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EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS WITH BIBLICAL
COUNSELING SKILLS AT COMMUNITY LIFE
CHURCH, FORNEY, TEXAS

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EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS WITH BIBLICAL
COUNSELING SKILLS AT COMMUNITY LIFE
CHURCH, FORNEY, TEXAS

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PREFACE

This project was an accomplishment involving many people. I entered the Doctor of Ministry program at the suggestion of my longtime friend, Paul Jacobs, pastor of First Baptist Church, Heath, Texas. Paul is an astute observer of pastoral issues and an academic steeped in psychology and theology. He listened to my goals and pointed out some of the strengths about the program. He noted that the presence of Stuart Scott, Associate Professor of Biblical Counseling, would be an asset for anyone wanting to study counseling. I contacted Stuart Scott, and he asked me to read two books about biblical counseling as an aid in my decision-making. Paul's initial guidance provided me with excellent options, but choosing this program was God's gracious path for me.

I entered the program without any preconceived expectations. I quickly learned there was much more than what I thought might happen. Not only was Stuart Scott a godly man with a seemingly inexhaustible grasp of counseling issues, I also met Heath Lambert, Brad Bigney, and Robert Burrelli. All of these men are outstanding biblical counselors and taught seminars with passion and wisdom. Each possesses unique skill sets, formed by years of devoted study, teaching, and counseling. Heath was completing his dissertation about the biblical counseling movement. Brad was pastoring a nearby congregation and brought the pastoral perspective to our class. Brad's lectures on marriage, parenting, and family made indelible impressions during my first seminar. Robert, also a pastor and an academic with distinguished credentials, helped me see how

humility and scholarship are compatible. Robert's zeal for spreading biblical counseling was contagious.

While the academic part of counseling is important, I had the privilege of putting lectures and books into practice at Community Life Church. My counseling path took a slight deviation when I realized that counseling and small group leadership were synonymous. I shared the ideas I was learning with Don Griffin, Spiritual Formation Pastor. He and I developed foundational training for small group leaders. Don's ability to ask tough questions and penchant for framing training matter were used to train small group leaders. I want to thank Don for his friendship and keen insight during this process. His relationship is best described as "iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Prov 27:17).

Finally, I have to thank my patient wife, Paula, who not only encouraged me to persevere to complete the program, but also nurtured my life during a major interruption before I was about to conduct the project. On August 18, 2011, I underwent open-heart surgery to replace an aortic valve. My wife coordinated the logistics of hospital care and became an instrument in the hands of the Redeemer while I recovered. My operation, recovery, and rehabilitation during this period were successful because God gave me a wonderful wife who shepherded me through a critical experience. I am truly grateful for my cohort friends, church community, and others whom I may never thank personally but who made a difference in my life. I pray that God will help me to be an available and willing servant in sharing with others what I have so graciously received from so many.

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Mesquite, Texas

December 2012

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to equip designated small group leaders at Community Life Church in Forney, Texas, to apply biblical counseling skills in caring for one another and other believers.

Goals

This project will have five goals that will serve as the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this project. The first goal is to enlighten small group leaders about their identity as counselors. An examination of the scriptural evidence about the believer's identity in Christ as being competent to counsel will be used to motivate small group leaders in their public and private ministry of the Word. A survey instrument will assess each participant's identity as a counselor and experience in using Scripture, prayer, and mutual concern as a means of ministry to others.

The second goal is to help small group leaders build biblical counseling skills to care for others. Counseling skills will be grouped into three core sets and will focus on the ministry of prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the ministry of mutual concern. A participant training manual will focus on each of these ministries as they relate to biblical counseling. The manual will include a scriptural exposition of each ministry, practical exercises for the leader with a specific focus on personal change and growth,

and an emphasis on how these skills apply in daily conversational–relational encounters. The manual will contain a standard counseling methodology that may be applied to other counseling problems. Finally, the manual will contain reading assignments and homework for the participant that models how the leader would make similar assignments for anyone they may be counseling.

The third goal is to equip small group leaders with counseling diagnostic skills in order to evaluate one’s relationship with God and others. This will involve an exploration of common problems that small group leaders encounter and application of scriptural solutions.

The fourth goal is to demonstrate to small group leaders the importance of a conversational–relational model in their biblical counseling. This goal places a strong emphasis on Christian fellowship or community as a fundamental cure for many counseling issues. Participants will explore how interpersonal relationships, small groups, and congregant worship services should be viewed as essential components of the counseling process.

