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EQUIPPING LAY LEADERS OF CAPE BIBLE CHAPEL IN
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI, TO CREATE A
COMMUNITY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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I dedicate this project to my wife Jaime, my daughter Amelia, and my son Sawyer.

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PREFACE

This project was completed in large part due to the endless amount of support I have received from those around me. I will forever be grateful that God blessed me with a wife who is always willing to take on extra work with our kids as I toil over my laptop in my office, for my fellow pastors who listen to my ongoing rambling about my project, and to my supervisor Dr. Jones who provided helpful encouragement in the process and the necessary push in the end to cross the finish line.

My hope and prayer is that God uses this project to strengthen the community of my present church and help encourage similar growth in other church communities for years to come.

Benjamin Beswick

Cape Girardeau, Missouri

December 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cape Bible Chapel (CBC) seeks to be a gospel-centered community of worshippers on mission to make and multiply disciples of Christ in our neighborhoods, among the nations, and of the next generation. The execution of this vision is foundationally tied to the concept of providing a true *community* of believers that are able to reach out and minister to the surrounding world. Encouraging that type of environment requires developing the types of relationships found in every true community. To help encourage the church in that direction, it is essential for church leaders to be equipped in the building up and protection of those relationships both in times of relative ease as well as in times of relational trials found in every church context.

Context

The purpose of this project is to equip key lay leaders of Cape Bible Chapel in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to create a community of counseling. The development of a community characterized by growing relationships amongst its members is essential to the fulfillment of CBC's vision to be a "gospel-centered community of worshipers of Jesus Christ who seek to make disciples of the neighborhoods, the nations, and the next generation."

As a church, CBC has numerous strengths that help in building a desired community of disciples. One primary strength is the team of committed lay leaders serving in a number of different contexts. Central to the present shepherding within the church and key to this project are the church's elders and small group leaders. These individuals are the lay leaders in focus for the sake of this project due to their high level

of involvement and their present relational connections to many within the church body. These lay leaders are united in the desire to see a community of committed disciples of Jesus Christ built at CBC. As such, each leader possesses a willingness to sacrifice time and personal resources to be of service to their church.

A second yet equally important strength of CBC in the fulfillment of its goal is an ongoing focus given to the authority of Scripture. That authority is most apparent in the weekly exposition of God's Word that is heard both from the pulpit as well as in weekly Sunday School classes. This focus on God's Word has always been central in the mindset of the leadership of CBC and is generally embraced by its members. While this focus on Scripture still falls short in ways that will soon be addressed, its presence already provides a foundational trust in the Bible that is essential in assuring the development of a lasting community and in introducing a culture of biblical counseling.

For many years CBC has sought to develop the desired community through its lay leaders and through their ongoing focus on the preaching of the Word. Despite their consistent efforts, however, the desired community has been difficult to develop. In the place of that desired community of relationally connected believers stands a general culture of privacy and individualism within the congregation. This context stems from three foundational weaknesses.

The first weakness stems from the larger cultural context of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. In a city where many residents live just down the street of their childhood home and within a few miles of many extended family members, there is an understandable level of concern over the potential of personal struggles becoming known and reflecting poorly upon their family. In this cultural context, both regular church members as well as key ministry leaders are prone to keep all personal matters behind closed doors.

To overcome these cultural tendencies is, of course, no small task. In order to do this, the church must address a second weakness. That second weakness is a generally narrow understanding of the nature of a church community as it is revealed in Scripture.

This is seen both in the relatively little attention given by many to the biblical concept of relationships between believers and in many members' understanding of the Bible's application within a variety of everyday struggles.

Initially, this narrow understanding is surprising in light of the general attention that is given to the study of the Bible. All of the lay leaders addressed in this project are already able to articulate a biblical understanding of a variety of theological doctrines. Despite this ability, however, many of those same leaders still struggle to apply Scripture to common struggles such as marital disputes, depression, and other common trials seen within any church body. Ultimately, this common struggle amongst the church's key lay leaders is tied to one final primary weakness.

That third and final weakness is a lack of understanding the concept of biblical counseling. As it currently stands, most members and lay leaders do not connect the practice of counseling to biblical theology. Instead, when responding to any common struggle, many of our leaders are prone to draw from the messages and practices concerning counseling from their secular society. Central to that practice is the assumption that struggles that require any level of counseling ought to be taken to professionally trained individuals. Thus, even our highly competent key ministry leaders operate under the assumption that they lack the ability to offer counsel to any of those under their care. This hesitancy does not stem from a lack of love for the people. Rather, it appears to stem from a belief that providing others with counsel in personal matters is far more complex than anything they already provide as leaders.

When members of a church possess neither a proper understanding of community nor biblical counseling and when the lay leaders who have the opportunity to speak into the lives of those under their care choose to refrain from doing so due to a feeling of inadequacy, the inevitable result is that problems within the body will remain unresolved and will persist. This persistence, of course, only furthers the already existing assumption that personal problems are best to keep behind closed doors and away from

fellow believers. As those problems remain hidden and as church members maintain the general culture of personal independence, the resulting community is one marked not by genuine relationships but by coexistence.

To help overcome this culture of coexistence and the failure of that community, I hope to train key lay leaders in the skill of biblical counseling. As those skills are acquired, our already active ministry leaders will both learn more about the biblical concept of community and develop abilities that can be utilized within the context of developing and encouraging deeper relationships throughout our church body.

Rationale

The community that Cape Bible Chapel desires is essential to the execution of its overall vision and, more importantly, to the fulfillment of the New Testament model of the local church as a unified body of believers (Eph 4:15-16). Yet, as it currently stands, that community is hindered by the overall lack of depth found in relationships within CBC. In those commonly shallow relationships, the commands for Christian unity and for believers to lovingly carry one another's burdens cannot be obeyed (Gal 6:1-2). Fulfilling this command requires believers to suffer alongside one another and willingly make sacrifices to help ease the burdens of our brothers and sisters.¹ Suffering alongside fellow believers requires a certain level of maturity and empathy. The practice of biblical counseling is one in which that ability is addressed. Thus, by equipping lay leaders within the body of the church, this project will help ensure the fulfillment of that calling in three vitally important ways.

Equipping CBC's key lay leaders to counsel those under their care from the Word of God will, first of all, further develop their understanding and application of God's Word. We are told that God's Word is sufficient for all that God has called us to

¹ Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press), 129.

do as believers (2 Tim 3:16-17). This sufficiency must be appreciated both in terms of doctrine as well as in practical concerns in daily life. As lay leaders are trained in biblical counseling, they will be reminded of that sufficiency, and they will be able to also pass that understanding along to all of those under their care.

Equipping these leaders for biblical counseling will also empower the church's leaders to accomplish the tasks they are commanded to follow in Scripture and that they have already volunteered to complete (1 Pet 5:1-3). Whether it is in the position of elder or leading a small group, these individuals have been given the task to minister to individuals under their care. While these leaders have proven themselves as competent teachers of the Word in their present service, they have also professed a sense of inadequacy to minister to those facing common trials.² This inability severely diminishes CBC's leaders' ability to minister to needs that consistently surface in any given ministry. This, of course, not only fails to uphold the sufficiency of Scripture, but it also further discourages the development of deeper relationships between congregants and their leaders. Thus, by providing leaders with an increased ability to counsel, the church will equip its leaders with the necessary tools to fulfill their task and will help further assist the growth of a relationally connected community.

Finally, as this project seeks to better equip leaders to minister to those under their care, it will also help ensure that problems within the church body do not continue to grow in complexity and in destructive tendencies. As congregants begin to see a growth in the willingness and ability of their leaders to help address everyday struggles, they will hopefully express a greater willingness to seek out help sooner rather than later

² The shared sense of inadequacy to offer biblical counsel has been consistently communicated by lay elders in monthly elder meetings. In recent years, there has been a growing desire to encourage increased support for attendance at counseling training conferences as well as a desire to provide more training opportunities at Cape Bible Chapel.

in their struggle. It is the hope of this project, then, that the training of leaders will lead to a faster process of identifying and addressing problems within the body.

As a result of giving this group of lay leaders a more developed understanding of Scripture, equipping them with the necessary abilities to properly recognize needs within the body, and giving them the skills necessary to address those needs before they begin to spiral out of control, there will ultimately be a newly found normalcy in biblical counseling conversations and practice. As those conversations increase and as more individuals within CBC find help from their newly equipped leaders, those issues that had once stunted the growth of community can be handled and removed and the ultimate vision of CBC can be successfully executed.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the key lay leaders of Cape Bible Chapel in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to create a community of biblical counseling.

Goals

The following goals were designed to help ensure the ultimate success of training key ministry leaders and implement their training within their current area of leadership.

1. The first goal was to assess the willingness and abilities to counsel in Cape Bible Chapel's current elders and small group leaders.
2. The second goal was to develop a basic Sunday School curriculum for biblical counseling training within the context of eldership and small group ministry.
3. The third goal was to equip ministry leaders through the teaching of the curriculum designed in the second goal.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to implement the training ministry leaders have received into their ministry contexts.

Research Methodology

Four goals were used to determine the successful completion and success of this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of skill and understanding of biblical counseling among the selected ministry leaders. This goal was considered completed when each ministry leader completed the assessment and all gathered data was analyzed in a way that gave a clearer picture of the current level of biblical counseling skills.

The second goal was to develop Sunday School curriculum for biblical counseling training. This curriculum was intended to provide an introductory level presentation of the need for lay leaders, the history of biblical counseling, the foundational doctrines relevant to biblical counseling, and the practice of biblical counseling. The curriculum addressed areas including marriage, parenting, and other issues commonly seen within our present counseling ministry. This goal was measured by an expert panel that utilized a rubric to evaluate the scope, biblical faithfulness, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level of competency.

The third goal was to equip ministry leaders through the teaching of the eight-week, eight-hour curriculum designed in the second goal. This goal was measured by a pre- and post-survey that measured the leader's knowledge of biblical counseling and confidence to apply what they have learned. Additionally, those already involved in the counseling ministry of CBC were to observe our newly trained leaders in practice counseling sessions in which their ability to address common counseling concerns was observed. This goal was considered successfully met when every ministry completed the designed curriculum and demonstrated an increased level of understanding and competency in the practices of biblical counseling.

The fourth and final goal was to develop a ministry plan to implement the training that lay leaders received into their ministry contexts. This final goal was measured by a panel of current CBC pastors and elders as well as biblical counselors who used a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, the communication processes, and the actions steps. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.³

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain key terms used throughout this ministry project were defined to aid in the reader's understanding of the project's overall aim.

Community. In their work *The Compelling Community*, Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop define community within a local church as “a togetherness and commitment we experience that transcends all natural bonds—because of our commonality in Jesus Christ.”⁴ The community that is sought within the context of the local church, then, requires both a genuine relationship shared between members who love and care for one another and a shared commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lay leaders. This project focused on the training of lay leaders who were serving as small group leaders and elders. The small group ministry of CBC consists of groups of four to twenty people who regularly gather together outside of our weekly Sunday morning worship for the purpose of Bible study, fellowship, and general encouragement. Each group is facilitated by one to two small group leaders who serve as hosts and discussion leaders. These groups are a highly valued aspect of our church body believed to be an ideal context for the ongoing work of sanctification in the life of the

³ 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.

⁴ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 13.

believer.⁵ The role of the elders at CBC is shaped by the New Testament passages in which the qualifications and work of elders is described (1 Tim 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8).⁶ In the context of CBC, the men serving in this office are treated as the general overseers of the congregation.

Biblical counseling. The concept and general practice of biblical counseling is defined by Dale Johnson and Samuel Stephens as “the personal discipleship ministry of God’s people to others under the oversight of God’s church, dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God’s Word through the work of the Holy Spirit.”⁷ This particular definition is helpful to this project first in its clarity regarding the biblical content that is foundational to the type of counseling in focus. It also succeeds in placing the practice of biblical counseling within context of a personal relationships, which is central to our goal of building a church community.

Two delimitations were applied to the scope of this project. First, the training offered in biblical counseling was targeted primarily at those defined as elders and small group leaders. It was believed that these particular leaders provided the most strategic entry points into the body of CBC and, therefore, held the most potential in helping encourage the growth of the community that CBC desires. Second, the curriculum developed for the purpose of training CBC elders and small group leaders was condensed into an eight-week format. While additional training was considered at the conclusion of this project, it was believed that an eight-week format is best for the purpose of initial training within the context of Sunday School class due the fact that it could be provided

⁵ C. J. Mahaney, “Why Small Groups,” in *Why Small Groups*, ed. C. J. Mahaney (Gaithersburg, MD: Sovereign Grace Ministries, 1996), 3.

⁶ Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19-30.

⁷ Dale Johnson and Samuel Stephens, “The Nature of Biblical Counseling,” July 20, 2020, in *Truth in Love Podcast*, episode 267, produced by Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, audio, 19:36, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/podcast-episodes/the-nature-of-biblical-counseling>.

in the course of one summer and would provide little interruption to the other ongoing Sunday School studies.

Conclusion

Equipping lay leaders of CBC is central in ensuring the development of the church's community of believers. Developing that community important to the successful execution of CBC's vision as well as the command given to God's people throughout both the Old and New Testaments. In the following chapters we will see the nature and requirements of community for God's people, the role of biblical counseling in building that community, and the practical steps needed to equip lay leaders for biblical counseling specifically within the community of CBC.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
EQUIPPING LAY LEADERS OF CAPE
BIBLE CHAPEL FOR BIBLICAL
COUNSELING

The purpose of this project was to train lay leaders at Cape Bible Chapel for biblical counseling for the purpose of creating the community commanded in Scripture and described in CBC's mission statement. Chapter 1 described the context in which this training was accomplished as well as the challenges stood in the way. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it is to show how the nature and necessity of community in every individual believer's life demonstrate the necessity of using lay leaders to carry the burdens of ministry in order to maintain the health of that community. Second, it is to demonstrate the ability of and the necessary means by which those lay leaders are able to specifically help carry the load of biblical counseling within the community.

To establish a clear picture of community and demonstrate the usefulness of biblical counseling within that community, we will examine four biblical texts. First, Hebrews 10:19-25 will establish the nature and necessary role of biblical community in the life of every believer as they fulfill their calling. Second, Exodus 18:13-26 will show us the importance of using a plurality of leaders within the community to ensure that the problems common within the community are addressed without overwhelming leadership. Third, Romans 15:14 will then demonstrate the ability of all believers to play an important role in providing that help. Fourth, to establish the foundation from which all counseling knowledge will be gleaned, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 will demonstrate the sufficiency of Scripture for equipping lay counselors.

Biblical Community Is Essential to Christian Obedience (Heb 10:19-25)

Maintaining a healthy community of believers in the local church setting is an essential part of a believer's obedience. While the role of corporate life may be easily overlooked by some, the author of Hebrews, in Hebrews 10:19-25, reminds us that maintaining proper fellowship with one another is essential to remaining in the faith. To understand his argument for the necessity of community and to see how he comes to that conclusion, it is important to first see the community's foundational connection to the earlier work of Jesus Christ, as it is highlighted in Hebrews 10:19-23, and then to show the role that the community plays in encouraging the ongoing growth that comes as a result of Christ's work.

Christ's Blood Is the Foundation for the Believer's Confidence (Heb 10:19-22)

The foundational connection between the community depicted in verses 24-25 and the work of Christ can immediately be seen in the first exhortation, in verse 19, in which believers are commanded to draw near to God.

The language of 10:19 is very similar to the language of 4:14-16, where the author also speaks of the need to approach the throne of God. What follows that earlier exhortation is a thorough explanation of Christ's work as our High Priest. It appears that based on the similarity of language in both passages, 10:19-23 is intended to be read as the close of the *inclusio* that spans chapters 4-10.¹ Just as the *inclusio* begins with a reference to Christ's work, so too does the conclusion as it speaks to the basis for believers' ability to approach God's throne. In the passage before us (10:19-22), two particular aspects of Christ's work are highlighted as the basis by which believers are

¹ George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 240.

able to approach God with confidence. The first of those aspects is the atoning death of Christ.

The atoning death of Christ, which is the work cited in the author's reference to Christ's blood, is that work which inaugurated a new path to the Father. This inauguration, which is explained earlier in Hebrews (i.e., 9:19-22), was affected by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.² By that death, we are told, believers are now granted access to God. This access, however, is different from the access granted to a select few under the old covenant. Unlike that old covenant, which only allowed priests to enter into the temple, the new covenant, which is established by the blood of Jesus Christ, provides all believers today confidence to enter into the direct presence of God.³

The confidence of believers to come before God, however, is not only secured by the past atoning work of Christ; it is also maintained by the ongoing work of Jesus Christ as our High Priest. That ongoing work is highlighted in Hebrews 10:21: Jesus now serves as the High Priest over the "household" of God. That "household" is the same community of God's people that is exhorted throughout verses 19-23.⁴ Yet again, then, we see Christ's work applying to all believers and not just a select class of priests. Anyone covered by Christ's sacrifice and represented by Christ daily as their High Priest enjoys these benefits and can enter daily into God's presence.

As a result of this past and ongoing work of Christ, then, believers are able to not only approach God's throne but also do so with complete confidence, knowing that they are continually pure in the eyes of God.

² Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 367.

³ Philip Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 407.

⁴ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 366.

Draw Near with Unwavering Faith (Heb 10:23)

Having established the foundation of believers' confidence before the Father that comes through the past, present, and ongoing work of Christ, the author of Hebrews now speaks to the need for believers to hold fast to their confession of hope.

Holding fast to something speaks to the idea of holding “unswervingly” or clinging tightly onto something already gained.⁵ Paul uses similar language as he encourages the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 15:2, to hold fast to the word of the gospel already preached. The author of Hebrews uses the same imagery and instructs his readers to cling tightly to that which was previously passed down. To better understand the exhortation of Hebrews, we must look at that to which believers holds fast and then at the basis for their obedience.

The object to which believers must cleave is their confession of hope. Unlike Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians, where believers are encouraged to hold fast to a more formal confession defined by Paul in the summary of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, the confession to which the believers addressed by the author of Hebrews are to hold fast describes the broader concept of Christian hope. Throughout Hebrews, “hope” is used to describe the present and future salvation of believers and as a general summary of the entire Christian life.⁶ That hope, which can be seen in other passages (e.g., Heb 6:18-19), is more than a formal confession; it is the person and work of Jesus Christ. To hold fast to our confession of hope, then, is to hold fast to Christ and to persevere in living out the calling he has given to every believer.⁷

The author of Hebrews' call to persevere is weighty, particularly when persecution and other earthly trials are experienced. Such trials were a significant concern

⁵ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 516-17.

