns.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
46. Biblical counseling helps Christians assimilate the beliefs of secular counseling.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
47. Gathering information from counselees promotes biblical change by securing enough of the right kind of information to accurately understand the counselee and his/her problems.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
48. Biblical counselors must seek to mentor the willing counselees until the necessary changes are integrated into his or her life.
SD D SLD SLA A SA
49. Biblical change is not a process, but instantaneous.
SD D SLD SLA A SA

APPENDIX 2

DISCIPLESHIP AND COUNSELING
CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Name of Evaluator:					Date:
Discipleship and 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 textually sound. Proper exegesis and use of texts was done.					
The curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it sets out to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently interacts with the teachings of the heart processes involved in race, identity, redemption, and suffering.					
Methodology					
The curriculum keeps the connection between theology and practical living by incorporating a variety of learning approaches: illustrations, examples, application, study guides, and discussion.					
Practicality					
At the end of the curriculum, students of SMTI grasp the relation between discipleship and counseling as it relates to Scripture and the way it should operate in the church.					

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A THIRTY-HOUR DISCIPLESHIP AND COUNSELING COURSE FOR STRENGTHENING MINISTRIES TRAINING INSTITUTE IN PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

Sybrand Ferdinand de Swardt, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

The purpose of this project was to develop a thirty-hour ACBC approved discipleship and counseling course for an African context that demonstrates a biblical approach to discipleship and counseling for Strengthening Ministries Training Institute at Lynnwood Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa. Chapter 1 covers the context of SMTI and addresses the goals of the project. Chapter 2 examines several biblical texts, which give the theological basis showing the role of the church in discipling believers. Chapter 3 explains the importance of understanding the diversity of the African context. The chapter further highlights possible approaches that may hinder the assimilation of biblical counseling principles. Chapter 4 discusses the development of the curriculum for the 30HDC course. The chapter also deals with the importance of contextualizing biblical counseling for the African context. Chapter 5 focuses on the results of the pre-course and post-course survey data. This chapter also considers an evaluation of the project's purposes. An evaluation of the project's goals is also addressed and measured by the results of the surveys. Chapter 5 closes with a theological reflection on the project.

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