The fifth goal is personal. I want to become a better small group leader and trainer. I hope this project clarifies and advances our church curriculum for training small group leaders and helps them develop counseling skills for the work of the ministry.

Ministry Context

The context for this ministry project will be Community Life Church, Forney, Texas. Forney is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the United States. It is

a beneficiary of the overall growth of Texas and, specifically, the North Texas area.¹ Between 2009 and 2014, the population is expected to increase by 13.6 percent, or 37,418 persons—three times the national average.² Currently, 274,182 persons reside in the greater Forney area, an increase of 106,310, or 63.3 percent, since 1990. During the same period of time, the United States as a whole grew by 22.3 percent.³ Forney is located on the northwest side of Kaufman County, Texas, the fortieth fastest growing county in the United States, and adjacent to eastern Dallas County, Texas.⁴ Two major highways, leading in and out of Dallas, bisect Forney. Forney is also on the southern border of Rockwall County, Texas, the third fastest growing county in the United States.⁵

A review of the demographic information of the greater Forney area reveals a young population. According to data provided by Percept Group, Inc., the largest age groups in the area are almost evenly divided between the “Millennials” (born between 1982 and 2001) at 30.1 percent and the “Survivors” (born between 1961 and 1981) at 31 percent.⁶ This contrasts with the rest of the United States, with Millennials at 27.7 percent and Survivors at 29 percent, respectively. Although Forney is characterized by

¹Haya El Nasser, “Texas Big Census Winner this Decade,” *USA Today* [on-line]; accessed 30 November 2010; available from http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/census/2010-03-23-census23_N.htm; Internet.

²Percept Group, Inc. Sources: Percept, Census Bureau, Claritas, “FirstView 2009” [on-line]; accessed 28 September 2010; available from <http://www.perceptgroup.com>; Internet. Demographic studies based on the following zip codes: 75142, 75161, 75474, 75189, 75032, 75180, 75126, 75159, 75114, 75181, 75182, 75150 and 75149.

³Ibid.

⁴U.S. Census Bureau, “Population Estimates for the 100 Fastest Growing U.S. Counties with 10,000 or more Population in 2009: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2009” [on-line]; accessed 1 December 2010, available from <http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/CO-EST2009-08.html>; Internet.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Percept Group, Inc., Sources: Percept, Census Bureau, Claritas, “Ministry Area Profile 2009” [on-line]; accessed 28 September 2010; available from <http://www.perceptgroup.com>; Internet.

its young population, nearby Rockwall County is the eighth fastest growing county in America for those fifty-five and over.⁷ Many “Baby Boomers” (born between 1949 and 1966) are retiring in the area because they want to be closer to their adult children and grandchildren.

Based on information from the Percept Group, Inc., the majority of people who live in the Community Life Church ministry area are grouped into two of six American Lifestyle Categories.⁸ The largest group is described as “Middle American Families” and forms 48 percent of all households as compared to 31 percent for the rest of the United States.⁹ Middle American Families can be broadly described as married couples with children whose income is somewhat above average. Percept further subdivides these six categories into fifty possible lifestyle segments. The two highest segments represented are “Established Country Families” at 15.5 percent and “Young Suburban Families” at 9.7 percent. The second American Lifestyle Category is “Affluent Families,” representing 24 percent of all households as compared to 15 percent for the rest of the United States. Affluent Families are households generally above average in household income (\$69,293) and education.¹⁰ They are characterized by a high number of adults in their thirties. Working female adults with children are concentrated here. From a lifestyle segment perspective, “Prosperous Diversity” is the dominant group at 14.2 percent, followed by “Prosperous New Country Families” at 5.9 percent.

⁷U.S. Census Bureau. “Population Estimates for the 100 Fastest Growing U.S. Counties.”

⁸Percept Group, Inc., “Sourcebook: A Reference to Percept Information Sources and Systems,” sec. 2 (version 4.01, 2007) [on-line]; accessed 28 September 2010; available from <http://www.perceptgroup.com>; Internet.

⁹Percept Group, Inc., “Ministry Area Profile 2009.”

¹⁰Ibid.