⁶ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 368.

⁷ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 414.

to the audience of Hebrews as it appears as if persecution was on the rise. To overcome the trials of this life, then, the call to persevere must be grounded in something truly inspiring.

Similar to the earlier exhortation to confidently draw near to God, the inspiration behind this second exhortation is grounded not in believers' maturity but in the faithful work of Christ. Thus, we read, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (10:23).⁸ As the previously referenced message of 6:18-19 already declared, the readers are only able to hold tightly onto Christ when they realize that Christ has already entered into the inner place as a forerunner on their behalf. Just as it was the case in the first exhortation to draw near to God, so also in this case, believers' additional ability to remain true to God is connected to the faithful work of God.

As Hebrews 10:22 closes, readers are left with these two clear exhortations that both present a practical response to the faithful work of Jesus Christ: (1) draw near to God and (2) remain in his presence daily through obedience. In the final verses before us, we see that the faithful response is one that requires not simply the obedience of an individual but also the obedience of a unified community.

Draw Near as a Community (Heb 10:19-25)

The final exhortation of Hebrews 10:19-25 is the exhortation towards a life of ongoing and mutual encouragement within a community of believers. It is here that the author encourages the application of what he has previously expounded.⁹ In this final exhortation, readers are reminded to take seriously the role of their local community of believers in the fulfillment of the earlier exhortation to hold firm to their faith.

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *ESV*.

⁹ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 405.

The seriousness of the exhortation is felt with the opening words “Let us consider” in verse 24. These words call every believer to carefully direct their minds towards the proceeding command and to focus all of their energy on its execution.¹⁰ This final exhortation directs believers to focus their attention on the active encouragement of the community—rather than to focus their energy on merely doctrinal issues, as we have seen previously.

Believers’ focus is, initially, directed towards how we might “provoke” one another to love and good deeds. The act of “provoking,” as seen in passages such as Acts 15:39, is generally negative in connotation. Here, however, it is used in a positive sense and suggests the activity of actively motivating one another towards love and good deeds. This type of encouragement is far from unique to Hebrews. Throughout the New Testament epistles and particularly in passages such as Ephesians 4:9-16 and Romans 12:1-21, this expression of the faith is an essential cornerstone of authentic Christian community.

The mutual care and the proper provocation cannot be sustained, of course, if those same believers are failing to come together as a community. We see this reality in the final words of our passage as the author commands his readers to “not neglect meeting together” (Heb 10:25). The word translated as “meeting together” is commonly debated as it is unique in the New Testament. It appears to be closely related with the word for “synagogue,” which is used to describe Christian gatherings in passages such as James 2:2. In Hebrews, however, the language is changed slightly to *επισυναγω* and appears to ultimately suggest that a similar type of gathering is in the mind of the author.¹¹ The “fellowship” that Hebrews suggests, then, appears to reference the gathering of a local church. In light of that likely context in the mind of the author, then,

¹⁰ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 369.

¹¹ Craig Koester, *Hebrews*, Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 446.

his final exhortation to maintain fellowship for the purpose of provoking one another towards good deeds is not entirely unlike the exhortation of Proverbs 27:17 in which the author speaks of the role of fellow believers in sharpening one another just as iron sharpens iron.¹² In both passages, as well as in others that also discuss the effects of believers' meeting with one another, it is clear that the act of meeting together must consist of something more than simply receiving a sermon. Rather, during this meeting together, there must be other activities that allow for lay people in the church to encourage, exhort, and provoke their fellow brothers and sisters within their church community.

The importance of that community is essential for the author of Hebrews to emphasize in light of the fact that some believers had begun neglecting the practice of maintaining Christian community. The author does not specify the reason that led to the community's apparent decision to neglect gathering. Based on later chapters of Hebrews, however, it seems likely that their decision was partially motivated by a desire to escape growing persecution.¹³ Regardless of their reason or the difficulties that may arise as a result of consistent fellowship, the author emphasizes the essential role that this gathering plays in their remaining true to the faith and continually coming into the presence of God as they eagerly await his return.

It is that future return that stands as the constant motivation for Christian community, according to Hebrews 10:25, for as the author states, believers are to seek out mutual encouragement increasingly as they continually set their eyes on the final day that is drawing near. That final day, which is equated with the broader concept of the "Day of the Lord," is something of which numerous New Testament authors remind their readers (e.g., Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6). This "Day of the Lord"

¹² Hughes, *Hebrews*, 415.

¹³ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 371.

includes the return of Christ, when the present age will be brought to its conclusion and the new heaven and new earth will finally be established.¹⁴ While no New Testament author knew the specific date or timing of that final day, they used its impending reality as a means of encouraging their readers to remember the importance of persevering and living every day as if it could be their last (Jas 4:14). Within the context of Hebrews 10, it appears that one of the principal applications of this reality is the regular practice of gathering together with fellow believers in community for the purpose of growth and service.

The author's emphasis on the role of community in the fulfillment of every Christian's calling was essential for his audience to appreciate if they were to remain in the faith. Although believers in our own culture face significantly different circumstances, the importance of the community's role in our daily calling is no different, nor is it less important in any way. Every believer today is still called to maintain regular fellowship in which they are actively provoking their fellow believers to love and good deeds. It is only within that active community, then, that the full calling of Christians is fulfilled. Still, however, as Christians work towards building and maintaining that type of community, certain struggles will remain. As we move forward, we will seek to see how those struggles might be dealt with properly and how biblical counseling plays a central part in that process.

The Necessity of a Plurality of Leaders in Maintaining Healthy Community (Exod 18:13-26)

In Exodus 18:13-26, we find a story that highlights the inevitable struggles of life within a community as well as the necessity of dividing up the work of resolving personal and communal conflicts among numerous leaders.

¹⁴ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 416.

Israel's Struggle in the Wilderness (Exod 15-18)

The narrative of Exodus 18:13-26 unfolds during a unique time in Israel's history. Israel had only recently been delivered by God's hand out of Egypt, and they had not yet received the law that would soon be given to Moses on Mount Sinai. At the moment, then, the people were still only partially aware of the nature of God and of the expectations that God had for his people. Thus, they were clearly reliant on Moses to offer them continual guidance as to how life must look under the rule of God.¹⁵

The result of their dependence is seen in Exodus 18:13 as Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, observes Moses's offering judgments to the people of Israel from morning until evening. When asked why he is spending his time in this manner, Moses reveals that the people continually seek him out so that he might "inquire of God" and resolve their various disputes.

The people's request reveals at least two important aspects to their daily reality. First, it offers a brief glimpse at the arbitration process used by the ancient Israelites prior to their arrival in Canaan. Some interpret this process as mirroring ancient Midianite practices in which tribal leaders functioned as judges.¹⁶ Others, noting the people's dependence upon Moses, believe the Israelites at this moment in history appeared to view the ability to rightly judge in legal matters as being part of the ability to also interpret the oracles received from God.¹⁷ Since Moses was the only one who had directly received those oracles from God, the people looked to him as the only one capable of also bringing solutions to their personal disputes in a manner pleasing to

¹⁵ John Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 250.

¹⁶ R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 146-47.

¹⁷ Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 330.

God.¹⁸ Thus, it seems that the community felt unable to handle conflict that was either spiritual or civic in nature. Second, their request and Moses's explanation to his father-in-law reveal the unbearably high number of responsibilities carried by Moses. He served not only as their leader but also as their instructor of the law, their arbitrator, their preacher, and their mediator before God.¹⁹

As Jethro rightly observes, this communal practice and Moses's response is untenable in the long-term, for it would both exhaust the people as well as threaten the ability of Moses to continue leading in any area outside of his role as a legal arbitrator.²⁰ It was, therefore, imperative that a new practice be installed so as to avoid unnecessary stress on Israel and its leader.

Even before looking at Jethro's solution, it is important to acknowledge the struggle of Israel in the wilderness and see the inevitable struggle in every community of believers. Concerning the case of Israel, Terence Fretheim notes that "God's redemptive activity does not respond to every one of Israel's needs."²¹ Even after their exodus from Egypt, Israel faced the daily conflicts that are inevitable in a fallen world.

While church communities find themselves in an entirely different context than ancient Israel, they each will experience conflicts that are spiritual, relational, and civic in nature. Thus, even though the communities of God's people today are marked by the new covenant gift of the Holy Spirit, the fact remains that the salvation of God's people does not remove the need for daily wisdom in response to daily struggles. Rather, there remains a need for wise leaders within each community who can rightly divide the Word of God, apply its teachings in our daily concerns, and help ensure that the needs present

¹⁸ Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 371.

¹⁹ Childs, *Exodus*, 330-31.

²⁰ Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 354.

²¹ Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 197.

within the community of believers are consistently met. This includes both doctrinal disputes as well as practical concerns within relationships, personal struggles with sin, and many other similarly routine matters that so many New Testament epistles address.

The reality of ongoing spiritual and practical needs is demonstrated in the earliest days of the church in the book of Acts (Acts 6:1-6). There, in order to ensure that the apostles could remain devoted to the direction of the church's worship and ongoing mission, they sought out and approved the appointment of seven men who could take care of the needs of widows within the church community.²² In any community of significant size, those types of disputes will be too much for a single leader who is also responsible for the proclamation of biblical doctrine to handle. In light of those inevitable disputes that will continue to arise within any community, it is imperative to consider the solution offered by Jethro.

The Necessity of Help from Lay Leaders

Jethro's counsel in response to the struggle of Israel was for Moses to continue in his role as a teacher and intercessor. In addition to this unique role, however, Moses was to also carefully choose leaders to assist him in providing counsel. These carefully chosen leaders were to be men who demonstrated an ability to counsel wisely, exhibited an honest character, hated dishonest gain, and clearly feared God.²³ These leaders, as suggested by Jethro, were to handle the easier cases that Moses would otherwise be left to handle. Only cases that took on a certain level of weight and difficulty would be left to Moses. The job of these newly appointed leaders was not to receive new revelation from

²² F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 121.

²³ Durham, *Exodus*, 250.

God by which they could make judgments but to reapply the interpretations already handed down by Moses as the intercessor between Israel and God.²⁴

The wisdom of Jethro resulted in a judicial system unique to ancient Israel. Yet, both in Jethro's advice regarding the careful choosing of leaders as well as in the manner in which those leaders were to offer counsel, there is great wisdom to be applied in the development of lay counselors in any church community today.

In a manner not unlike Jethro's counsel, the New Testament emphasizes both the importance of finding additional lay leaders to assist in the care of the church community and the necessity of using lay leaders who meet certain guidelines. This understanding, again, was seen in the appointment of the seven deacons in Acts 6 where those chosen were marked by a good reputation and overall spiritual maturity.²⁵ That same concern for maintaining strict guidelines when choosing new leaders is also seen in requirements given for elders and deacons in other New Testament passages, namely, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

Yet, even when it is not those particular offices addressed, New Testament authors, such as Paul, emphasize the importance of giving responsibilities to people based on their gifting as well as their maturity. Looking to passages such as Ephesians 4:11-16, for instance, one can find an example in which Paul depicts the necessity of equipping qualified leaders to assist in the building up of the body. It is clear from Paul's perspective that this careful equipping is part of God's design in providing care to each local church community.²⁶

²⁴ Durham, *Exodus*, 253.

²⁵ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 120-21.

²⁶ Rob Green and Steve Viars, "The Biblical Counseling Ministry of the Local Church," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 228.

In considering passages such as Ephesians 4 as well as others that detail the ministry that is to take place within the local church, it is also clear that Jethro's advice concerning the strategy of lay leaders when offering counsel can be similarly executed today. Just as Jethro advised, lay counselors today ought to be able to take the wisdom that has already been handed down when addressing any number of cases brought before them. When any particular case appears to contain details that are without precedent or seemingly outside of previously provided revelation, then those same leaders are wise to bring it before the leaders who are responsible for their equipping.

Thus, both in Jethro's advice concerning the need for lay leaders as well as his strategy of how to employ the skills of those leaders, the narrative of Exodus 18:13-26 continues to provide wisdom to leaders in the local church who seek to build their community through the ministry of biblical counseling. As we continue to move forward, though, there still remain questions regarding the ability of lay people in the church to lead in this manner as well as the means by which they can confidently carry out their ministry. In response to the first question concerning the abilities required, we now turn to Romans 15:14.

The Ability of Lay Leaders to Counsel the Community (Rom 15:14)

With the nature and necessity of community established in Hebrews and the long-standing practice and importance of maintaining a plurality of leaders within a community of believers depicted in Exodus, we now look to understand whether lay people in churches today are able to carry out the work of ministry. As we will soon see, it seems clear that the apostle Paul understood the ability of lay people within the church to lead in this manner and relied on their ongoing work in his absence. To demonstrate that confidence of Paul, we look to Romans 15:14.

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Before addressing the specific statement of Romans 15:14, it is important to have a basic understanding of the overall purpose and theme of Paul's letter to the Romans.

The theme of Romans is found in 1:16-17. In these two verses, Paul highlights what he will spend the rest of the letter unpacking. Namely, he seeks to write a letter for the purpose of explaining the gospel and its power to justify man and to exhort his readers to live a life that properly reflects this gift of righteousness from God.²⁷

Paul's explanation of the gospel, which includes a lengthy exposition regarding the nature of justification, is found in the first eleven chapters of his letter. After giving that lengthy exposition, Paul, in 12:1-15:13, exhorts his readers concerning the nature of righteous living and its implications in terms of unity amongst Jews and Gentiles, submission to government, and general Christian freedom. In the final two chapters, Paul concludes with a reminder of why he writes to the Romans and what he plans on accomplishing in the proceeding months.

Paul's Ministry to the Romans (Rom 15:15-32)

With a general understanding of Romans in mind, we now must consider Paul's unique relationship with the believers to whom he writes. Unlike the audience of many of his other epistles, the audience of this letter had never actually experienced the in-person ministry of Paul. The absence of any prior personal ministry, however, did not negate Paul's concern for them. Still, the question remains as to why Paul chose to write to them prior to any personal interactions. Within our passage, we see at least two of those reasons cited by Paul.

²⁷ Alva J. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1973), 18-19.

The first reason why Paul writes to these believers in Rome is to remind them of those things they have already known (15:15). That review, it seems, is a summary statement of the totality of Paul's letter. This purpose is one that is incredibly common throughout the Pauline Epistles (see, e.g., 1 Cor 4:17; Titus 3:1).²⁸ Just as he does in those other letters, so also in Romans, Paul seeks to communicate the fact that he does not write for the purpose of revealing previously hidden truths. Rather, he simply writes to exposit the gospel that, as previously discussed, is able to transform man into God's redeemed people. This explains the content of Paul's letter. There still remains the question, however, of why Paul would feel he had the authority to write to a body of believers he had not yet served as shepherd. That explanation is found in Paul's second reason for writing.

The second reason for writing the Romans stems not from Paul's understanding of his role as shepherd but as priest. In this second reason, we see Paul speak not to his message but to his authority. That authority and Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, which can be traced back to Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, are once again described in Romans 15:16-33. The grace that Paul was given in his conversion and the calling he received from God were for the purpose of Paul's serving as a public servant specifically to the Gentiles.²⁹

The authority claimed by Paul is established through his use of cultic terms such as "priest" and "offering." These words, which can be found in passages such as Nehemiah 10:39 and Isaiah 61:6, tie Paul's ministry to the ministry of Old Testament religious servants who, amongst many other things, offered sacrifices on behalf of the people of God to help maintain the community of believers. Here in Romans, the uses of

²⁸ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 766.

²⁹ Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 355.

these words envision Paul as doing the work of a priest in the new covenant. As a priest under the new covenant, however, his offering before God is not an animal but the Gentile converts who are under his care.³⁰ As he seeks to continue that ministry as a priest, then, Paul does so through this letter to the Romans.

Thus, Paul writes to the Romans not simply as a detached figure seeking to gain an influence in an important city but as shepherd with authority over Gentiles for the purpose of helping instruct them in the way they ought to live. Paul writes, then, as a pastor who simply seeks to maintain care for his flock regardless of how distant they might be geographically.

Although Paul was, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, serving in a unique context different from any minister today, the language he uses is connected to the ongoing realities of the new covenant community and, ultimately, to the ministry of all pastors regardless of the age in which we serve. As Paul discusses in Romans 12:1, and as other authors establish in passages such as Hebrews 13:15 and 1 Peter 2:5-9, all believers now serve as priests, and the sacrifice we offer before God is obedience.³¹ Those serving in leadership are called to serve as under-shepherds whose aim is to help encourage the ongoing growth of obedient believers. Thus, while the context in which we serve today is different from Paul's, the ultimate aim remains the same.

The language of Paul, then, stands not only as a model to pastors today but also as an explanation of why he wrote to the Romans. In order for us to ultimately see the connection between Paul's ministry and the ongoing needs within the church that he could not meet in person, though, we must still answer the question of how Paul viewed that community of believers. More specifically, we must answer the question of how that

³⁰ Douglass Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 486.

³¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 494.

community could thrive even in Paul's absence. Once we understand the answer to that question, we will be able to understand the role of lay leaders within local church communities today.

Paul's Confidence in the Romans (Rom 15:14)

Despite Paul's inability to be physically present with the Roman church, reports that have been given of the Roman believers' obedience, which are cited in Romans 16:19, fuel his confidence in their faith and in their ability to fulfill the exhortation he has offered. That confidence is communicated clearly in Romans 15:14 as Paul assures his readers that he is "convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another." In this, we see Paul's confidence in the Romans' overall maturity as well as in their ability to continue to grow regardless of Paul's physical absence.

Paul's confidence in the Romans' overall maturity is particularly applied to their "goodness" and "knowledge." Both terms are broad in meaning and, therefore, difficult to clearly define. Yet, based on all that has already been stated, it is clear that Paul believes that his audience has demonstrated a maturity that sets them in direct contrast to the Gentiles that he describes chapter 1.³² Unlike those Gentiles, who are enslaved to their foolish passions and blind to the truth of the gospel, these Roman Christians have proven their knowledge of the things of God as well as their generally godly character. It is that general maturity that allows Paul to be so confident in the calling he gives to the Romans in 15:14.