Three former youth pastors envisioned a new church plant in the Forney area. Their shared vision and initiative led them to become the founding co-pastors of Community Life Church. Two of the co-pastors, David Griffin and Paul McDill, attended Baylor University together and stayed in contact with each other after college. McDill served as the minister to adults at Mimosa Lane Baptist Church in Mesquite, Texas, and Griffin held the position of executive pastor at First Baptist Church, Sunnyvale, Texas. Randy Wade, the third co-pastor, worked as the youth minister at First Baptist Church, Sunnyvale, when they mutually decided to create a new church in Forney.

On Sunday, March 6, 2006, Community Life Church conducted its first service at Claybon Elementary School in Forney. The first three Sunday services averaged between 250-300 people. Of this group, approximately 175 came from Sunnyvale First Baptist Church, twenty-five from Mimosa Lane Baptist Church, and the rest from various contacts the pastors had in the area. By the last Sunday of March, the need for a second service was clear. Two Sunday services would be offered starting on the upcoming Easter Sunday. The immediate impact of offering two services was that the average attendance rose to approximately 350-400 people.

From the beginning, the church implemented a small group or “community group” model and approximately twenty-eight small groups were formed. Community group attendance was a requirement for church membership. Matt Bradley was the original community group pastor. He helped implement the current “sermon-driven” small group model.¹¹ A small but select curriculum of study books was also approved for small group leader use. Most of the original small group leaders had been Sunday

¹¹The sermon-driven small group model uses the Sunday morning message as a platform for the small group study. Each week, a study guide is emailed to small group leaders for use in the study portion of the small group meeting.

school teachers in their former churches. The church leadership recognized almost immediately that leading a small group was very different than teaching a Sunday School class. No formal training for small group leaders was offered other than the mutual care and concern of each pastor, fellow leaders, and members. Bradley left after one year of service to join the staff of another church.

Don Griffin, the father of co-pastor David Griffin, was asked to become the small group pastor in March 2007. Don had recently retired as an IBM sales representative and brought considerable organizational skills and training acumen to the church. He had been involved in various levels of church leadership during his life, and became an eager student of the small group movement.

Tremendous growth occurred during this period. Many of the people attending the services are referred to as the “un-churched churched.” The “un-churched churched” categorization describes people who have some church background or membership but do not have a recent history of church involvement. Most of the “un-churched churched” profess to be Christians. The growth in attendance began a prayerful search for a larger building and the answer was soon forthcoming. In September 2007, the church purchased a skating rink and sixteen and a half acres of prime commercial real estate for \$1.2 million. The new property was approximately three miles from the elementary school and placed the church at one of the major commercial intersections of Forney.

During this time, the church decided to multiply the community groups through a mandatory split. This was based on the existing philosophy that if the group had not reproduced itself every eighteen to twenty-four months, the community group leader would receive a request for “group reformation” or forced division. Because of the rapid church growth, far more people were attending church than the existing

number of community groups could accommodate. The leadership believed group reformation would create new groups and allow more people to be a part of small groups. Griffin oversaw this process, which proved to be challenging and would eventually be discontinued as a strategy for small group development.

Everyone recognized the need for small group leadership development, especially in light of the challenges created by the group reformation initiative. The defined need was for training prospective leaders in how to become a small group leader and equipping the existing leaders with skills to deal with the various issues they were encountering. In response to this need, Griffin developed a training seminar for community group leaders. This training was offered at the sub-courthouse in Forney in April 2008. Approximately 25 of the 40 community group leaders attended the training. The theme of the training was “What do you need to know to lead a community group?”

Prior to this training, Griffin and I had begun to dialogue about developing a strategy for community group leadership development. This ongoing conversation culminated in a Spiritual Formation Leadership Workshop on November 16, 2009, titled “Who is my neighbor?” This event was held at the newly renovated campus that had opened a few weeks earlier. The purpose of this event was to educate and motivate the small group leaders to become missional.¹² The workshop discussed the demographics of the greater Forney area and table coaches led each group in a discussion about ways their small groups could make an impact in their neighborhoods and the world beyond.

On May 3, 2010, a small group leadership appreciation banquet was hosted at the Forney campus. Pastor Bill Ramsey, founder of The Met Church in Keller, Texas, was

¹²Rodman W. MacIlvaine III, “What is the Missional Church Movement?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167, no. 665 (2010): 91. A missional church is a unified body of believers intent on being God’s missionary presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that God is already at work.

the guest speaker. As someone who uses small groups in his own church, he was able to challenge and encourage the leaders about the importance of community groups in the life and ministry of Community Life Church.