The specific calling given to the Roman believers by Paul is the calling to admonish one another. This calling, which is translated from *noutheteō*, is given here in Romans 15:14 as well as in other passages (e.g., Acts 20:31; Col 1:28; 3:16). The

³² Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 354.

practice of admonishing one another is, quite simply, to minister to one another and offer the necessary pastoral oversight that Paul himself would offer if present.³³ According to Jay Adams, it involves not merely correcting but also working towards both personality and behavioral change.³⁴ Paul summarizes his own pastoral duties using the same language recorded by Luke in Acts 20:31. Thus, it ought to be understood as work that is connected directly to the role of a pastor. More importantly, however, in passages such as Romans 15:14 it is clear that this activity is something that Paul commands all believers to practice.³⁵

In practice, the act of admonishing is tied both to formal teaching and informal counseling. Paul speaks of this type of ministry in Romans 12:3-8, where he addresses the variety of gifts present within each church community and the necessity of using those gifts for the purpose of encouraging one another towards the transformation of the mind and into the image of Christ. It is also the work commanded by Paul to Timothy in the passage we will examine next (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Considering the numerous activities that fall under the practice of admonishing, Paul's confidence in the Roman believers' ability to fulfill their ministry is quite impressive. Due to the many difficult matters that Paul had to address in his letter, some of his original readers may have presumed a lack of confidence in the Roman believers on the part of Paul.³⁶ Yet, in light of what Paul stated regarding the reputation of the Romans 1:8 and, more importantly, in light of Paul's clear confidence in the gospel to transform the heart and mind of believers, however, his confidence should not come as

³³ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 509.

³⁴ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 45.

³⁵ Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*, 41.

³⁶ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 509.

a surprise. Paul knows the gospel is the power of God that is able to transform God's people through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. That confidence is made clear in 15:13, where Paul prays for the Holy Spirit to continue to bring about the change he has already begun in these Roman believers. Ultimately, then, Paul's confidence in these believers is simply a confidence in God's saving and sanctifying work effected through the Holy Spirit. As such, Paul's words provide a practical reminder to pastors today when it comes to how they view the abilities of their own lay leaders.

The work of the Holy Spirit, which is the foundation of all of Paul's confidence, is still equally evident today as God continues to work towards the transformation of his people. Thus, as pastors seek to develop a community of believers in which the transformation described by Paul in passages such as Romans 12:1-2 takes place, they must also take seriously the role and ability of lay people within the church to accomplish the necessary work of admonishing and instructing one another—just as Paul models in Romans 15:14.

The greatest remaining question regarding the work that is to be done towards that transformation concerns the role that Scripture must play in the development of a biblical community and in the practice of biblical counseling. It is to this question—and its answer found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17—that we now turn.

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling (2 Tim 3:16-17)

At this point, we have seen the necessity of community, the value in the assistance of a plurality of lay leaders within each community, and the ability of those lay leaders to help perform the type of ministry involved in biblical counseling. There still remains, however, the necessary role of Scripture in the ministry provided by lay leaders and in the development of biblical community through the work of biblical counseling. Despite the many challenges involved in this type of ministry, Scripture is clear in its

claim of total sufficiency in all matters of counseling. To demonstrate the sufficiency of Scripture for the purpose of equipping lay leaders, we will examine 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The Definition of Scripture

The first point of Paul that must be understood when discussing the sufficiency of Scripture is what qualifies as Scripture. The specific phrase that must be understood is *πασα γραφη* (3:16), which is accurately translated as “all Scripture.” In examining this phrase, we must first ask whether Paul is speaking of Scripture in part or in whole.

At first glance, it is difficult to understand Paul’s intention in his language describing Scripture. This difficulty is largely because Paul does not use this language in any of his other letters.³⁷ While we do not have any other examples of this wording, however, we do have a very similar phrase found just a few verses earlier (vv. 14-15). There, Paul encourages Timothy to remember the “sacred writings” that he studied in his youth. Those sacred writings, which appear to refer to the entirety of the Old Testament, were to be the basis of Timothy’s own ministry.³⁸ Paul himself would have studied those same writings, and he refers to them frequently in his epistles.

In light of Paul’s reference to the sacred writings as well as his own usage of numerous Old Testament texts, then, it appears as if Paul is speaking most directly to the entirety of the Old Testament when he refers to “Scripture” in verse 16. Still, though, there is the question about the legitimacy of referring to the New Testament as equally authoritative and, thus, qualified to be seen as Scripture.

Although Paul’s concept of Scripture can most easily be traced back to the Old Testament, his writings also suggest that this same label can be used on texts outside of the Old Testament canon. The most obvious example of this comes in 1 Timothy 5:18,

³⁷ Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 587.

³⁸ William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 567.

where after introducing a text as “Scripture,” Paul directly quotes a passage from Deuteronomy as well as from Matthew 10:10. Based on this passage, it seems as if the door had already been opened to the early church’s accepting the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels as authoritative Scripture. Furthermore, when one includes Peter’s reference in 2 Peter 3:15-16 to Paul’s writings as fitting within the same category of the “Scriptures,” it appears as if the early church was already developing an expanded understanding of the canon and had already adopted not only the Gospels but also the Epistles as Scripture.³⁹

When taken together, then, it appears that when Paul refers to “all Scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16, he can be read as saying Scripture in its totality.⁴⁰ In the modern context, this can safely be defined by the Old and New Testaments.

The Origin of Scripture

The second phrase in the passage before us that must be understood is θεοπνευστος, which is rightly translated “God-breathed.” Yet again, this phrase poses some initial confusion due to the fact that it is not found anywhere else in Paul’s writing. But when the language is more closely observed, its ultimate meaning is, again, clear.

The phrase translated “God-breathed” speaks ultimately to the role of God in the writing of what is included under the heading of “Scripture.” The process of the writing of Scripture, then, is one that finds its origin in God’s activity. While that activity does not go so far as to dictate the words to the original authors, it does ground all Scripture in God’s supreme authority. Thus, Paul understands the words contained in Scripture to be the collective Word of God.⁴¹

³⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 568.

⁴⁰ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 445.

⁴¹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

The message of Paul, then, is that the writings contained in the Old and New Testaments are ultimately the product of the creative breath of God.⁴² For Paul, though, his primary focus was not the origin of Scripture but the grounds on which his next argument for Scripture's sufficiency lies.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Paul's ultimate argument regarding Scripture was not for the purpose of demonstrating Scripture's origin but for the purpose of demonstrating its overall sufficiency in fulfilling all things related to ministry. That sufficiency is succinctly presented in Paul's final statements in 2 Timothy 3:16b-17. Paul lists four tasks that Scripture is sufficient to accomplish: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

The act of teaching is, perhaps, the primary way that believers tend to understand the use of Scripture. Within the letter of 2 Timothy, teaching plays a significant role as Paul repeatedly tells Timothy the importance of teaching proper doctrine and handing it down to the next generation of teachers.

A closely related use of Scripture is the task of rebuking. This task, which is the task of making someone aware of sin or false doctrine through teaching, was particularly important in the ministry of Timothy as he was facing numerous opponents who were preaching false doctrine within the church at Ephesus. For the sake of preserving that church and to fulfill his ministry, it was essential that Timothy actively expose the false teaching. According to Paul, Scripture was sufficient for that purpose.

The third task Paul references is the task of correcting. This task is to correct not simply poor doctrine but poor behavior that comes from that poor doctrine. In the task

⁴² Benjamin Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 133.

of correcting, it appears as if Paul shifts his attention from Scripture's sufficiency in addressing orthodoxy to its sufficiency in addressing orthopraxy.⁴³

The fourth and final task, which is the broadest task included in this list, is the task of training fellow believers in the way of righteousness. The language used by Paul here was, apparently, commonly used in ancient Greco-Roman culture to describe the ongoing pursuit of the virtues.⁴⁴ In contrast to that goal set by Greco-Roman culture, Paul sees the end goal of Christian training as a life characterized by the righteousness of God. Even in this broadest of tasks, Scripture is sufficient.

After speaking to the sufficiency of Scripture, Paul finishes this passage by describing the practical benefits that Scripture brings to those who follow its teaching. Since Scripture is divine in its origin and since it is, according to Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16, sufficient in all that is required in ministry, it should be no surprise that it is also efficient in what it produces, namely, the wisdom required for salvation and a minister who is adequately prepared. Writing on this efficacy of Scripture, Michael Kruger speaks of Scripture's perlocutionary effect by which a person is gradually transformed as a result of receiving the teachings of Scripture.⁴⁵ In the words of Paul, Scripture is adequate to equip every minister to accomplish every good work that God has set before him. Good works are the tasks assigned not simply to Timothy but also, more broadly, to all lay leaders and all believers alike. They are the same type of works that Paul describes in Ephesians 2:10, where Paul similarly references good works that God has called all his people to accomplish. In Ephesians, the focus of Paul is on the manner in which believers ought to live. Here in 2 Timothy, readers are given the means by which that lifestyle is fulfilled. The means, of course, is the sufficient Scriptures—that is, the Old and New Testaments.

⁴³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

⁴⁴ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 591.

⁴⁵ Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 131.

Paul's words depicting the sufficiency of Scripture and its ability to produce a sufficient servant of God were essential for Timothy to understand. Timothy was already facing a variety of challenges from false teachers who had drifted from the already revealed truths contained in God's Word. Thus, it was important for him to understand the sufficiency of Scripture so that he would not stray from its message and to remember that he already had the necessary gifts to fulfill his ministry even in Paul's absence.

This same confidence in the sufficiency of Scriptures as well as in the gifting of lay leaders is equally important to understand in our context today as lay leaders within the church will inevitably hear a wide variety of cases in counseling conversations. When hearing of some of those cases, it is tempting to feel overwhelmed and inadequate to present a new word of judgment as a counselor. Yet, in a manner not entirely dissimilar to the leaders chosen by Moses in our previously discussed passage in Exodus 18, lay leaders today are not called upon to find any new judgment from God in responding to the counseling issues brought before them. Instead, they are simply called to apply that which has already been revealed by God and that which has already been interpreted and applied in previous similar cases. The counsel of lay leaders, then, is to always be grounded in Scripture. Thus, a lay leaders ability and competence to counsel is tied directly to a belief that God's Word is our final authority and that it contains all we need to know to live a life pleasing to God.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present a biblical picture of community, demonstrate the necessity of using lay leaders to carry the burdens of ministry to maintain the health of that community, and argue for both the ability of and the necessary means by which those lay leaders are able to specifically help carry the load of biblical

⁴⁶ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 37.

counseling within the local church community. As we have seen from Hebrews 10, every Christian's calling requires involvement within a community of believers that is provided by the local church. Looking to the wisdom of Jethro in Exodus 18, we discussed the practical benefit of using lay leaders within the community to offer counsel to its members who face the struggles that are inevitable in a fallen world. Although our context is different from Israel's in the wilderness, our communities today will still face challenges that remain spiritual, relational, and civic in nature. These issues still require counsel from capable counselors. As we examined Romans 15 and 2 Timothy 3, we saw Paul's confidence in lay people to fulfill that role because of his confidence in the gospel that transforms, the Holy Spirit who indwells believers, and the Scriptures that contain all that is needed to adequately counsel those under our care. In the next chapter, we will use these lessons learned from Scripture to address the need of counsel specifically within the body of CBC.

CHAPTER 3

THE NECESSARY BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CHARACTER FOR LAY LEADERS OF CAPE BIBLE CHAPEL FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING

As seen in the discussion of Romans 15:14 in chapter 2, those who are competent to counsel must demonstrate both the correct character and the correct knowledge. Thus, developing fully effective lay leaders within the church community requires a focus on the cultivation of Christian character among its lay leaders, a growing understanding of the gospel, and a foundational understanding of key theological concepts to assist lay leaders through the process of counseling those under their care.

Developing Christ-Like Character in Lay Leaders

The believers to whom Paul wrote in Romans 15:14 were competent to counsel due, in part, to what Paul summarizes as goodness. To ensure that our lay leaders are prepared to counsel, then, it is essential to structure the equipping process in such a way to encourage all trainees to develop that same Christ-like goodness in their own lives.¹ While that development is a life-long process ultimately guided by the Holy Spirit, in connection to the process of equipping lay leaders, such development must include a few foundational characteristics, including humility, joy, gentleness, and love.

Seeing the Character of Christ

To develop character that is Christ-like requires, first and foremost, that we understand the character of Christ. To help in that endeavor, we must consider how Christ

¹ Bob Kellemen, *Equipping Biblical Counselors: A Guide to Discipling Believers for One-Another Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2022), 187.

himself summarized his own character. That summary is as follows: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30).

While Christ displays many other attributes that will soon be discussed, the two simple attributes of his gentleness and humility provide the soil from which all other attributes grow. To help ensure that lay leaders are prepared to model a similar gentleness and approachability as that of Christ, it is essential that they are adequately equipped to pursue an overall Christ-like character. Those attributes, which are discussed in resources such as Jerry Bridges’s *The Practice of Godliness*,² can be divided between reflecting Christ’s devotion to the Father and exhibiting Christ’s moral attributes.

Fear of God

Regarding Christ’s devotion to the Father, one must recall his perfect obedience in all that he accomplished. Regarding his actions, in John 5:19, Jesus declares, “The Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does.” In all of his speech and activities, then, Jesus demonstrates a perfect fear of the Father.³ That fear, which was in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 11:3, was not a fear of the Father’s discipline; rather, it was the product of Jesus’s complete understanding of the Father’s glory and his perfect devotion to accomplishing the mission the Father sent him to complete.

Every Christian and, more specifically, every lay leader must pursue a similar fear of God. It is that fear that, as Bridges notes, “is the wellspring of all godly desires and aspirations.”⁴ A proper fear of God, which consists of a believer’s reverence for and

² Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2008).

³ Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 21.

⁴ Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1998), 25.

recognition of God’s glorious attributes, fuels our ongoing love for God and shapes our everyday life. Thus, it is that fear of God that must be encouraged amongst those desiring to serve as lay leaders and that will fuel them in the desired growth.

The desired growth in lay leaders ought to be encouraged in a variety of areas. In light of the previous discussion regarding the aim of becoming more like Christ, one area of particular importance is growth in other attributes that Christ perfectly modeled. While any of the attributes of Christ depicted in the Gospels are beneficial for every believer, there are certain attributes that play a particularly important role within successful counseling. Those attributes are humility, joy, gentleness, and love.

Humility

As Paul seeks to instruct the Philippian believers in how to address the problem of disunity in their church, he points to the example of Christ and, in particular, to the humility of Christ as a key attribute to imitate: “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:8). In his willingness to take on the form of a bondservant and to sacrifice himself on our behalf, Jesus perfectly modeled humility. As we seek to imitate that same humility today, we must understand what it means before God as well as before our fellow man.

The humility of Christ, which is closely linked to the fear of God discussed above, is founded on a right understanding of God’s eternal and unchanging nature.⁵ As we rightly observe that unchanging nature, we are forced to recognize our own unworthiness and our desperate need for God’s constant guidance. Flowing from that humility before God is a proper humility before man. It is the attitude communicated by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15 as he declares himself the chief of sinners. It is that same humility

⁵ Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 75.

before others that grounds believers in the understanding that every skill we have is a gift and every element of our spiritual growth is ultimately a work of God.

Humility, then, not only puts us in a proper position before God but also allows us to rightly interact with other people. As counselors, humility is essential to rightly interpreting the data we receive and to ensure that we do not use our position as a means of being domineering over those under our care.

Joy

As Bridges avers, “True Christian joy is both a privilege and a duty.”⁶ As a privilege, it is a gift that Christ grants to those who are saved. As a duty, it is something that God calls us to regardless of our circumstances. In John 10:10, Jesus declares that he came to provide the type of abundant life that is essential to our daily joy. It is only the result of his work that believers are able to enter God’s presence daily with great joy in their hearts. It is with good reason, then, that Christians’ joy is always to be grounded in the Lord (Phil 4:4).

The joy we experience as believers is far from a denial of the reality of suffering all around us. In the case of the previously cited encouragement of Paul, he directed his command to rejoice to believers who faced hostility (Phil 2:15), personal doubts (1:28), and struggles within their own church family (4:2).⁷ Those under the care of a counselor likely have faced similar obstacles that have led to a lack of joy in their own life. Whether that obstacle is one of personal sin, tragic loss, or the common trials of life, it is the job of the counselor to help the counselee see the obstacle within the larger work that God is accomplishing in their life.

⁶ Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 109.

⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 174.

We can see this strategy on display both in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians as well as in Peter’s first epistle. In his opening words of encouragement in that epistle, Peter points to that greater work of God as he reminds his readers that their trials, when handled with wisdom, result in increased faith and eternal glory (1 Pet 1:3-9). As noted by Peter in that same passage, when trials are seen in that light, those suffering are still able to experience the inexpressible joy that comes in knowing Christ.

As counselors, then, our job is not to remove every trial or obstacle in the lives of our counselees. It is, instead, to assist the counselee to lean into the joy that Christ still provides regardless of our circumstances. In order to do this, of course, the counselor must consistently strive to model joy in his or her own life before the counselee.

Gentleness

When describing his own heart, Jesus declares that he is gentle and lowly (Matt 11:29). In reference to this attribute of gentleness, Dane Ortlund describes Jesus not as harsh or trigger happy but as the “most understanding person in the universe.”⁸ Speaking to that same attribute, Bridges states that it was Christ’s gentleness that caused people to be at ease in his presence.⁹

Treating others with a gentle spirit requires that we, like Christ, actively seek to make others feel at ease in our presence. It means that we do not belittle them in their struggles nor speak in a manner that is unnecessarily blunt or harsh. Rather, we seek to communicate proper respect for each individual, acknowledging their inherent worth as an image-bearer of God. This manner of treatment is not only beneficial to us in day-to-day relationships; it is, even more, essential for the effective counseling of those under

⁸ Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 19.

⁹ Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 186.

our care. Thus, as lay leaders seek to model the attitude of Christ, they must exhibit his self-proclaimed gentle spirit.

Love

According to Bridges, “Love is the overall grace from which all the others grow.”¹⁰ Apart from a proper understanding of love, one can neither understand God as he has revealed himself nor counsel in the manner we are seeking to counsel. Regarding that self-revelation of God’s character, we consider 1 John 4:8, which tells us that “God is love.” In order to ensure we rightly understand the nature of God’s love specifically in connection to the character of Christ, we consider 1 John 4:10, which states, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” The love of God about which the apostle John writes is a proactive love that reaches out for the good of others, gives selflessly to others, and sacrifices for others.¹¹

Considering the central role of love in the gospel, it is clear that this final attribute must maintain a central role in the counseling process. Those who wish to build the necessary counseling relationship must do so out of a similarly benevolent, selfless, and sacrificial manner. Thus, for lay leaders, it will be essential to encourage ongoing growth in their love for God and others. To that end, lay leaders must be encouraged to also grow in their understanding of biblical doctrine.

Developing Increased Understanding of Doctrines Key to Biblical Counseling

In addition to the development of Christ-like character, lay leaders must also be equipped with an increased understanding of the gospel and its teaching regarding the

¹⁰ Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 205.