The next major small group leader training took place on August 23, 2010. Boyd Pelley, co-founder of *ChurchTeams* and a small group consultant, was the keynote speaker for this event. Community Life Church uses *ChurchTeams* small group management software. In conjunction with Pelley's presentation about how to effectively use *ChurchTeams*, we also introduced a *Small Group Leader Handbook*. Various people involved in small group ministry within the church had written the *Handbook*. Don Griffin and I provided a *Handbook* overview and orientation. The purpose of the *Handbook* was to address some of the deficits in the leadership training. The *Handbook* was a major step toward a comprehensive leadership development strategy. Each small group leader who attended the training received a copy of the *Handbook*.

The following Monday, August 30, 2010, another small group leader training event was held. The purpose of this event was to give prospective new leaders an opportunity to explore what it means to be a small group leader. Don Griffin, Wes Benjamin, and I provided an overview of the dynamics of small group ministry. Each presentation was based on a specific section in the *Small Group Leader Handbook*. A table coach was assigned for each group and, following each presentation, the table coach hosted discussions. At the conclusion of this training, every participant was challenged to make one of four decisions. The first option was to allow anyone to leave the room unobtrusively, acknowledging that he or she was not ready to assume any form of small group leadership. The three other choices included staying in the room and joining a discussion about an apprentice program, a mentoring program, or accepting the challenge

of becoming a small group leader. This training event created five new small groups and formed the basis for new leadership development.

On September 12, 2010, a satellite campus was formed in Mesquite, Texas. This campus is officially referred to as the West Campus. It is approximately ten miles west of the Forney campus. Although Community Life Church has always had a master strategy of creating satellite campuses, the unexpected growth at the Forney campus forced the church to consider opening another campus sooner than expected. This was in response to the growing number of people attending the Forney campus who live in the Mesquite and Sunnyvale area. Approximately 53 percent of the membership has a Mesquite/Sunnyvale zip code. It was also an attempt to alleviate the overcrowding at the Forney campus. The Forney campus offered four services each Sunday. Once the West Campus opened, the number of services at the Forney campus was reduced to three. The West Campus currently meets in a movie theater. The entire theater complex is rented for use each Sunday morning. The worship attendance has averaged 350 with approximately 110 children meeting in a separate area of the building. While the Forney campus can be characterized as a young campus, the West Campus tends to be a Baby Boomer campus. The creation of this campus has created more demand for small groups and placed focus on how important small groups are in providing pastoral care to a large congregation meeting in two separate locations.

Community Life Church is a theologically conservative congregation whose members are advanced educationally. Scattered throughout the congregation are people who have degrees from Bible colleges and seminaries. It is a fellowship that hears the Word of God preached and held in high esteem during worship services. It can be described as a congregation on the move. At the local level, community groups are

involved in regular community impact projects. The church operates an orphanage in Guatemala and is developing a partnership with a Bible college in Ghana. Mission teams are routinely sent to both of these locations.

The congregation has a plurality of overseers for governance. In addition to the three co-pastors who function as the Executive Staff, they are assisted by the Board of Overseers. The men who serve on this board provide guidance and counsel to the pastors on critical issues related to the health of the church. This includes finances, personnel decisions, strategic planning, and various other ministries. The age of the overseers tends to be older than the co-pastors' average age of thirty-eight.

The membership of Community Life Church consists primarily of young families. Approximately 60.1 percent of all members are married and 19 percent of the parents are between thirty and thirty-nine years of age. Children between the ages of five and twelve represent 19.8 percent of the membership and are the largest single demographic in the congregation. Only 12 percent of the membership is either single or divorced. Less than 1 percent of the members are listed as widows. Only 9.8 percent of the congregation is over fifty years of age. Approximately 25 percent of the membership lives in the city of Forney. Other municipalities with substantial membership representation are Crandall/Kaufman (3 percent), Terrell (4 percent), and Heath/Rockwall (2 percent).

Between 2006 and 2010, the average worship attendance has grown from 375 to 925, or increased 147 percent. Membership has increased from 396 to 785, or 98 percent. The number of small groups has almost doubled from 28 to 59. During this time, small group attendance has not increased as dramatically, but has progressed from 275 to 385, or 40 percent. The number of baptisms has averaged 66 each year.