¹¹ Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 209.

effects of the fall and Christians' transformation accomplished through Jesus Christ. Using the same strategy employed regarding the development of Christ-like character, the development of understanding doctrines requires a narrowed focus on those doctrines that are foundational not only to the Christian faith but also to the practice of biblical counseling. To that end, the following subjects are engaged below: the gospel, humanity, the fall, election, regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, union with Christ, the Holy Spirit, sanctification, the church, and future glory.

The Gospel

As members of the church, each lay leader will have already demonstrated a basic understanding of the gospel. Still, to ensure that lay leaders grasp well the gospel and its foundational revelations regarding salvation and the Christian's identity, it will be essential to begin with a review of this simple yet essential message.

The gospel, as Milton Vincent explains, is both the means by which we enter into our saving relationship with Christ as well as the means by which God continues to work within believers daily in their ongoing sanctification.¹² A growing appreciation and understanding of the gospel, then, is essential both to salvation and to Christians' hope, daily call, and overall understanding of the God we serve. Since the gospel will be the ultimate focus of all counseling cases; the gospel must play a foundational role in the equipping process of every lay leader. From this gospel foundation we can then build a fuller understanding of other doctrines key to the practice of biblical counseling.

Humanity

To understand the people we seek to counsel, we must understand the basic nature of humanity. This fact means that we must have a basic appreciation of God's

¹² Milton Vincent, *A Gospel Primer: Learning to See the Glories of God's Love* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2008), 19.

creation of people in his own image. The creation of humankind as image-bearers of God, which is declared in Genesis 1-3, sets men and women apart from the rest of creation as unique reflections of the Creator.¹³ Those reflections can be seen throughout the totality of humanity's existence and, therefore, include everything from the relationships we enjoy to our overall design.¹⁴

The primary relationship we were designed to enjoy is our relationship with our Creator. This relationship is on display in creation as man walks with God in the garden of Eden. Aside from this relationship, man was also designed to live in relationship with fellow image-bearers. This second relationship was revealed to be a necessity when, in Genesis 2:18, God declared that it was not good for Adam to be alone.¹⁵ Even after sin is introduced, maintaining relationships with fellow image-bearers is stressed throughout the narrative of the Bible.

Understanding our overall design as image-bearers also requires that we understand the significance of our bodies. This includes the fact that we were designed as gendered persons. In the beginning, God created us male and female (Gen 1:27). The significance of the two genders is emphasized from the beginning with the creation of marriage and the distinctions between male and female that are reinforced throughout all of Scripture (see, e.g., Lev 18:22; Matt 19:4-5; Eph 5).¹⁶ The complementarity the two genders is something that is emphasized both in marriage as well as in the familial relationships that are encouraged in the church.

¹³ Kristin L. Kellen, "Anthropology: How Should We View People?," in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 60. 59-71

¹⁴ Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 66.

¹⁵ Kellen, "Anthropology: How Should We View People?," 61.

¹⁶ Kellen, "Anthropology: How Should We View People?," 62.

Finally, understanding what it means to be made in the image of God requires that we understand the design of humankind as both material and immaterial beings. God created us as physical beings who are designed to physically experience the creation in which God placed us (Gen 2:7). Scripture teaches that even in our glorified state, we will continue to maintain a physical body (1 Cor 15).

Still, the Bible also speaks clearly to the fact that we were designed as spiritual beings as well. Throughout Scripture, that spiritual element is referenced using concepts such as the heart (Jer 17:9) and the soul (Matt 10:28).¹⁷ It is only when one understands both the physical and spiritual aspects of humanity that one can possess a complete biblical picture of our design.

Understanding this doctrine is key to all counseling, for it grounds us in an understanding of the complexity of the person seeking counsel as well as our ultimate goal. With every individual we counsel, our understanding of the *imago Dei* reminds us that we are dealing with someone who is designed for relationships with both their Creator and fellow image-bearers, designed as male or female, and designed as both physical and spiritual. Thus, any biblical counsel must take all aspects into account when offering guidance. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that we share one ultimate goal in all counseling cases—to help facilitate the restoration of the image of God in the person who sits before us.¹⁸

Sin and Suffering

Although an understanding of the nature of man is built upon the concept of the image of God, biblical counseling also requires an understanding of what causes man to struggle in so many ways. That struggle, as seen in Scripture, is the result of the fall of

¹⁷ Kellen, “Anthropology: How Should We View People?,” 63-64.

¹⁸ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016), 190.

humanity into sin. As a result of the fall, every aspect of human life—internally and externally—is distorted.¹⁹ That distortion, which begins with the marring of the image of God and the loss of man’s communion with God, is carried into a life lived under the dominion of sin and death and into a world that is temporarily under the grips of Satan.²⁰

The first aspect of humankind’s life that is experienced because of sin is a broken relationship with the Creator. As a result of our sin, our relationship with God shifted from that of a loving relationship to one that is adversarial (Eph 2:1-3). Rather than accurately reflecting God, fallen humanity consistently demonstrates attitudes and attributes that are contrary to the nature and the works of God.²¹ As sinners, we, by nature, now stand condemned before God and are unable to restore our relationship with him (Rom 3:23).²²

Sadly, our relationship with God is not the only relationship impacted by sin. The same impact is carried into our relationships with fellow image-bearers. Just as our relationship with God has shifted to one of conflict, so, too, are the relationships we experience with one another marked by mutual conflict and hatred (Titus 3:3).²³ This conflict is seen as early as the first murder in Genesis 4 and is continually on display in our world today in ongoing warfare and in the endless interpersonal conflicts our counselees face.

Furthermore, the fall of humankind has resulted in a brokenness we experience within our physical bodies. God warned Adam and Eve of this brokenness prior to the fall

¹⁹ John McClean, “Humanity: The Need of Theological Anthropology for Everyday Ministry,” in *Theology for Ministry: How Doctrine Affects Pastoral Life and Practice*, ed. William Edwards, John Ferguson, and Chad Van Dixhoorn (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2022), 101.

²⁰ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2017), 14.

²¹ Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2021), 30-37.

²² Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 220.

²³ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 224-25.

in Genesis 2:15-17 when he declared that disobedience to his commands would result in death. As a result of Adam's disobedience, that death is introduced. This means that from the moment we are born, the effects of the fall cause our bodies to be in a gradual process of decay, disease, and eventual death.²⁴

Finally, the fall of humankind has resulted in a brokenness that is experienced at the heart level and revealed in daily choices made that result in increased conflict and suffering. It is from the heart that a person's fallen desires are found, and it is those desires that, due to sin, drive us further away from God and further into conflict with all of Creation (Jas 4:1-2).²⁵

In the post-fall state, the effects of the fall on our humanity are unavoidable within the realm of counseling. These effects include suffering directly due to our own sins, suffering due to being sinned against, suffering due to natural disasters, suffering due to personal pain or the pain of others, and—ultimately—suffering due the reality of death.

To help those we counsel through their suffering, then, we must have a basic understanding of the reality of suffering as demonstrated in Scripture.²⁶ An understanding of the fall helps one understand the reality of suffering, for it explains why things are disordered and why pain is inevitable. Furthermore, an understanding of the fall helps point us towards our ultimate hope: redemption in Jesus Christ. To that end, the remaining doctrines to be discussed revolve primarily around the salvation of believers and its various results.

²⁴ Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, 38-39.

²⁵ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 78-79.

²⁶ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 254.

Election

Election, according to Wayne Grudem, is “an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.”²⁷ This act of choosing is something that both the Old Testament and the New Testament highlight. In the Old Testament, God chooses particular men to act as his evangelists and servants. This choosing, illustrated in God’s election of Abram as well as in his election of the nation of Israel, was key to God’s people understanding their unique identity (Deut 4:37; 9:4-6). Similar language of election can be found throughout the New Testament wherein God’s choice is extended to individuals outside of Israel. Key passages such as Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9-11, and Ephesians 1:4-14 highlight this reality as well as the importance of this doctrine as foundational to Christians’ understanding of their identity today.

While the doctrine of election is more easily connected to a discussion on the order of salvation, I believe it is of particular importance within the practice of counseling. Its teaching reassures our humility, as discussed earlier. Furthermore, its understanding allows for the establishment of the assurance of salvation, which will be discussed shortly. Finally, an appreciation of God’s eternal decrees as highlighted in the doctrine of election serves as a means of helping inspire counselees in their own worship.

Prior to enjoying these fruits of election, however, individuals must understand how they can be certain they are among the elect. In other words, they must be certain of salvation.

Regeneration

By faith and repentance, on the basis of the work accomplished by Christ, believers experience the process of regeneration. According to Grudem, regeneration is

²⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 670.

“a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us.”²⁸ In various places, Scripture describes this process using a few different word pictures, such as rebirth (John 3:3-5), re-creation (2 Cor 5:17), and resurrection (1 John 3:14). Regeneration is necessary due to the fact that as a result of the fall, man is spiritually dead and entirely unable to enter into God’s heavenly kingdom. In order to gain entrance, then, man needs a new life found only in Christ.

Regeneration results not simply in a new spiritual status but also in a new life in which the regenerated individual is able to live out a life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and characterized by obedience to Christ. It is in that final result that we see the connection between regeneration and counseling. If we truly desire to see our counselees transformed and successful in their spiritual aims, then they must first be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. To skip over this doctrine, then, is to skip over the means by which counselees can find success.

Repentance

To have a proper understanding of salvation, one must understand the nature of repentance. True repentance, according to Sinclair Ferguson, is “the return to God with which the Christian life begins.”²⁹ It is, in effect, the decision to turn away from the sin inherited at the fall and to turn towards a life devoted to Christ. Although repentance is easy to define, its certainty requires a certain amount of investigation on behalf of the counselor. Elements of true repentance, which should be demonstrated, include a sense of shame over one’s sin, a newfound humility, sorrow over the sinful acts, a growing distaste for sinful actions, a growing desire for the things of God, a zeal for personal obedience, and a recognition of pardon that is found in Christ alone.³⁰

²⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 699.

²⁹ Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 68.

³⁰ Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 69.

Understanding repentance is not only important within evangelistic conversations; it is also important within the practice of counseling, as it is an essential step when dealing with any given sinful habit. Within counseling conversations, counselors must continually ensure they are neither forgetting the gracious mercy of God nor the dangers of a cheap grace that results in an unchanged life. That cheap grace, which is a common threat in many of our churches today, will assist counselees in confessing their sin but will fail to bring them forward in the sanctification process.³¹ Just as evangelists should look for the previously listed elements of repentance in those whom they are evangelizing, so too should counselors encourage and look for signs of repentance in their counselees.

Justification

Justification is the act of God by which sinners are made righteous and brought into a proper relationship with God. As seen in passages such as Romans 1:18-3:26 the basis for justification is Christ's perfect obedience to the Father, his propitiatory death on the cross, and his resurrection.³² The means by which Christians can receive the benefits of Christ's work is simply through faith.

Justification is central to our understanding of the gospel. It is also central to understanding the believer's hope in any counseling situation. Justification is, after all, central to understanding why the moral guilt of our sin is removed, how our forgiveness is eternally secure, and how our salvation is entirely by grace through faith.³³ As counselors, we must both understand this doctrine and communicate it as a means of modeling assurance and encouraging our counselees' ongoing dependence on Christ.

³¹ Cornelius P. Venema, "Faith and Repentance: Implications for the Gospel Call in Preaching," in Edwards, Ferguson, and Van Dixhoorn, *Theology for Ministry*, 295.

³² Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 84.

³³ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 288.

Union with Christ

Although it is often overlooked, union with Christ is, in the words of Ferguson, “the foundation of all our spiritual experience and all spiritual blessings.”³⁴ Throughout his epistles, the apostle Paul regularly speaks of this doctrine (e.g., 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:32, Col 3:4). Just as importantly, Jesus speaks of his union with believers in his prayer recorded in John 17. In that prayer, Christ uses language that depicts believers as being “in” him—that is, in Christ.

It is believers’ union with Christ that ensures their obedience, their justification, and their fruitful life. Within the practice of counseling, it is this union that gives counselees confidence in prayer, protection against temptation, and confidence to move forward in the ongoing pursuit of personal obedience.³⁵ Following the example of Paul in Colossians 3:1-4, the counselor ought to repeatedly remind the believing counselee of their union with Christ in his death and ascension as a means of helping them to persevere despite personal failures.

The Holy Spirit

Although lay leaders may not possess a master’s level understanding of the work and person of the Holy Spirit, they should understand a few key points regarding the Spirit for the sake of successful counseling. First and foremost is an understanding of the Spirit’s work of indwelling. That indwelling—which Christ promises in John 14:16-17 and Paul refers to in Romans 8:9-11—refers to the literal presence of God within every believer. To say that the Spirit is “in” us, as Paul does in Romans 8, is to say that the Spirit’s presence is not a temporary experience. It is, rather, an ongoing presence that brings us into fellowship with God and that continues to draw us closer to him.³⁶

³⁴ Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 98.

³⁵ Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 105.

³⁶ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 182-85.

A similar promise of permanence is seen in the Spirit's additional work of "sealing." That separate work, which is referenced in Ephesians 1:13, is God's pledge that he will forever keep and protect us.³⁷ Similar to the comfort that comes in the knowledge of the Spirit's indwelling presence, the Spirit's act of "sealing" further assures the believer that the gift of grace given to them in their conversion cannot be taken away.

In addition to his work of indwelling and sealing believers, the Holy Spirit actively teaches believers and allows them to understand the Word of God (2 Cor 12:14-16).³⁸ Finally, as he allows us to understand the Word, the Spirit also cultivates the fruit of righteousness (Gal 5), gives spiritual gifts (2 Cor 12:4-11), and continually convicts of sin.³⁹ For believing counselees, then, it is clear that their only hope is in the work of the Holy Spirit who indwells them. Thus, in order to help ensure that counselors are equipped to highlight these truths to their counselees, it is essential that counselors gain a clear understanding of the Spirit's unique role. It is only then that they can better understand the next topic: sanctification.

Sanctification

The doctrine of sanctification can be used to refer both to the one-time historical act of God in which he sets the believer apart as a new creation as well as the ongoing process in which the believer grows in holiness. The first usage, which is commonly referred to as positional or definitive sanctification is the primary usage of sanctification throughout the New Testament.⁴⁰ This is seen, for instance, in Paul's statement to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:2 in which he states that the Corinthian

³⁷ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 180-82.

³⁸ Dennis E. Johnson, "The Holy Spirit: New Creation Power for God's Redeemed People," in Edwards, Ferguson, and Van Dixhoorn, *Theology for Ministry*, 205.

³⁹ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 35.

⁴⁰ John Murray, *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1977), 277-84.

believers were already sanctified. As a result of that historical act, those same believers are now called to pursue a life of holiness. It is that ongoing pursuit that speaks to the second concept of sanctification: progressive sanctification.

As Grudem explains, progressive sanctification is the “progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.”⁴¹ The success of believers in this ongoing growth comes, of course, as a result of the realities created by the previously discussed realities of justification, union with Christ, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The process of sanctification is that process by which believers regularly seek to mortify the flesh and its sinful desires (Rom 6:11-14; 1 Cor 6:11; Col 3:5-11). It is, in practice, the constant battle in which believers deliberately reject sinful thoughts, desires, circumstances, and deeds.⁴² When one understands the nature of that battle, one can discern its close ties with the practice of counseling, for in the process of trying to manage any trial or struggle, it is essential that believers understand the biblical picture of spiritual growth. Hence, to help encourage counselees towards such growth, it is crucial for counselors to grasp sanctification.

The Church

Although membership in a local church is not a prerequisite for the counselees we seek to help, it is something that is important to understand as the experiences afforded within the context of a local church are of tremendous value to every believer. This importance is seen both in the benefit it provides the counselor as well as the counselee.

Every lay leader must understand that he fulfills his role as a member of their local church. As such, the lay leader serves under the authority of the elders called by

⁴¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746.

⁴² Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 150.

God to lead and help develop the members of their flock.⁴³ This hierarchy is essential both because it is instructed in the New Testament but also, from a practical standpoint, it helps ensure that lay leaders are held accountable for the doctrines they present and the direction they offer to those under their care. To ensure that this accountability works as it is intended, then, it is important to maintain requirements for church membership amongst lay leaders and those serving in any official counseling position.

For the counselees, active engagement in their local church is equally important. Even if that active engagement temporarily falls short of membership, it still provides the essential context in which they can consistently worship the God they are seeking to serve, expands and provides opportunities for fellowship with other believers beyond their counselor, teaches them a wide range of topics that are related to general self-discipline, and affords the important tool of accountability from fellow believers.⁴⁴ That added circle of accountability becomes increasingly important as the counselee eventually reaches the end of his formal counseling process with his counselor and reenters a normal life within the church. In order to help ensure the success of counselees, then, it is important to emphasize the value of membership within a doctrinally sound local church where counselors can be certain they will be expanding the help offered to counselees.

Future Glory

The sufferings of this life are, according to Paul, unworthy of being compared to the glory that awaits every believer (Rom 8:18). It is in that glory where believers will experience their resurrection, transformation, and ultimate consummation of their sonship (Rom 8:28-30).⁴⁵ In that final glorious state, then, believers will enjoy the realities of

⁴³ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 307.

⁴⁴ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 310.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 184.

salvation that have only begun in this life and the rest that can only be experienced in an existence void of all sin. This future glory is intended to be both a means of present encouragement and a motivation for holy living, for no one can grasp the realities of this future glory without finding the necessary motivation to live a life that is already changing.⁴⁶ This reality is true for every believer and especially relevant within the practice of counseling.

Conclusion

Additional theological doctrines may be considered for the ongoing education of lay leaders (e.g., theology of suffering). For the sake of time, however, the doctrines discussed above should be sufficient to provide the necessary theological framework that will be applied in the process portion of counseling.

The Content of Developing Lay Leaders

Even with the foundational theology in place, there remains the practical question of how to prepare lay people for the process of counseling others. To that end, training must consider both a basic background of the biblical counseling movement and a basic method of counseling.

The Background

Without realizing it, many of our lay people come into training already influenced by popular psychology. The influence of popular psychology can be seen in everything from the use of common terminology such as “self-esteem” and “victimhood” to the common assumption that counseling can only be offered by “professionals.” Hence, we must help our lay people understand how the assumptions brought about by

⁴⁶ Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 188.

the influence of popular psychology are relatively modern in the mindset of believers so that they can move beyond such assumptions.