Rationale

The growth of Community Life Church can be attributed to an attractional model. While all churches try to attract people to their services, Community Life Church focuses on hosting events to draw people to the church so that people can engage in a spiritual discussion there. Believers and nonbelievers are attracted to the worship services because of the music, videos, stage props, and relevant sermons. The worship service is the functional platform for the life of the church as opposed to small group ministry.

The emphasis on congregant worship introduces a tension between the stated mission of the church, “Connecting people to God and one another,” and the church’s stress on participation in a small group as a part of membership. While one could assert that the sermon and music connect people to God, it is challenging to argue that the emphasis of most sermons is to connect people to one another. This statement must be weighed against the fact that the weekly small group leader discussion guide is based on the sermon, and daily email devotions reinforce the sermon throughout the week. Small group members whose leaders use the sermon-based curriculum are motivated to focus on the sermon. However, most people attending the service are not members of a small group and would not associate the sermon with the small group lesson.

The co-pastors’ weekly sermons do not integrate the small group ministry into the application of their messages. The co-pastors preach an occasional sermon that may emphasize the importance of small groups, but this is the exception rather than the rule. During weekly announcements, one of the pastors will refer to the worship bulletin and instruct visitors to “check” the small group “box” on the detachable information link for more information about a small group. This is the weekly “on-ramp” announcement for small groups. It is significant that the small group pastor does not make any of the

announcements on Sundays. The small group pastor's nominal presence on the worship platform minimizes the awareness of the congregation with his ministry and makes it challenging for him to be appropriately identified with the co-pastors.

The tension in the church between the attractional model and small groups can be defined in three specific ways. First, the large crowds attending worship services need to be offered the opportunity to join a small group. Co-pastor David Griffin states that navigating people into a small group is one of the most challenging parts of the small group ministry. An additional challenge is created when small groups simply do not exist for potential members. The dilemma is resolved by either minimizing the small group ministry, recruiting willing believers into leadership roles before they are ready, or balancing the attractional model with a focus on discipleship and small groups. All three of these have been an occasional emphasis at Community Life. Second, leadership development is foundational to the small group model. When small group leaders are viewed as more of a shepherd than a mere host, the focus is on the spiritual maturity of the leader. The members of a small group expect their leader to be a teaching shepherd. The attractional model can supplement the discipleship process but it cannot create disciples alone.¹³ Members grow spiritually in the context of a small group. The worship service may corral existing leaders and channel them into a leadership position, but rarely does it develop a new small group leader. Small group leaders are ordinarily developed by an ongoing process of mentoring, discipleship, and apprenticing within a small group. Third, navigating people into small groups without a spiritually mature and trained leader is ineffective and places spiritual infants in the position of spiritual parent.¹⁴

¹³William James Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 23.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 101.

The small group model emphasizes the role of the leader and group in providing pastoral care to one another. Even the most seasoned Sunday school teacher experiences new challenges when placed into the role of small group leader because the teacher has gone from sharing information (an academic model) to sharing life with the members (a community model). In the community model, the leader often functions as a caregiver and counselor, whether they are ready or not. Most teachers have never thought of themselves as counselors, yet the Bible often emphasizes the role of the wise counselor. Indeed, discipleship and counseling are two sides of the same coin. It is this dimension of small group leader development that will be the primary concern of this project. An attempt will be made to address the deficits many teachers feel as they attempt to solve common problems of the small group. As an overseer, community group life coach, and community group leader, I have a unique vantage point and interest in the health of small group ministry and leaders.

Most Sunday school teachers have a polite audience that may ask the occasional question or respond to a prompt from the teacher on a given topic. Similar to the pastor's sermon, it is normally a one-way conversation between the teacher and the audience. The small group model turns the Sunday school model upside down. It encourages member participation and conversation. The participants talk back to the leader and to each other. They ask challenging questions and sometimes openly share their problems with the group. Conversation is not limited to the Bible study, but rather is a part of the meeting as soon as people begin to arrive. If the group shares a meal, meaningful conversations occur almost continuously. The focus of the small group meeting is both conversational and relational. There is an expectation that the leader will share his life with the group beyond the teaching of the Bible study. This

means the leader will be involved in everything from attending special events featuring members' children to life's more somber moments such as surgery or death. It is in these conversational-relational moments of life that authentic biblical counseling takes place. However, it is in these same conversations that many leaders miss the opportunity to give wise counsel because they are conditioned to think of themselves only as a teacher during a one-hour Bible study.

This project will benefit small group leaders because it will experientially equip them with skills to be effective biblical counselors. The Bible will serve as the sourcebook for the counseling content and methods. And just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit will serve as the counselor's Counselor (John 14:26; 16:13). Christ should be central to the change process and the church should be the first place people turn to for help when they are struggling. "Counseling," far from being esoteric, would overtly cohere with the content and goals of preaching, sacraments, discipleship, small groups, and church discipline.¹⁵

The participants in this project will be committed believers who have demonstrated some level of Christian maturity based on character and involvement as a small group leader. Each participant understands the theoretical foundations of ministry and exhibits an ability to minister in a small group. The leaders' maturity will allow the project to focus on the identity of the participants and quickly move into the sphere of biblical counseling skill development. We aspire to join the legacy of faithful leaders so that it can be said of us, like it was said of King David, "So he shepherded

¹⁵David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 33.

them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands” (Ps 78:72).¹⁶

Definitions

The most controversial and esoteric word used in this project is the word “counseling.” It is controversial because secular therapists claim it as the unique domain of licensed professionals. It is esoteric only because of the atmosphere surrounding its meaning in a highly secularized therapeutic culture. David Powlison defines biblical counseling at a basic level as an “intentionally helpful conversation . . . from the perspective of seeing God.”¹⁷ Powlison further describes biblical counseling as existing in tension between two definitions.

On the one hand, “biblical counseling” is a *goal* to live and die for. On the other hand, “biblical counseling” is a *current achievement*, partial and imperfect like all human achievements. . . . Restoring Christ to counseling and counseling to the church is a direction, a task, a trajectory. When I say what I think biblical counseling is, or voice a criticism of biblical counseling, I’m plodding across the plains and up the foothills of our current attainment.¹⁸

Counseling is not mere words of encouragement, but it is the words of God and the divine comfort that is ministered through God’s instruments or gifted servants (2 Cor 1:3-7). Biblical counseling is also a “focused process of discipleship.”¹⁹ Discipleship requires relationship, conversation, encouragement, debriefing, modeling, and personal contact.²⁰ It is a relationship and conversation with the God of the Bible within a

¹⁶Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the NASB.

¹⁷David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003), 1.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁹John Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel: Leader Notebook* (Mustang, OK: Dare 2 Dream Books, 2008), 31.

²⁰Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 23.

“heavenly-minded community.”²¹ Counseling takes place in community through shared lives and physical resources.²² In this sense, biblical counseling and soul care are two sides of the same coin.

The purpose of the project is to develop biblical counseling “skills.” A skill is an ability that has been acquired by training. It is a capacity to do something well. The mason guilds of ancient Rome allowed students to practice on structures in remote areas before assigning them to work on public works projects. You can see their works of trial and error in various classrooms from the artifacts of antiquity. Their skills eventually developed and they were assigned to work on what can only be described as some of the greatest architecture of the world. Likewise, developing the counseling skills of small group leaders takes practice and experimentation. Students have their own God-given ability or capacity for ministry (Eph 3:7; 4:7). Each student has a blueprint for developing human architecture in accordance with God’s design (Eph 2:20-22). Although participants are unequally gifted, their equal diligence will result in equal reward (Matt 20:1-16; 25:14-30). Skill development, therefore, will be relative to each student but in accordance with each one’s God-given ability to minister to one another (1 Pet 4:10).

Community Life Church has always had small groups by design. The ministry context for each participant is small group leadership. They may be leading a group of youth, men, women, or mixed adults consisting primarily of married couples. Ken Lawson defines a Christian small group as “an intentional face-to-face gathering of 3-12 people on a regular time schedule with the common purpose of discovering and growing

²¹Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel*, 36.

²²Jerry Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1985), 130.

in the possibilities of the abundant life in Christ.”²³ Although most of our small groups fit nicely into this definition, there are some exceptions because of growth.

Limitations and Delimitations

The project has one limitation and two delimitations. The limitation is the project is limited to fifteen weeks, which includes student instruction, assessment, and course evaluation. Fifteen weeks is a brief period of time to equip students with biblical counseling skills. The short amount of time means the long-term effects of the project cannot be known beyond the scope of the course. As such, the long-term effectiveness of this project will not be measured as a part of this project.