The shift towards moving counseling out of the pastor's office and into the secular professional's office can be seen in the years following the Civil War, as psychiatry and psychotherapy gradually began displacing the previously Christian practice of "soul care."⁴⁷ By the mid-twentieth century, those practices were largely shaped by men such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Rogers. Under their influence, which was completely detached from any Christian faith, humanity's problems were increasingly viewed as an internal battle that should be addressed by individualistic efforts. Although these theories and their proposed solutions were void of biblical doctrine, they were largely adopted by many mainline Protestant ministers who viewed professional counselors outside of the church as friendly alliances.⁴⁸

It was around this time that Jay Adams entered the ministry and quickly saw the need for counseling within his church. After studying the popular Freudian and Rogerian theories, however, he quickly understood that their theories and methods were guilty of removing personal guilt, instituting a victim's mindset, and making the process of overcoming one's suffering impossibly mysterious to the average person. In response to those glaring failures, Adams came to understand the need to build a system that was, at its root, wholly biblical. Part of the process of building that system and training others in its ways was his publication of *Competent to Counsel*, which sought to help ministers guide their people out of the distress of everyday life.⁴⁹ That work offered a critique of popular psychology and introduced readers to the practice of nouthetic counseling. This publication served as a watershed moment in the history of biblical counseling.

⁴⁷ David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 22.

⁴⁸ Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 23.

⁴⁹ Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 18.

The publishing of *Competent to Counsel* in 1970, while marking a watershed moment, by no means marked the end of secular psychology's influence in the local church nor did it establish one unified movement. In the decades that have followed, many pastor and authors have continued to find great popularity in their use of secular psychology. In the late 1980s, men such as James Dobson and his ministry Focus on the Family, Larry Crabb, and Robert McGee authored numerous works of the self-help genre.⁵⁰

Even within the biblical counseling movement, numerous groups have formed over various disagreements regarding earlier practices and teachings popularized in nouthetic counseling. These groups, which included Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, and Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, agreed on the necessity of the Bible in counseling but disagreed on other matters including methodology and practice. Furthermore, second generation biblical counselors, such as David Powlison and Ed Welch, offered critiques of Jay Adams and what they viewed as an insufficient consideration of suffering as well as an underdeveloped understanding of human motivation.⁵¹ While these men and others offered critiques of Adams, however, it is important to see their work as further attempts to ultimately grow the biblical counseling movement and expand its influence.

Discussions and disagreements over methodology and doctrine continue today as the biblical counseling movement continues to be developed. Still, despite those disagreements, the movement has maintained the larger focus on the sufficiency of Scripture and a desire to harness that sufficiency in responding to the struggles of everyday life. As lay leaders understand that history, they are able to see themselves

⁵⁰ Powlison, *The Bible Counseling Movement*, 206.

⁵¹ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 70-71.

within the larger story being told and are able to be connected with a movement that is greater than one local church.

The Process

With the foundation of theological and historical knowledge necessary for biblical counseling now in place, the focus of this section can transition to the process of counseling itself. To help simplify this process for lay leaders, training will follow the “love, know, speak, do” process outlined in Paul David Tripp’s *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*.⁵²

Love

The first and foundational step in the process of biblical counseling is the process of loving the counselee. It is this love, as argued by Tripp, that is the foundation for people-transforming ministry.⁵³ As we seek to love our counselees, we must begin with a reminder of Christ’s love for us.

This love, which was foundational in our earlier look at the gospel, stands as the believer’s unchanging hope. It is out of love that the Father chooses us (Eph 1:4-5) and it is this love that assures us that we will never be forsaken (Rom 8:31-39). Furthermore, as we consider the incarnation of Christ, we can see a model of what it looks like to practically love those we counsel. As we examine that incarnational ministry, we see Christ’s willingness and ability to enter our world, fully understand our suffering, and bring our needed healing.

In our interactions with every counselee, then, we seek to model that same love. Using the language of Tripp’s *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, we seek to do this by entering the world of the counselee, reflecting the love of Christ, identifying with

⁵² Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 161-76.

⁵³ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 117.

suffering, and accepting with agenda. Many of these elements are explored in the remaining three steps of the process. Still, to ensure that the counselor does not forget the motivation behind every step, it is essential to continually emphasize the necessity of love as the foundational motivation in all we do in counseling.

Know

The next step in biblical counseling revolves around the process of learning all of the necessary data relevant to counselees' situation. This process, which is ultimately modeled after Christ's exhaustive knowledge of us and of all we face (Heb 4:14-16), is essential in order to ensure that our eventual counsel is based on truth and not assumptions.⁵⁴

Gathering data requires both extensive listening as well as asking strategic questions aimed at unearthing counselee's heart. Understanding that counselees generally begin the counseling process without an understanding of what lies at the heart of their problem, counselors must carefully ask questions that address counselees' cognitive patterns, their emotional response to the presenting problem, and how they have volitionally responded to the presenting problem.⁵⁵ Asking open-ended questions can help counselors succeed at unearthing that heart as well as help them gradually understand the patterns in counselee's life that must be addressed. As counselors gather, organize, and eventually interpret the data, they are then able to enter into the next phase of the counseling process.

⁵⁴ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 169.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 184-91.

Speak

Helping counselees change requires that counselors demonstrate a willingness and ability to speak the truth in love. This process requires careful attention is given both in speaking truth regarding sin as well as speaking truth regarding God's grace.

As counselors speak, then, they must be willing to confront those sins and patterns discovered in the "know" portion of the process. Although confrontation is not something attractive to many of us, it is an essential part of loving our neighbor as ourselves and, as Tripp discusses, a "moral responsibility in every relationship."⁵⁶ In the process of confronting sin, the counselor's aim is to help counselees consider their position and sinful patterns, confess where they have fallen short of God's standard, commit themselves to follow those standards, and seek to change their behavior moving forward.⁵⁷

Speaking truth in love, however, does not only call for the counselor to confront sin. Just as the process of gathering data can reveal patterns of sin, it can also reveal an inadequate understanding of God's goodness and grace. Thus, as we seek to speak truth to the counselee, we must also revisit the theme of God's grace offered to the counselee. This requires the counselor to maintain a focus on the gospel and its ongoing implications in the life of the believer. As we speak truth to a counselee, this focus will be revealed as we consistently point to God's grace in the past demonstrated on the cross, God's present grace seen in the Spirit's indwelling presence, and in God's future grace as we look to the believer's ultimate glorification.⁵⁸ It is only when the counselor speaks of the gospel's treatment of sin and offer of grace that he is offering the full truth of the Word in his counseling practice.

⁵⁶ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 202.

⁵⁷ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 231.

⁵⁸ David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2005), 42-43.

Do

The final step in the counseling process is the point where counselors seek to help counselees begin taking the necessary steps to move forward in their situation. According to Tripp, this stage of the process is marked by four basic objectives: (1) establish your personal ministry agenda, (2) clarify responsibility, (3) instill identity in Christ, and (4) provide accountability.⁵⁹ Establishing a personal ministry agenda requires that counselors communicate the Bible's response to the counselee's situation and create a strategy by which counselees can seek to make specific changes. In order to encourage the steps necessary for that change, it is essential that counselors clarify the responsibility that counselees must accept. While change is ultimately a work of God, it still requires counselees' trust and obedience. Throughout each of these steps, it is essential to consistently emphasize counselees' identity in Christ. When counselors fail to do this, it will inevitably become easy for counselees to identify more with their struggle than with their Savior. Thus, through the use of various passages in Scripture, counselors must routinely return to this identity as the source of counselees' only hope. Finally, ongoing change requires that counselees have in place a network of loving accountability. Although this accountability may initially come from counselors, it is important that counselees find accountability from fellow believers who are equally committed to seeing them change in accordance with Scripture.⁶⁰ To help the counselee find that accountability, counselors ought to use other formal and informal ministries already available within the church. This can include small groups, men's and women's Bible studies, and already existing friendships within the church body.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 244.

⁶⁰ Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 269.

⁶¹ Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 97.

Once this network is in place and it is clear that the counselee has demonstrated the necessary growth, counselors will be able to bring the formal counseling process to an end and encourage the counselee to reenter the ongoing process of discipleship within the broader church community. Ending the formal counseling process, however, does not permanently close the door to future counseling conversations with the counselee. It does, however, help encourage the counselee's growth and reminds them that they, too, can become a resource to others within the congregation who face similar struggles.

Conclusion

Effective biblical counseling requires far more than learning a few quick tricks that can be used in a short period of time. It requires developing biblical character, learning about the movement from which our form of counseling is derived, and growing in an understanding of the practical process. In order to help establish each of these elements, curriculum must be developed and taught.

CHAPTER 4
THE TRAINING OF LAY LEADERS
FOR COUNSELING AT CAPE
BIBLE CHAPEL

In the first three chapters, I outlined the need for lay leaders in Cape Bible Chapel for the purpose of building a healthy church community, the biblical basis for training lay leaders within the local church community, and the necessary content for training those lay leaders particularly within CBC. With those chapters providing the necessary foundation for the task of training lay leaders in place, I created the training curriculum and presented it in the context of a Sunday School class throughout the summer of 2023.

Selection of Participants and Initial Findings

In the weeks leading up to the presentation of the prepared curriculum, CBC small group leaders and various other lay leaders within the church were encouraged to attend the training course. In addition to these invitations, a general invitation was given to everyone within CBC.

Due to the fact that this was the church's first attempt to present training for biblical counseling, the class remained open to everyone who voiced interest in the subject and the content included in the curriculum was designed to provide participants with a basic introduction to biblical counseling.

During our time together, participants were introduced to a variety of resources from which the curriculum was drawn. The classes consisted largely of teaching but also included a fair amount of class discussion to encourage vocal participation from all who were in attendance.

Training Curriculum

The design of the curriculum used was intended to provide participants with an introductory level presentation of the need for lay leaders, the history of biblical counseling, the foundational doctrines relevant to biblical counseling, and the practice of biblical counseling. This curriculum was covered within the context of a new Sunday School class offered on Sunday mornings. During that period of 1.25 hours, participants engaged weekly in corporate prayer, group discussion, and lectures.

During the weekly lectures, class participants were able to engage in discussion regarding biblical counseling, engage with the curriculum discussed below, and receive a few different resources to help with their ongoing study and to supplement the curriculum provided.¹ During each weekly discussion, participants were encouraged to ask questions and engage in ongoing discussion regarding how the weekly curriculum could be applied in common counseling cases. The curriculum covered in those weekly discussions was broken up into nine separate discussions.

Curriculum Evaluation

Prior to beginning the Sunday School class in which the curriculum was offered, an overview of the class was sent to all of the elders of CBC. The members of that Elder Board include Josh Stephens (Lead Pastor), Jeremy Kallin (Family Pastor), Andy Callis (Student Ministry Pastor), Jeff Grindstaff (Worship Pastor), Dave Anderson (Lay Elder), DT Whitaker (Lay Elder, College Ministry), Scott Horrel (Lay Elder), Mike Edmunds (Lay Elder), Larry Garret (Lay Elder), and Jason Yunck (Lay Elder).

Although all feedback received from our elders was an important part of the process of developing curriculum that was deemed beneficial to our congregation, I

¹ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping Others in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002). Examples of additional resources include Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2017), and Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

specifically sought out feedback from those elders who provided an additional level of knowledge in biblical counseling. Those elders included Josh Stephens, who is a certified biblical counselor and a founder of the Biblical Counseling Alliance; Mike Edmunds, who has received training in biblical counseling through Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries; and Andy Callis, who is the process of finishing his Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling degree through Faith Seminary. In addition to receiving feedback from those elders, I received feedback from local pastors Greg Schaub, who received a bachelor's degree in psychology and biblical studies degree through Cedarville University, and Matthew Cromer, who also received a bachelor's degree in psychology. The feedback provided by all individuals, including those from our own Elder Board, helped provide additional encouragement to include more details that were particularly relevant for the end of the series. Details from the feedback received from this panel, along with feedback received from class participants, are seen in the instruments provided in chapter 5.

Week 1

The aim of Week 1 was to explore the reason why biblical counseling within the local church is key to developing and maintaining a healthy church community. Central to our discussion was the concept of “community,” which is something CBC proclaims itself to be and, more importantly, something that Scripture repeatedly calls for within each local church.

Our first week's discussion introduced our class to two passages that were consistently referenced throughout all nine weeks. Those passages were Hebrews 10:19-25 and Romans 15:14-17. Both passages, which were explored in an earlier chapter, provide both a biblical portrait of what the community within the church is intended to look like and how lay people within the church today can still be used to help address common counseling problems found within their own church community.

Using Hebrews 10:19-25, our class discussed the foundation that every church community already shares. That shared foundation includes our central faith as well as our calling as believers. Furthermore, within CBC, that shared foundation also includes a shared set of doctrines as well as a shared church mission that every member agrees to fulfilling when becoming a member. It is out of an appreciation of that shared foundation that believers in Hebrews as well as today are called to come alongside one another and help ensure that our fellow believers are fulfilling the assigned mission.

While we share that foundation, however, there remains a presumed inability amongst many believers at the thought of helping a fellow believer walk through any number of life's trials. Assuming the ability to counsel requires formal training, many church members are hesitant to step into the struggles of fellow believers and assume that their pastors alone are fit to address problems within the congregation. As we looked to Romans 15:14-7, however, we saw that this was not the belief of Paul regarding the Roman believers. Those believers, as we discussed in an earlier chapter, we deemed to be competent in their knowledge as well as in their spiritual maturity. To help encourage our own people, we used this passage to discuss the biblical requirements of competency in counseling and demonstrated how that same competency is within grasp of our own church members today.

As we observed both passages, then, we discussed the confidence authors such as Paul maintained in local churches and the calling that was given to the lay people within those churches. It was with that understanding in mind that we were able to look ahead to the aim of the class and the purpose of biblical counseling within our church setting.

Week 2

After laying the foundation for why biblical counseling is so valuable within the local church, we began exploring foundational doctrines. The first of those doctrines

was the sufficiency of Scripture in which we understood the Bible to stand our ultimately authority in its revelation and our sufficient source for knowledge and practice.

Our primary passages for our discussion on the sufficiency of Scripture included 2 Timothy 3:15-17, Psalm 119, and Matthew 4:1-4. Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15-17, which were discussed earlier in chapter 2, provided our class discussion with a brief but foundational reminder of the God-inspired origin of Scripture and what that Scripture is sufficient to address. To help our class see that sufficiency through the eyes of David as well as Christ, we also included Psalm 119 and Matthew 4:1-4 in our discussion. In Psalm 119, we see David speak of the Word's sufficiency to give him guidance in living a life pleasing to the Lord, to comfort him in the face of trials, and to bring joy. In a similar manner, in Matthew 4:1-4, we see Jesus turn to the words of Scripture to overcome his own temptation in the wilderness. In both cases, then, we see personal application of the sufficiency of Scripture.

After exploring the sufficiency of Scripture, our discussion focused on the historical drift away from Scripture's sufficiency and how that drift was manifested within the common transfer of counseling out of the local church and into the secular and professional psychiatrist's office. To help our people see the shift that brought about that gradual change, we looked at key figures such as Wilhelm Wundt, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Rogers. Although each of these figures were outside of the church, the popularization of their theories gradually made an increasing impact on believers and on the growing hesitancy to address common counseling issues through the Bible.

With that broad historical overview given, we then looked briefly at the shift back towards biblical counseling. Focusing on the influence and teachings of Jay Adams, we discussed how this relatively recent shift came not as the result of inventing a new form of counseling. It was, at its heart, a return to the sufficiency of Scripture understood long ago. That shift, as we discussed in our class, grew out of Adams's own experience as a pastor where, early in his first pastorate, he was confronted with his own inability to

help a parishioner who came to him in great distress following a worship service. After feeling inadequate to help that parishioner, Adams began his journey of finding training to help him in his counseling efforts. The training he found, however, proved to be heavily influenced by the likes of Freud and Rogers in its unbiblical portrayal of man, its ignorance of sin, and its inability to truly help those in need. In response to that discovery Adams began the decades long process of helping grow the practice of biblical counseling to be used by pastors in the local church. It was this practice and its dependency on Scripture that provided our class with a helpful model of biblical sufficiency in all we offer as counselors.

For most people in our class, accepting the sufficiency of Scripture was far from something novel. Understanding it in terms of its use within the practice of counseling, however, was somewhat new to a number of our participants. Because of the lack of familiarity with this subject, this study proved to encourage a great deal of discussion during and after class. Many of the class participants were particularly interested in discussing how many of the terms they have grown accustomed to use, including “self-worth,” “our ideal self,” and more, have been popularized by secular psychology. In our discussion, then, this surprise influence led to us considering why using language from Scripture is so important to ensure that we are communicating our dependency on Scripture when counseling others.

Week 3

The sufficiency of Scripture provided the necessary foundation for the remaining discussion on what a competency in biblical counseling requires. With that foundation laid, our third week focused on the necessary character of an effective biblical counselor.

When trying to grow in one’s competency as counseling, it is tempting to jump to the study of foundational doctrines and the practical strategies that can be used. Yet, as

we looked at passages such as 1 Timothy 4:16, our class first discussed the fact that a competent counselor, like a competent pastor, must keep a careful watch of both his doctrine as well as his character. Apart from that proper character, a counselor's long-term effectiveness is greatly hindered and those under their care are put at great risk.

After establishing the importance of godly character, we discussed the foundational fear of God that is required to grow additional God-honoring attributes. To help gain a picture of that fear, we looked to both 2 Corinthians 7:1 and John 5:19. As we did so, we discussed how the fear of God, according to Paul in 2 Corinthians, stands as the essential response to understanding of God's promises and the calling to live holy lives. The perfect example of that holy lifestyle, of course, is seen Jesus Christ who, in John 5:19, reminds us that the Son did nothing outside of the Father's will. It is in that perfect obedience that we see a perfect fear of God on display.

Building on that fear of God, we next spent time looking to passages, such as Matthew 11:29, 1 Peter 5:6, and Galatians 5:22-26, to discuss a few additional characteristics that are especially beneficial in a counseling environment. Those characteristics included gentleness, joyfulness, humility, and love. In each of these characteristics, we first defined the characteristic and looked at it on display in Scripture. More specifically, we discussed how those characteristics are perfectly displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Finally, with each characteristic understood, we discussed how it specifically applies to counseling. It was in this final discussion that we sought to tie together all the material covered in week 3 and finished our portrait of what a competent counselor's character requires.

Week 4

During our fourth week together, we began to walk through a list of doctrines essential to effective biblical counseling. We began this study with a class devoted entirely to a look at the gospel.

Our discussion began with an overview of the gospel story. This story, as seen throughout the New Testament, can be summarized in both shortform as well as longform. Looking to 1 Timothy 1:15, we first discussed how effective a statement as simple as “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” can be to summarize the basic gospel message. In contrast to that brief statement, we then looked to passages such as Colossians 1:13-23 and Acts 17:22-31 and discussed ways that the same gospel narrative can be shared in a longer format with concepts intended to cause to stretch the listener.

Knowing that the familiarity many of our church members have with the gospel can create its own tendency to oversimplify the gospel, I saw it as important to also provide further aid to encourage each class participant to think more deeply on the variety of ways the gospel can be explored. To help them in that process, I encouraged the use of Milton Vincent’s *A Gospel Primer*. In his work, readers can see both a variety of presentations of the gospel as well as a variety of reasons why daily rehearsing the gospel as believers is so helpful to our ongoing spiritual growth.

After exploring the gospel narrative and its various implications, we then sought to demonstrate its essential role in biblical counseling as it establishes boundaries within biblical counseling. For the counselee, it is that gospel story that defines the central need of every sinner and the means of ongoing protection against both legalism and antinomianism. Furthermore, for the counselor, the gospel helps guide us throughout the counseling process as it ensures ongoing balance between grace and correction and forces us to remain focused on the end goal. From the first to final session of any

counseling case, then, it is that same gospel message that must remain central in all counseling endeavors.

Week 5

In our fifth week together, we continued our discussion of essential biblical doctrines. During this week, we specifically looked at the *imago Dei*, the effects of the fall, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of regeneration, and the role of faith and repentance.

Each doctrine was first defined and discussed using various passages of Scripture. This began with a look at Genesis 1-3 and a discussion about the *imago Dei* and how the *imago Dei* was marred in the fall. We further examined the impact of the fall by looking to Romans 3:10-18. As we did so, we discussed how the results of the fall can be seen in all of human suffering as well as in our sinful choices that are addressed in counseling. The doctrine of election, which was intended to emphasize the sovereignty and kindness of God, was presented primarily through Ephesians 1:3-11 and Romans 8:28-30. Rounding out our discussion on doctrines in week 5 were the doctrines of regeneration and faith/repentance. Using Ephesians 2:1-10 along with Romans 10:8-10, we continued to discuss what each of these doctrines reveals about God's nature and how they help flesh out our understanding of the gospel, which was our focus in our previous week.

Although each participant in the class had likely already heard these doctrines explained in the past as a result of attending our church, it was clear that many lacked a clear definition of each concept and tended to blend a variety of doctrines together. Seeing this early on led to the class spending a bit more time than initially planned to define each concept and explore related biblical passages.

After discussing a basic definition of each doctrine and a look at key passages, we then discussed why each doctrine matters within the realm of biblical counseling. At

this juncture in the class, much of our time was spent in class discussion as participants were given the opportunity to share how each doctrine has surfaced in their own counseling experiences. These discussions were greatly beneficial particularly to those with little to no counseling experience.

Week 6

The sixth week of our study completed our look at essential biblical doctrines. In this final week of discussing essential biblical doctrines, we discussed justification, sanctification, a believer's union with Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, and glorification.

Once again, a large percentage of the class time was spent slowly walking through each doctrine and key biblical passages to ensure the class understood each topic. Central to our doctrinal discussions this week was Romans 5-6, in which we saw justification (Rom 5:18-21), the believer's union with Christ (Rom 6:1-5), and the concept of progressive sanctification (Rom 6:12-14). Seeing these passages in succession provided a helpful look at the ongoing growth of the believer.

Additional time was given to our discussion regarding the Holy Spirit and his role in the biblical counseling process. In my particular church context, I have found that the Holy Spirit is often misunderstood by many of our people who have come out of a more charismatic background. Knowing that background, I felt it important to explore the topic of the Holy Spirit's work at greater length than I did with other topics. As we discussed the Holy Spirit, we looked specifically at John 14:16-17, John 16:8-11, 1 Corinthians 2:10-16, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. As we looked to each of these passages, we discussed the specific work attributed to the Holy Spirit and how, in light of that work, we are dependent on him in all we seek to accomplish in counseling.

Our discussion of doctrine concluded with a look at the believer's future glory. To better understand this, we looked at 1 Corinthians 15:35-39 and Romans 8:31-39. As we considered these verses, we discussed both what our future glory will look like and

how this ought to be a tremendous source of motivation to us as counselors as well as those we counsel.

The central aim of the content covered in weeks 5-6 was to provide a summary of biblical doctrines that both tell the story of Scripture as well as explain the story of the calling of the believer. Although more time could have been given to explore additional topics, those covered in our study were sufficient to provide a basic framework on which class participants could add in their pursuit of growing in their counseling competency in the coming years.

Week 7

With a foundation comprised of understanding the need for biblical counseling, the doctrines necessary for effective biblical counseling, and the general character required for biblical counseling, the final weeks of our counseling course could focus on the basic practice and methods of biblical counseling. That practice was divided into a three-week discussion on the process outlined by Paul David Tripp in his work *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*.

During our first week discussing this process we introduced the need to maintain a clear strategy in counseling cases and began to walk through the process of getting to know our counselee through exhaustive data gathering. To emphasize the importance of this process, we looked at both Proverbs 18:13 as well as Hebrews 4:15. Proverbs 18:13, a verse that came up throughout our discussion on the counseling process, says "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame." As we discussed in class, this proverb is a much needed reminder in our culture we are continually tempted to speak first and listen second. In addition to this reminder, we also used Hebrews 4:15 as a reminder of the character of Christ and his ability to empathize with those under his care. Although we cannot understand those we serve at the same level that Christ understands us, the process of gathering data in counseling is one way

we can ensure that we are doing the necessary work to get to know our counsees and serve them with love and empathy.

Prior to looking at the practical skills required to gather data, we reviewed the foundational role that love must play in this phase of the counseling process. That love, which is modeled by Christ in his incarnation, is our motivation to enter into the world of the counselee, identify with their suffering, and set an agenda. As previously discussed in our class, forgetting this underlying motivation negates the biblical nature of our counseling. Thus, this love must remain central in the stage of gathering data, speaking truth to our counselee, and helping them practically address the problem.

After establishing the importance of gathering data and the necessary role that love plays in that effort, we discussed the processes by which that data can be gained. To help class participants think through this process on a practical level, we looked at the data gathering skills of asking good questions and listening well. Each skill, which we explored using two primary resources, is essential in gathering the necessary data for counseling.² To ensure that class participants understood, we took time discussing potentially helpful questions that may be used within the counseling setting.

After discussing the skills required for data gathering and discussing how these skills can be honed, we began discussing the process of organizing the data. As we did so, we looked at the categories that can be useful when collecting data. Those include the situation being discussed, the responses of those involved, the thoughts present in the minds of those involved, and the motivations that drove them to respond the way they did. This process is, as our class discussed, lengthy. Still, if we want to be able to speak wisely into the situation, we must first know the situation as well as possible.

² William R. Miller, *Listening Well: The Art of Empathic Understanding* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018); David Powlison, "X-Ray Questions: Drawing Out the Whys and Wherefores of Human Behavior," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 1 (1999): 2-9.

Week 8

In our eighth week together, we continued to discuss the practical process of counseling others. Our discussion began with a brief conclusion to the subject of gathering data. Having already discussed the process of asking questions and listening carefully, our only remaining data gathering discussion revolved around the skill of interpreting and organizing the data in question. To help think through this process, we looked at the “three trees diagram” found in Timothy Lane and Paul David Tripp’s *How People Change*.³

After concluding our discussion concerning data gathering, we were able to move forward to the second stage of counseling: speaking. As we discussed this process, we first focused our attention on Ephesians 4:11-16 and, more specifically, on the idea of speaking the truth in love. As we discussed in class, this process requires the counselor to speak both words of encouragement as well as words of confrontation in response to sin.

To help us think through the process and aim of speaking truth in love, we began by first reviewing the positive things we must remember to communicate for the purpose of encouraging our counselees. As we did so, we reviewed the comfort of the gospel, the value of every life that is presented through the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, and the realities of progressive sanctification that will be evidenced in every believer’s life. In every counseling situation, these truths will be present but easily overlooked by some counselors when dealing with a counselee’s sin.

With an understanding of the importance and means of encouragement through our speech, we then focused our attention on speaking truth in response to issues of sin. The process of confronting sin, while at times painful, is essential in encouraging the changes counselees seek. To help the class understand the beneficial nature of this process, we looked both at Tripp’s process of confrontation as well as at Robert

³ Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006), 90.

Kellemen’s language of “carefronting,” which he defines as “humbly and lovingly exposing sin out of concern and with a desire for heart change.”⁴ We also looked to passages such as 1 John 1:9-10 to remind us of the goal of our confrontation. That goal is one of confession and repentance. Although confession may feel weighty at times, it is only through this that the freedom found in the promised forgiveness of Christ can then be experienced by our counselees.

The ongoing goal in all we speak during this process, of course, is the continual growth and positive change of the counselee. It is, to use the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:22-32, the process of putting off sin and putting on righteousness. As we concluded our discussion in our eighth week, we used that passage as a reminder of where we would be headed in our ninth and final discussion.

Week 9

In our final week together, we finished our discussion on the process of counseling with a look at the stage of “doing” from Tripp’s *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*. As we did so, we finalized the process of moving from one on one counseling to handing off a counselee into the care of others within the church.

Our discussion began with a look at Psalm 33:18-22 and, in particular, the call for believers to trust in God’s ways and obey that which he calls us to do. This simple concept served as a reminder that our efforts in counseling, while at times feeling inadequate, can be used by God to help accomplish his will. Thus, our calling and the calling of the counselees we serve, is simply to continue to explore what God has revealed in Scripture, to put that revelation into practice, and to trust that he will continue to do what is promised.

⁴ Robert W. Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Family Counseling: An Equipping Guide for Pastors and Counselors* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2020), 182.

To help our class think practically through what this looks like in the final process of counseling, we then discussed the practical need to establish a clear agenda. In doing so, we discussed the importance of reviewing what the Bible says about the particular issue being discussed and the practical benefit of establishing biblical goals and methods. Furthermore, we discussed the importance of clarifying the responsibility of the counselee and the work that can only be accomplished by God.

Finally, as we brought our discussion to a close, we returned to the role of the church community at large and the importance of passing off our counselees into the hands of fellow church members who love them and who are willing to help continue to encourage them in their faith. This brought our class, once again, back to the passages that started our entire study: Hebrews 10:19-25 and Romans 15:14. As we discussed these passages one final time, we reviewed how even lay people in the church can prove to be competent counselors and why their role is essential to developing the community we seek to develop at CBC.

Conclusion

The response to our Counseling for Community class was overwhelmingly positive. The number of participants, which ranged from thirty to over sixty on any given week, communicated a desire from our church body to have this type of training and to seriously consider the role of biblical counseling to create a healthier church community at CBC in the coming years.

The instruments provided, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, demonstrated a growing interest in the topic of biblical counseling. More importantly, they demonstrated that the participants both understood the importance of the doctrines presented in the class as well as how those doctrines are connected to the practice of biblical counseling. Although more time could have been given to the practical guide to the counseling process, all participants of the class were

able to leave with a basic introduction to the concept of biblical counseling and, based on their results, were more confident in their competency to serve as lay leaders in the coming years in the issues that arise that fall within the purview of their training.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Cape Bible Chapel exists to be a gospel-centered community of worshippers on mission to make and multiply disciples in our neighborhoods, in the next generation, and throughout the nations. This project sought to come alongside the mission of CBC and assist in the strengthening of the church's community through the use of biblical counseling. In previous chapters, the rationale for the project, the theological foundations for the training, and the curriculum presented to individuals at CBC were discussed. In this final chapter I will seek to demonstrate the efficiency of the project, consider where the project may be strengthened for greater future use, and discuss lessons learned throughout the process.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the key lay leaders of CBC in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to create a community of biblical counseling. This purpose, which was seen as a strategic means by which the larger vision of the church could be executed, was encouraged by the leadership of CBC and seen as an early step in the long-term goal of establishing a culture of biblical counseling within our church.

The project's focus on various lay leaders within Cape Bible Chapel proved to be successful as it drew most of our small group leaders as well as a handful of our elders, deacons, and a few other ministry volunteers. Feedback from these leaders was overwhelmingly positive. One elder was particularly encouraged by both the content, which he commented was "very well prepared and very helpful" as well as the class participation which he described as "great interaction" and "inclusive of all

participants.”¹ From all the feedback received, it seemed clear that our leaders agreed that the subject of training lay leaders is important to our church and that the curriculum provided accomplished the goal of beginning that training. Those same leaders agreed that the future success of this training will largely depend on our ability to continue to encourage the development and use of lay leaders for counseling within our church community.

Although the success of the project can certainly be measured in the participation and response of the church’s lay leaders, I believe the project’s success can equally be seen in the large number of additional church members and visitors who consistently attended and provided equally positive feedback. Within that larger number, people from a variety of age groups, church engagement, and spiritual maturity were happy to participate in the class. One participant, who was already an engaged member of the church, commented on how “encouraging it is to see the doctrine I already know to be true applied in such a simple yet helpful way.” Another participant far younger in the faith and relatively new to the church, commented on how convicting it was to “hear other Christians be able to apply the faith to counseling situations he was currently battling.” Although the overall responses of these participants were positive, many others still spoke to the desire to have more training on the practical process of counseling and hoped that another class would be offered soon.

More training is needed to create confident and competent biblical counselors. Still, considering the stated purpose of this project and the feedback received from the many participants, I believe that this project was successful, and I believe that its success will continue to help our church build a community of counseling in the coming years.

¹ This particular feedback was given by Lay Elder Mike Edmunds in his evaluation feedback on the curriculum rubric and in feedback he provided to the elders following the conclusion of the class based on his interaction with class participants.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal of the project was to assess the willingness and abilities to counsel of CBC's current elders and small group leaders. This goal required the use of two assessments that could help quantify both the current level of involvement in our church community as well as the current ability possessed by those lay leaders to offer counsel when needed. This goal was considered successfully met when the key lay leaders present in the class participated in the pre-project Church Community Involvement Survey as well as the pre-project Basics of Counseling Assessment (BCA).²

Although the training remained open to all interested participants, the results gathered from the assessments focused only on those serving as lay elders and small group leaders. That group, which included 66 percent of our lay elders and 75 percent of our small group leaders, consisted of twelve individuals total. This same group also completed the post-project BCA, which will be discussed shortly.

The results of the Church Community Involvement Survey demonstrated the level of church involvement and weekly spiritual disciplines of those participating in the class (see table 1 below). Aside from demonstrating the high level of involvement of these lay leaders in the lives of other members at CBC, this survey also demonstrated the gap between the percentage of lay leaders who are consistently asked to help address counseling matters monthly (76.1 percent) and the percentage of lay leaders who have received previous training for counseling (35 percentage). The results of the pre-project BCA, which will be discussed later, further demonstrated a lack of confidence and competence felt by these lay leaders to offer counsel to others.

² See appendices 2 and 4.

Table 1. Pre-project church community involvement survey

<i>Category</i>	<i>Average Results</i>
Years as a believer	28.70
% of participants currently serving as an elder or small group leader	70.00
Hours spent each week in personal Bible study	4.88
% of participants who weekly discuss Scripture with others within the church community	82.30
Hours spent each week in prayer	3.67
% of participants who weekly pray with other believers each week	52.94
Hours spent each week with other members of the church outside of Sunday morning worship	2.40
% of participants who have previously received theological training	5.80
% of participants who have previously received training for counseling	35.00
% of participants who are asked to help address counseling matters on a monthly basis.	76.10

The second goal of the project was to develop a basic Sunday School curriculum for biblical counseling training within the context of eldership and small group ministry.³ The curriculum was then evaluated by fellow pastors and ministry leaders using a curriculum evaluation rubric.⁴ This goal was considered met when the curriculum was developed and when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria on the evaluation rubric met or exceeded the sufficient level of competency. All the evaluation criteria received a rating of sufficient or exemplary from the members of the panel (see table 2 below).

³ See appendix 1.

⁴ See appendix 3.

Table 2. Curriculum evaluation tool scores

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total Percentage</i>
Biblical Accuracy	95.0%
Scope	87.5%
Pedagogy	95.0%
Practicality	82.5%

The lowest total score came in response to the practicality of the curriculum. This score likely would have been helped by building in more opportunities for class participants to demonstrate their counseling abilities with fellow class participants. Another common critique, which came under the category of scope, questioned the amount of content that was included in this short of a timeframe. I agreed with this critique and would likely try to lengthen the duration of the series in the coming years.

Overall, each panel member viewed the curriculum as generally helpful and well organized. The elders who participated were pleased by the weekly discussion and the opportunity this curriculum gave to expose our congregation to the topic of biblical counseling. One local pastor even stated that he would like to think through how a similar curriculum might be implemented in his own church here in Cape Girardeau.

The third goal of the project was to equip leaders through the teaching of the curriculum designed in the second goal.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when participants completed their pre-project and post-project Basics of Counseling Assessment (BCA).⁶ The pre-project BCA was provided before the start of the class and was returned by each participant to my mailbox in the church offices before the second week of the training. The post-project BCA was provided the final week of class and was

⁵ Again, to ensure that data was taken from class participants who fall within the category of lay leadership, the testing group was specifically focused on those participants currently serving as elders or small group leaders.

⁶ See appendix 4.

returned by each participant to my mailbox within a week of the conclusion of training. Although each assessment provided the opportunity to remain anonymous, each lay leader also chose to include his name on his assessment.

The result of the t-test from the BCA demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(12)} = 5.041$, $p < 0.0004$.⁷ Although growth was not significant with each participant, both those who finished with the highest scores as well as the lowest scores on the pre-project BCA made significant gains on their post-project BCA (see table 3 below).

Table 3. Pre- and post-project BCA

<i>Category</i>	<i>Pre-Project BCA</i>	<i>Post-Project BCA</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Average Score	128.58	139.75	11.17
High Score	143.00	153.00	10.00
Low Score	114.00	127.00	13.00

A large percentage of our class was already familiar with many of the doctrines and ideas presented in this class. That familiarity resulted, in part, in a relatively minor amount of change documented in the assessment. Still, the results demonstrate growth in particular areas, including the participants' confidence in the belief that every Christian has sufficient spiritual resources to counsel fellow believers as well as in their own ability to counsel a friend facing personal conflict.⁸ Furthermore, in discussions with class participants, it was clear that this curriculum resulted in our people becoming far more exposed to the language and practice of biblical counseling. As a result, I felt the impact this class made on participants to be worth the effort.

⁷ See appendix 5.

⁸ These results were based on questions 3 and 18 of the pre- and post-project BCA.

The fourth and final goal of the project was to develop a ministry plan to implement the training ministry leaders have received into their ministry contexts. The original goal stated that this would be considered completed once a strategic plan was crafted to implement the training in various ministry contexts. This final goal has proven to be the most difficult to evaluate as the elders of CBC are in the early phase of discussions regarding long-term plans for implementing biblical counseling training for more people within the body. As an Elder Board, we have already begun planning a potential conference in 2024 with Stuart Scott for the purpose of providing more thorough training. We have begun planning an annual Sunday School class similar to the course presented in this project to ensure that new members are given the opportunity to learn the basics of biblical counseling. In addition to an annual class, I have also scheduled two training sessions for 2024 for our small group leaders to continue our discussion of how to use the skills of biblical counseling in their weekly small group discussion. Finally, to provide practical opportunities for those interested in serving as lay leader biblical counselors, I have begun discussions with our Senior Pastor Josh Stephens about the process of inviting lay people to serve as counseling advocates in new counseling cases. My hope is that this will satisfy the desire to serve from our most interested and equipped lay people while our elders continue to think through a long-term strategy for developing a biblical counseling culture at CBC.

Based on the original language of the goals made for this project, then, this fourth and final goal has not yet been achieved. Still, considering the progress that has been made in making more of our key leaders and other church members aware and increasingly familiar with biblical counseling and based on the ongoing planning for providing additional training and counseling opportunities for our lay people, I believe the project has proven to be useful and a success in our church community.

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of this project was in the surprisingly high level of interest revealed by the number of participants. Although most of the participants were hesitant to fill out my evaluations, there were approximately fifty people who faithfully attended each week's class. Those participants were consistent in class discussion, in asking questions to clarify lessons, and in their desire to even stay after class to continue counseling related discussions with fellow participants. This high level of interest demonstrated to all our elders the importance and use of biblical counseling as we continue to move forward in doing the work to build a healthier church community.

An additional strength of this project was in the time each class allowed for group discussion. While our participants were not able to witness any counseling cases on an individual level, they were given ample opportunities to think through the material covered and engage with the material through our weekly question and answer portion of the class. This time for discussion proved to be the most cited aspect of the class when feedback was offered. In most of our Sunday School classes, class participants have little opportunities to have questions answered. Thus, allowing them to do so in this context proved to be a great encouragement to all who attended.

One final strength of this project was in its ability to connect many familiar biblical doctrines to practical matters that are commonly addressed in counseling. Those matters included dealing with difficulties in marriage, challenges in parenting, struggles in the workplace, and many others. In those discussions, many class participants commented on how they had never connected the doctrine they felt they already knew with real life. One participant stated that she had never before considered how the concept of the *imago Dei* is so pivotal when working through conflicts within a friendship. Overall, I felt that the opportunity this class gave to connect our church's beliefs with the practice of counseling was, perhaps, its greatest strength.

Weaknesses of the Project

The first and, I believe, greatest weakness of this project was the chosen amount of time in which the curriculum was presented. My desire was to present training in a succinct manner that would provide a foundational understanding of biblical counseling that could then be used for future training. As I developed the curriculum, it became clear that eight weeks would not provide enough time to cover the desired material. In light of that, I added a ninth week to provide a little more time for class discussion. Although I still believe the project needed to focus on the fundamentals of training, two to three more weeks would have greatly helped the class leave the training with a greater depth of understanding some of the more practical implications of the material that was presented. This weakness was most clearly seen in the final weeks of the training when time for questions and answers had to be ended due to the need to conclude our Sunday School period and join the worship service.

A second weakness of the project related to the first weakness was in the lack of opportunities it gave for class participants to practice the skills they were learning. Although a high percentage of class participants reported they were involved in informal counsel at least monthly, it was also clear from their questions that they still lacked confidence in executing a consistent and strategic approach in their counseling conversations. In future training, I believe it will be important to schedule time for class participants to practice their newly learned skills “on each other” within the setting of the class.

A third and final weakness of the project revolved around the difficulties previously cited regarding the fourth and final goal of the project. As previously stated, our elders are still in the early phase of thinking through a long-term strategy to develop lay biblical counselors in our church. Although that discussion is necessary and is encouraging to see, its current incomplete status meant that class participants in this

project do not have a clearly defined area where they could use their newly developed skills within our church community.

What I Would Do Differently

Considering the previously referenced weaknesses of this project, I believe a few changes would be essential to the success of any future presentation of this project within Cape Bible Chapel. Those changes largely revolve around the length of the training and in the follow-up.

As previously stated, I felt that despite adding an additional week to the training, the nine-week schedule for our training was still too short. Adding two to three additional weeks to that plan would provide a greater opportunity to still cover the material but also provide more opportunities for questions and answers. More importantly, adding those weeks would allow for more time in which class participants would be able to practice their counseling skills with other class participants. This, I believe, would improve their level of confidence to counsel in every-day situations.

In addition to planning on a slightly longer timeframe, it would have been wiser to begin conversations at the elder level of the church concerning ways we could immediately implement the new training within our church body. As it stands, that conversation is currently taking place and I believe we will arrive at a conclusion in the coming months. I am hopeful that, at that future date, the class participants will still be eager to use their counseling skills to serve our church body. Still, it would have been better to have that plan already in place before the end of the training.

Theological Reflections

The curriculum presented in this project emphasized the importance of numerous doctrines and included the sufficiency of Scripture, the nature of man, sin, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, union with Christ, sanctification, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the church, and the believer's future glory. None of these

doctrines was new to participants who are members of CBC. Still, in the discussion surrounding these doctrines and in the questions asked by the class participants, I found two important reminders.

The first of those reminders is the importance of clearly defining biblical doctrine as frequently as possible throughout all the teaching and preaching that takes place within the context of our church community. As I previously mentioned, none of the doctrines I covered in this course were new to the members of our church. These doctrines are all defined in our church documents and referenced in our membership class. Still, despite that fact, I found that numerous people within our class were unclear in their understanding of these doctrines and often unable to define them on their own. Throughout those early lessons in this series, then, I was struck with the realization that our leadership and all those involved in teaching likely need a reminder on the importance of our teaching and, perhaps, may need some additional training offered by our staff in the coming years.

The second reminder came in the realization that even among class participants who demonstrated a firm grasp on the definition of various biblical doctrines, there was still a common weakness in the ability to connect those doctrines to the practice of counseling people facing everyday challenges. As an example, when asked how the *imago Dei* helps shape how we view an individual who struggles with a sin we find particularly offensive, many of our class participants were unable to give an answer. As I considered this reality, I was struck with the realization that our teaching within our church often lacks real life application. Thus, as a result of teaching through this curriculum, I was able to learn more about where our church community is weak theologically and where that weakness is linked to a weakness in our own teaching.

Personal Reflections

This project grew my appreciation of the value of biblical counseling within the local church for the purpose of building a healthier community as well as my understanding of the need for active members within the church body. It was a reminder of both what it takes to be a competent counselor as well as an effective shepherd.

Competency in counseling, which was an underlying theme in the curriculum, requires a proper grasp of biblical theology, biblical character, and biblical strategy. As I created the curriculum covering each of these areas, I was consistently reminded of areas in my own life that needed growth. One example of this came in thinking through the necessary character of a biblical counselor. As I prepared that lesson, I was reminded of how my character will come through not just what I say to my counselee, but in my willingness to listen carefully and to communicate always in a loving and humble manner. It was, then, an effective ongoing means of self-reflection that resulted not simply in helpful curriculum but also in personal growth.

Furthermore, teaching through the curriculum was a much-needed reminder of what is required to be an effective shepherd. Walking through our doctrinal discussions was a helpful lesson of where our people are weakest theologically and where I, along with the other elders, ought to continue to remain focused in our teaching in the coming months. Those weak spots included the concept of the *imago Dei* as well as the general ability to apply the gospel in everyday circumstances. In a similar manner, teaching through this curriculum was a reminder of how every member of the church truly can be used to minister to one another within our church community. This reality, which is something praised by Paul in multiple epistles, is something that is easy for me to overlook as a pastor. Thus, as I reflect on the lessons learned from this process, I am struck with the reminder of how much the people under my care are capable of if I simply put in the necessary work of equipping them according to God's Word. As our church

continues to move forward in our long-term planning, I pray that these lessons will be used to help our community continue to grow.

Conclusion

Developing and presenting the curriculum for this project was both deeply challenging as well as incredibly encouraging. From the beginning, I knew that developing the curriculum would require many hours of research and careful consideration of what was most needed to ensure a beneficial study for the church. Still, I did not appreciate in the development phase of this project the additional time that would be needed to answer the many questions that class participants would ask each week, to provide additional resources for further reading, and to help class participants who were already assisting in challenging counseling cases. Those additional challenges only grew my appreciation for the skill of counseling and in the importance of helping people minister to one another.

Despite those challenges, however, the process of teaching proved to also be incredibly encouraging. Had I chosen to simply write a paper, I believe I would have ended this research feeling a bit more emptied. Although I learned a great more about counseling throughout this process, my research also continually revealed how much room I must grow. Despite that humbling reality, however, the process of teaching this content to those under my shepherding care was a reminder of the need the church body has for faithful teachers and for people willing and able to equip church members to do the work of ministry. With each lesson, I would routinely hear words of encouragement and thanks from my participants. As a result, my project left me feeling tired yet eager to continue the process of growing a culture of biblical counseling in this church and in whatever other church God may have waiting for me in the coming years.

APPENDIX 1
CURRICULUM OUTLINE

The following is an outline of the curriculum used for our training course.

Counseling for Community

CBC Sunday School Class

Dates: Beginning June 11th, Ending August 20th

Week 1

The Need for Lay Counselors

Hebrews 10:19-25, Exodus 18:13-26, Romans 15:14-16

Counseling for Community, Week 1

Introduction: Our perpetual disappointment

I. “We exist...” for community

A. The Vision:

“CBC exists to be a gospel-centered community of worshippers on mission to make and multiply disciples of Christ in our neighborhoods, of the nations, and of the next generation.”

* *What comes to mind when you hear a word like “community?”*

B. The Biblical Foundation (Hebrews 10:19-25, I Cor. 12, etc)

i. The Presumed Foundation (10:19-21) (“since we...”)

ii. The Ongoing Work (Heb. 10:22-25) (“let us...”)

II. “We” experience...disconnect

A. Our Modern Dysfunction

* *What hinders the type of community that the Bible speaks of? (personal experience)*

B. Our Ancient Tradition (Hebrews 10, I Cor. 11:27-34, Exodus 18)

i. Interpersonal Disputes

* *What were some of those common disputes?*

ii. Cultural Tensions

* *When it feels too messy, what do people tend to do?*

iii. Practical Limitations (Exodus 18:13-16) (a story)

III. We need...You

A. The Genuine Need (Exodus 18:17, I Cor. 12, etc)

B. The Presumed Ability (Romans 15:14-17)

C. The Clear Calling (Romans 15:14): nouthetic counseling

a. Paul's Calling (I Cor. 4:14, I Timothy 1:5, etc)

b. The Romans' Calling: Admonish One Another (Romans 15:14)

b. The Christian Calling: To teach, correct, build up (II Tim. 3-4)

IV. Conclusion/Moving Forward

A. Personally: Rejoice in your salvation (because you have a real identity)

B. Personally: Be thankful for Christian community

C. For this Class: Attend, Ask Questions (whether it feels too simplistic or too difficult)

Week 2

The Authority Behind Biblical Counselors

II Timothy 3:15-17, Psalm 119

Counseling for Community, Week 2

I. The Starting Point: A Theology of Scripture

A. Foundation Belief:

“The Bible, as the Word of God, stands as our ultimate authority in its revelation and our sufficient source for knowledge and practice.”

- i. Authoritative: The Bible provides the supreme standard
- ii. Sufficient: The Bible contains what we need to know of God’s will and to live a life pleasing to him.

B. Foundational Text(s)

i. The Doctrine (II Timothy 3:16-17)

** According to Paul, what is God’s Word sufficient for?*

ii. Examples

- a. David (Psalm 119)
- b. Jesus (Matthew 4:1-4)

C. Historical Patterns

II. The Shift

A. Shift in the Church

- i. The “Ancient” Image (puritan pastor, making visits, etc)
- ii. The New Focus: From Discipleship to Revivalism (late 1700s)
 - a. A Key Figure: Charles Finney

- b. The Central Focus: Mass Conversions (big tent revivals)
 - iii. Lingering Orthodoxy (Fundamentalists vs. Modernists)
- B. Shift in the Culture
 - i. A New “Science”
 - a. Key Figure: Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1900)
 - b. New Idea:
 - “All psychological processes are rooted in a biological element.”
 - ii. A New “Practice”
 - a. Key Figure: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
 - b. New Idea: Invented the “talking cure”
 - iii. A New Language
 - a. Key Figure: Carl Rogers (1902-1987)
 - b. New Idea: Humanistic Approach
- C. The Eventual Collision
 - i. The Modern Challenge: World Wars (I & II)
 - * *What did these conflicts do to societies? How did they effect soldiers?*
 - ii. The Church’s Inadequacy
 - iii. The Apparent Solution: Go see a shrink

III. A Return to the Beginning (Biblical Counseling)

- A. A Key Figure: Jay Adams (1929-2020)
 - i. His Context
 - ii. His Struggle
 - inability to help, inability to confidently refer out to “professionals”
- B. “New” Old Idea: Nouthetic Counseling (Romans 15, II Timothy)
- C. The Resulting Movement: Biblical Counseling (*Competent to Counsel*)
- D. The Ongoing Growth (Biblical Counseling Movement through the 80s and 90s)

IV. Conclusion/Application

- A. Self Examination #1: How has your understanding of counseling been shaped by unbiblical ideas?
- B. Self Examination #2: How well do you know the Bible?
- C. Return to Scripture (rely on the Holy Spirit, study the Word)

Week 3

The Counselor's Character

Romans 15:14, I Timothy 4:16, Matthew 11:29

Counseling for Community, Week 3

Review/Introduction: More than a skillset...(Romans 15:14, I Timothy 4:16)

I. A Counselor's Focus

A. Our Foundational Mindset: Fear of God (I Peter 2:7, I Cor. 7:1, etc)

“This fear is the wellspring of all godly desires and aspirations.” (Bridges)

B. Our Foundational Model: Christ

i. His Perfect Devotion to the Father (John 5:19)

ii. His Sustained Connection to Man (Matthew 11:29) (*Gentle and Lowly*)

* *How is a sustained/real connection with Man possible only through fear of God?*

II. A Counselor's Character

A. Humility

i. Humility before God (I Peter 5:6, Is. 66:1-2)

* *How is humility essential in every person's conversion?*

ii. Humility before Man (Philippians 4:5, James 3:17, I Timothy 1:15, etc)

iii. Humility in Counseling

* *How is this attitude essential in counseling situations? (personal examples)*

B. Gentleness (Galatians 5:22-23, Colossians 3:12, II Timothy 2:24-25)

i. It's Character:

ii. Its Effect (seen in Christ) (Matthew 11:28-29)

* *Are people at rest in your presence?*

iii. Its Need (in counseling) (Galatians 6:1)

C. Joyfulness

- i. A Gift in Salvation (John 10:10, I Timothy 6:17)
- ii. An Ongoing Pursuit (Hebrews 12:12)
- iii. Its Need (in counseling)

* *Why is your joy important to the person seeking your counsel?*

D. Love

- i. Love of God (Exodus 34:6-7, Isaiah 55:6-13, I John 3:16, etc)
- ii. Love for God & Our Fellow Man (I John 4:19-21)
- iii. Love's Role in Counseling

* *How is love manifested in counseling situations?*

III. A Counselor's Internal Calling

A. Find your weak spots (as those around you)

* *Are people at ease in my presence? Do I love others? Am I joyful?*

B. Meditate on Christ

C. Imitate Christ

Week 4

The Counselor's Foundation: The Gospel

Romans 1:16-17, Colossians 1:19-20

Counseling for Community, Week 4

Review/Introduction: The frustration of presumed knowledge/understanding...

I. The Gospel's Story

A. The Gospel in Short-Form (I Timothy 1:15)

- i. Its Simple Themes
- ii. Its Focused Results: Sinner saved by grace.

“Here’s the gospel in a phrase. Because Christ died for us, those who trust in him may know that their guilt has been pardoned once and for all. What will we have to say before the bar of God’s judgment? Only one thing. Christ died in my place. That’s the gospel.”

(Alistair Begg)

B. The Gospel in Long-Form (Col. 1:13-23, Acts 17:22-31, etc.)

- i. Similar Themes (with more detail)
- ii. Its Broader Results: Creation restored.

“The gospel...is the message that God acted in and through Jesus Messiah, God’s anointed one, to effect God’s promise of shalom, salvation, God’s reign.” (Robert Gulich)

II. The Gospel's Proclamation

A. Proclaimed in Evangelism (Acts 17:22-31)

B. Forgotten by Believers

i. Legalism (I Timothy 1:6-7, Colossians 2:16-23, etc)

- The Presumption: “Conversion by grace, glorification by works”

* *What does this look like today?*

ii. Antinomianism/Relativism (Jude 4, I John 2:4, etc)

- The Presumption: “Conversion by grace, and then nothing...”

* *Again, what does this sound like today?*

C. Proclaimed for Ongoing Discipleship (Romans 1:13-17, I Corinthians 1:18, Ephesians 1-3, etc.)

* *Why did Paul and other authors keep the Gospel central in addressing so many issues?*

III. The Gospel’s Counsel

A. The Counselor’s Starting Point (I Cor. 15:1-3)

B. The Counselee’s Sanctification (Gal. 2:20, **Romans 6:8-14**, II Peter 3:18)

C. The Counselor’s Constant Guide

i. For Balance (seesaw of counseling)

ii. For Focus on End Goal (Eph. 3:14-19)

iii. For Confidence (Philippians 1:6, I Cor. 1:4-9)

* *How does the gospel maintain our confidence in all counseling situations?*

IV. Conclusion/Application

A. Review the gospel

B. Preach the gospel to Yourself

C. Use the gospel when helping others

Week 5

The Counselor's Knowledge: Doctrine (Part I)

Romans 15:14, Hebrews 10:19-25

Counseling for Community, Week 5

Review/Introduction: What must one know?

I. The Image of God

A. What it Is (**Genesis 1:26-28**): Man's Unique Design

- i. Declared in Creation: "In God's image he created them..."
- ii. Retained in the Fall (Genesis 9:1-7)
- iii. Restored & Renewed in Believers (Romans 8:28-30, **II Cor. 3:12-18**)

B. Why it Matters

- i. A Necessary Origin Story
- ii. A Foundational Appreciation of Humanity

II. The Fall/Sin

A. What it Is (Genesis 3, Romans 3:10-18, etc)

- i. The Key Event: The Fall (Genesis 3)
 - sin marks Man's Disposition and spiritual Position

ii. The Effects

- a. Our Desires/Motivations (James 1:14-15)
- b. Our Thoughts (Col. 1:21, Eph. 4:17-19)
- c. Our Physical Bodies (I Cor. 15:42-44)
- d. Our Relationships (Gen. 3, Titus 3:3, etc)
- e. Our Standing Before God (Romans 3:10-18)
- f. Our Entire World (Romans 8:20-22)

iii. The Experience

a. Sinful Choices

b. Sin-Caused Suffering

B. Why it Matters

i. A foundation for understanding humanity

ii. Motivation to Empathize

** In the absence of this doctrine, how is suffering misunderstood in our world today?*

III. Election/God's Plan of Grace

A. What it Is

i. The Definition:

An act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any unforeseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.

ii. The Biblical Texts (Deut. 7:6-8, Malachi 1:2-5, Romans 8:28-36, **Eph.**

1:3-11)

iii. The "Timing": Before the foundations of the earth

iv. The Basis: God's **Love** (Eph. 1:11, Romans 8)

v. The Results: Salvation and Service

B. Why it Matters

i. A foundational for understanding God (Our God is a God who Plans)

ii. Personal Humility

iii. Practically – to encourage people on matters of assurance.

IV. Regeneration

A. What it Is

i. The Definition:

A secret act of God in which he imputes **new spiritual life** to us.

ii. The Biblical Pictures:

- 1) New Birth (I John 2:29, 4:17)
- 2) New Creation (Gal. 6:15, I Cor. 5:17)
- 3) Resurrection (Eph. 2:5, I John 3:14)

** What do all of these pictures have in common in their portrayal of Man's effort?*

iii. The New Life

- a. Sovereignly Accomplished (review)
- b. Completely Transforming (I Cor. 6:11, Col. 3:1-2, I John 2:15-

17)

B. Why it Matters

** How does this help both the counselor and the counselee?*

V. Faith/Repentance

A. What (they) Are

i. Faith:

1) Specific Definition:

Trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life

2) Broader Understanding:

*** Not just knowledge, but KNOWLEDGE + TRUST**

ii. Repentance:

1) Specific Definition:

A sorrowful renouncing of sin and a sincere commitment to forsake it in obedience to Christ.

2) Broader Understanding (Hebrews 12:17, Luke 18:10-14)

iii. Essential for Salvation (Romans 10:8-10)

iv. Essential for Ongoing Growth

B. Why (they) Matter

VI. Conclusion/Application (more to come)

A. Be Humble (you can always know more)

B. Be a good Student, Find Good Resources (first and foremost, the Bible)

C. Be Comforted (God can use anyone)

Week 6

The Counselor's Knowledge: Doctrine (Part II)

Romans 15:14, Romans 8:17-39, etc.

Counseling for Community, Week 6

Review/Introduction: Why theology matters...

I. Justification

A. What it Is:

i. The Definition:

The act of God by which sinners are made righteous and brought to a proper relationship
with him

ii. The Declaration(s) (imputation)

1) Forgiven (our sins imputed to Christ) (Lev. 16:21-22 --> Is. 53:4-5)

2) Righteous (Christ's righteousness imputed to us) (II Cor. 5:21, Romans 5:18-21)

B. Why it Matters (in counseling)

i. Dealing with Guilt

ii. Dealing with false assumptions (inability)

II. Union with Christ

A. What it Is:

i. Definition:

The believer's solidarity with Christ, by the Holy Spirit through faith, by virtue of which
believers partake in his saving benefits.

ii. Key Texts:

a. OT Foreshadowing (Jeremiah 31:32, Is. 54:4-8)

b. NT Fulfillment (John 15:1-11, 17:23-26, Romans 6:1-5, etc)

- commonly represented by language of **in Christ**”

iii. Key Result: Transformation

B. Why it Matters

i. Provides Dignity

ii. Provides Confidence (John 15:4-7)

iii Help in Temptation (I Cor. 6:15-20)

III. Progressive Sanctification

A. What it Is:

i. Definition:

The ongoing work of God & Man that makes us increasingly free from sin and increasingly like Christ in our daily lives.

ii. God’s Work (Romans 8:28-30)

iii. Our Work (Romans 6:12-14, Titus 2:11-12, II Cor. 7:1, **Eph. 4:20-23**)

* *What is your role in your ongoing sanctification?*

B. Why it Matters:

i. For realistic Expectations

ii. For Remembering Responsibility

* Positional Sanctification, which is the primary way the term is used throughout the New Testament, refers to the one time act of God in which he permanently sets believers apart.

IV. The Holy Spirit

A. Who He Is/What He Does

The third Person of the Trinity given to all believers who enables them to carry out the mission given by God, gives spiritual gifts, and guides Christians in their daily walk

- i. His indwelling (John 14:16-17, Galatians 4:6, Eph. 1:13-14)
- ii. His Teaching (II Peter 1:20-21, John 16:12-13, I Cor. 2:10-16)
- iii. His Empowering/Gifting (I Cor. 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:12-13)
- iv. His Convicting (John 16:8-11)

B. Why this Matters

- i. For the Counselee
- ii. For the Counselor

V. Future Glory

A. What it Is:

The future event at which point we share in God’s glory when we, in our resurrected bodies in the new heavens and new earth, will experience the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom.

- i. A Future Transformation (I Cor. 15:35-39)

* What’s different about our resurrected bodies?

- ii. The Consummation of our Sonship (Romans 8:19, I John 3:1-2)
 “Everything Adam & Eve were called to be we shall become – and more.”

B. Why it Matters:

- i. For Hope (Romans 8:31-39)
- ii. For Motivation (I John 3:3)

VI. Conclusion/Application

- A. Examine Your Theological Depth (figure out where you need to grow).
- B. Continue to Study
- C. Use What You Have

Week 7

The Counselor's Practice (Part I)

Proverbs 18:13, James 1:19

Review/Introduction

I. Our Need: More Data

A. Acquaintance with People

** How does this negatively impact our attempts to build a healthy community?*

B. Acquaintance with God's Word (Matthew 12:3, 19:14, 24:25-27)

C. Growing in our Love for Both (God's People and God's Word)

** How does Jesus model this love for us perfectly?*

Key Text: Proverbs 18:13

II. Listening for Data (Skill #1) (James 1:19, Proverbs 12:15)

A. Our Model: God (Psalm 116:1-2, Hebrews 4:14-16)

i. OT (Psalm 116)

ii. NT (Hebrews 4:14-16)

B. Our Practice

i. The Mindset of Listening (Philippians 2:4)

ii. The Posture of Listening (Proverbs 2:2-6)

iii. The Balance of Listening

a. An Ear for Critique

b. An Ear for Encouraging

III. Asking for Data (Skill #2)

A. Our Model: Christ (John 11:17-27, Mark 8:29-30, etc)

i. His Practice

** What role did questions play in Jesus' earthly ministry?*

ii. His Message (The Revealed Value of Good Questions)

B. Our Practice

1. (Almost) Always Open-Ended Questions
2. Include “Survey” AND “Focused Questions
3. Different Questions for Different Information (to fill in the gaps)
 - What? How? Why? How often? When? Where?
4. Progressive Line of Questions

IV. Organizing the Data (Skill #3)

A. The Need: **Helping** to Make **Biblical** Sense

* In all of this, our goal is “Where does the Bible say that change needs to take place in this person/situation?”

B. The Practice (hooks analogy)

1) The Situation

- historical
- present

2) The Responses (What this person does in response to what is happening)

3) The Thoughts

* What does this person think about what is going on?

4) The Motives (What does this person want out of this?)

C. The Conclusion: Sorting the Laundry

V. Conclusion/Application

A. Consider the Example of Christ

B. Practice Key Skills (with spouse, with friends, etc)

C. Pray for Wisdom

Week 8

The Counselor's Practice, Part II

Ephesians 4, Romans 12:14-21

Review/Introduction: More than memorizing facts...

I. Interpreting Your Data (“Know” Conclusion)

A. Summarize (points on a list)

B. Synthesize (bringing thoughts together, comparing/contrasting with Scripture)

* 3 Trees Diagram

II. Speak (Process, Part 2)

A. The Call: Speak truth in love (Eph. 4:29, 4:14-16)

i. The Content: Scripture (Truth)

ii. The Motivation: **Love**

iii. The Aim: Change (put off, be renewed, put on)

B. The Process (from “Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands”)

1) Consideration:

“What does this person need to see (about himself, God, others, life, truth, change) that he does not see, and how can I help him see it?”

2) Confession (1 John 1:9-10)

3) Commitment (Eph. 4:22-32)

* What needs to change moving forward?

4) Change (heart level) (put on) (Eph. 4:23) (Eph. 3:14-19)

C. The Art of Speaking Truth in Love

i. In NT: Paul’s Epistles

* *Generally speaking, what pattern do we see in Paul’s writing?*

What does he do before correcting?

ii. In OT: Nathan & David (II Samuel 12:1-7)

* *Why was Nathan's approach so effective? (see David's response)*

III. Do (Process, Part 3)

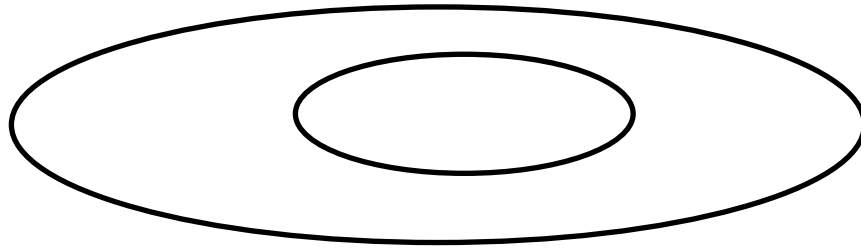
A. Establish an Agenda (review)

i. Find what the Bible Says (first on your own, then together)

ii. Explore Biblical Goals

iii. Establish Biblical Methods (role of homework assignments)

B. Clarify Responsibility (circles of responsibility)



i. The Need

ii. The Theme: Trust and Obey (Rom. 12:14-21, Eph. 4:16, etc)

C. Reaffirm Identity in Christ (union with Christ)

IV. Conclusion/Application

A. Practice Organizing Data (in your personal Bible Study)

B. Examine Your Current Speaking Habits (talking too much? Too little?)

C. Slow Down

Week 9

The Counselor's Practice, Part III

Ephesians 4, Psalm 33:18-33, Hebrews 10:19-25

Counseling for Community, Conclusion

Review/Introduction: How to speak that which is essential (Eph. 4)

I. Trust the Plan (Psalm 33:13-22 --> Eph. 4:16, etc.)

A. The Unchanging Tendency: Trust Man (33:16-17)

** What did the Israelites tend to wrongly trust? What do we wrongly trust today?*

B. The Unchanging Reality: God is in Control (Psalm 33:13-20) (doctrine of God)

C. The Unchanging Call: Trust and Obey (Psalm 33:19-22, Eph. 4:16, etc)

i. Trust God (know he is good, he is sovereign)

ii. Obey His calling

** What did this look like for OT Israel?*

** What does this look like for the NT Church? (Eph. 4)*

II. Empower your Counselee (Do)

A. Create a Ministry Plan

i. Explore what the Bible Says

ii. Consider Biblical Goals

iii. Decide on Biblical Methods (homework assignments)

B. Define Responsibility (circles of responsibility)

i. The Need: Avoid laziness and over responsibility

ii. The Practice:

* *Example: Annoyed with boss...what's your role as the employee?*

C. Review Identity in Christ (union with Christ review) (II Peter 1:3-9, Romans 6:1-5, John 17:23-26)

i. Our Tendency: Identify with our Suffering

ii. Our Opportunity: Identify with our Savior (I'm in Christ!)

“If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. *We are far too easily pleased.*”

(CS Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*)

D. Hand off to the Church (Galatians 6:1-2)

i. Remember the Goal: Change, Growth, **Service**

ii. Remember the Context: The Church (Galatians 6:1-2)

* *How does remembering this context help you, the counselee, and the overall congregation?*

III. Build a Community (review/conclusion) (Hebrews 10:19-25, Romans 15:14)

A. We Need Community (starting point)

B. Community Requires Effort (Counsel) (Hebrews 10:19-25)

C. Counseling Requires Competent Workers (Romans 15:14)

i. character

ii. doctrine

iii. practice

D. Competent Work Results in Healthy Community

IV. Conclusion/Application

A. Review your weak spots

B. Strive to Grow (study, practice)

C. Help Others

APPENDIX 2

CHURCH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

The following survey was given to class participants at the start of the project for the purpose of surveying the current level of involvement and spiritual disciplines of lay leaders in our church.

Instruments

1) Church Community Involvement Survey

Agreement to Participate

Cape Bible Chapel seeks to be a gospel-centered community of worshippers on mission to make and multiply disciples of Christ in our neighborhoods, among the nations, and of the next generation. We want our lay leaders to model the level of care and concern that characterizes the type of community we see in Scripture. In order to help better equip our leaders for the purpose of offering that level of care, we desire to provide training in biblical counseling.

This survey will help us assess our lay leaders' current competency and confidence to counsel one another biblically. This research is being conducted by Ben Beswick for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your response in this project.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Gender: _____ **Age:** _____

General Questions:

1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? _____
2. What is your present role in CBC leadership?
 - a. Elder
 - b. Small Group Leader
 - c. Other (please specify): _____
3. How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions?

4. Aside from Sunday morning worship, how often do you discuss your study of the Bible with others within the CBC community?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Seldom
5. How many hours a week do you spend in prayer? _____

6. Aside from Sunday morning worship, how often do you pray with someone with others in the CBC community?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Seldom

7. Outside of Sunday morning worship, how many hours a week do you spend in the CBC community? _____

8. Have you ever received any formal theological training? If so, please describe.

9. Have you ever been trained in any kind of formal counseling? If so, please describe.

10. How often do people come to you for help with spiritual (non-physical) problems?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Seldom

APPENDIX 3
BIBLICAL COUNSELING CURRICULUM
EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel and evaluated to ensure the curriculum's faithfulness to Scripture, sufficiency in its presentation of biblical counseling practices and theology, and practical benefit to the class.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 4

BASICS OF COUNSELING ASSESSMENT (BCA)

The following instrument is the Basics of Counseling Assessment (BCA). A small group from the training was given this assessment pre-project and post-project. The purpose of this instrument was to assess each participant's pre-project and post-project level of theological and biblical counseling understanding.

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly agree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

1. The Bible commands Christians to counsel one another.

SD D DS AS A SA

2. The Bible commands Christians to live in close community with their fellow believers.

SD D DS AS A SA

3. Every Christian has sufficient spiritual resources to counsel a fellow believer in any situation.

SD D DS AS A SA

4. Man is basically good.

SD D DS AS A SA

5. Sin is the ultimate source of peoples' problems.

SD D DS AS A SA

6. Suffering is never part of God's plan for his children.

SD D DS AS A SA

7. The Bible is sufficient to address all matters pertaining to godliness and living out the Christian calling.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. I am confident in my ability to love and show compassion to a person who faces an issue of suffering or sin.

SD D DS AS A SA

9. I am confident in my ability to provide biblical counseling to a person who faces an issue of suffering or sin.

SD D DS AS A SA

10. I believe the Bible is sufficient to address any non-physical problems.

SD D DS AS A SA

11. I know how to ask the kind of questions that expose a person's attitudes and desires.

SD D DS AS A SA

12. I can clearly articulate the gospel and lead someone to salvation.

SD D DS AS A SA

13. I can clearly explain the overall storyline of Scripture.

SD D DS AS A SA

14. I can define the practice of biblical counseling and explain how it is different from psychotherapy.

SD D DS AS A SA

15. Most problems with which people struggle require the help of a licensed professional counselor.

SD D DS AS A SA

16. If a friend is struggling with anxiety, depression, or discouragement, I would feel comfortable offering them counsel.

SD D DS AS A SA

17. If a friend is struggling with lust or other sexual sin, I would feel comfortable offering them counsel.

SD D DS AS A SA

18. If a friend is struggling with dealing with a personal conflict, I would feel comfortable offering them counsel.

SD D DS AS A SA

19. If a friend is struggling with a marriage or family related problem, I would feel confident offering them counsel.
- SD D DS AS A SA
20. I know when it is best to advise a friend to seek the help of a “professional” counselor.
- SD D DS AS A SA
21. The way we were raised determines how we react to trials.
- SD D DS AS A SA
22. After we profess faith in Christ, God changes us, so we no longer struggle with temptation.
- SD D DS AS A SA
23. I know how to apply the Bible’s teaching on repentance and forgiveness.
- SD D DS AS A SA
24. The main goal of counseling is to help a person cope with a difficult situation.
- SD D DS AS A SA
25. I would like to learn how to help others grow in their faith.
- SD D DS AS A SA
26. I need to grow in my ability to offer biblical counsel to others to help them with their daily struggles.
- SD D DS AS A SA
27. The community of Cape Bible Chapel would benefit from an increased understanding of biblical counseling.
- SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 5
T-TEST RESULTS

The following table shows the results of the t-test based on the pre- and post-project BCA.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>PRE-TEST TOTAL</i>	<i>POST-TEST-TOTAL</i>	
Mean	128.5833333	139.75	increase
Variance	68.81060606	64.75	
Observations	12	12	
Pearson Correlation	0.559419124		
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		
df	11		
t Stat	-5.041209488		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000188624		yes
t Critical one-tail	1.795884819		yes
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000377248		
t Critical two-tail	2.20098516		yes

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING LAY LEADERS OF CAPE BIBLE CHAPEL IN CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI, TO CREATE A COMMUNITY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
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The purpose of this project is to train the key lay leaders of Cape Bible Chapel in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to counsel those under their care for the further development of the church's community of disciples. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of Cape Bible Chapel and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides an exegesis of five key passages of Scripture that demonstrate the biblical evidence of the importance of community and the role that lay leaders must play in the maintenance of that community. Chapter 3 presents an overview of the doctrines and concepts that are essential to the practice of biblical counseling. Chapter 4 describes the project itself in each key step of preparing content, equipping lay leaders for biblical counseling through the teaching of that content, and developing a ministry plan to implement the training into everyday ministry within the community of Cape Bible Chapel. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the efficacy of the project based on the completion of the goals of the project. Ultimately, this project sought to equip Christians within the context of the local church to counsel one another for the purpose of creating a healthier church community.

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