The project is delimited to small group leaders because the project participants must possess some level of spiritual maturity, a basic understanding of the Bible, and a demonstrated ability to apply Christian life principles to themselves and others in the context of a small group. Leaders are motivated to minister to other believers and develop biblical counseling skills. The class cohort is delimited to fifteen leaders. Fifteen students provide a diverse number of participants and a manageable number for one-on-one and small group counseling skill exercises.

Research Methodology

The first goal of the project is to shape the identity of the leaders as being competent to counsel. At the beginning of the project, the participants will complete a survey to assess their identity and experience as a biblical counselor. After the project, the same survey will be given, and the two sets of results will be compared.

²³Kevin E. Lawson, “A Band of Sisters: The Impact of Long-Term Small Group Participation: Forty Years in a Women’s Prayer and Bible Study Group,” *Religious Education* 101, no 2 (2006): 182.

The second goal is to help small group leaders build biblical counseling skills to care for others. The core skill sets are the ministry of prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the ministry of mutual concern. Each of these core skills has skill subsets that will be the focus of the training sessions. After a practical demonstration of the skill has been provided to the group, participants will use a scripted problem to practice the skill in small groups and one-on-one. Each student will be given a participant manual that will aid in preparing for each session. Over the course of the training, students will monitor their conversations using biblical counseling criteria to determine if they have become “intentionally helpful conversations.” The project leader will email five daily devotions to the participants each week. The purpose of the devotions is to reinforce their awareness of how biblical counseling occurs in conversational-relational contexts.

During the fifth and ninth weeks of the training, the project leader will conduct structured interviews with five participants of the cohort. The interview questions will focus on how the training is impacting the identity of the student, the effectiveness of the training manual, and the practical application of the classroom material in conversational-relational contexts. The interviews will provide feedback to the project leader about the efficacy of the program. The intent is to choose men and women who are involved in diverse small group ministries for the structured interviews.

Small group leaders are responsible for referring members who have substantial issues to their small group life coaches. Small group life coaches provide oversight for three to five small group leaders at Community Life. Small group life coaches may work with the small group leader to resolve the problem or refer to the small group pastor for additional guidance. All of this involves a certain level of diagnostic competency and confidence. Diagnostic training is a deficit in the small group leader

curriculum. The project leader will introduce diagnostic training tools to the students. Students will participate in mock classroom exercises that require application of diagnostic skills learned in the course. Students will also practice diagnostic skills in one-on-one situations with another class member based on scripted scenarios. Diagnostic skill training will be evaluated during the structured interviews in the ninth week.

The importance of a conversational-relational model in counseling will be emphasized throughout the project. Participants will be asked to share how they viewed the efficacy of different forms of community counseling as compared to one-on-one counseling sessions. The project leader will assess how students' attitudes toward community counseling changed over the course of the project using the pre- and post-project survey instrument.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 describes the ministry context of Community Life Church, Forney, Texas. It provides a demographic overview of the greater Forney area and the people who attend the church. The goals for the project are listed, which come from the rationale for equipping the small group leaders with biblical counseling skills. Definitions and limitations are also provided.

Chapter 2 examines the biblical and theological basis for this project. It examines in detail Genesis 2:15-17, Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 8:26-28, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15. These texts are representative of the emphasis the Bible places on the Word of God, the ministry of prayer, and the ministry of mutual concern.

Chapter 3 compares the biblical counseling skills consistently emphasized throughout the Bible with the skills advocated by integrative Christian ministers and psychologists. The influence of secular psychology will be highlighted against the biblical emphasis of the ministry of the Word, the ministry of prayer, and the ministry of mutual concern. An attempt will be made to understand how integrative Christian counselors use similar terms for counseling skills as biblical counselors but mean something entirely different.

Chapter 4 will outline the methodology used in the implementation of this project. The lesson plans, schedule, and assignments for each class will be presented so that the class may be duplicated by someone desiring to teach biblical counseling skills.

Chapter 5 will thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The survey instruments will be of particular interest in determining if anyone grew in counseling identity, experience, and skills. This evaluation will be important in determining whether the project will be helpful to other churches and leaders.

CHAPTER 2
A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION
FOR COUNSELING SKILLS

God calls everyone who is of the truth to hear his voice (John 18:37). God communicates truth to us through the Bible and he expects the counselor to speak the truth in love to others (Eph 4:15). The skilled biblical counselor builds a bridge between the world of the Bible and the world of today, between the original context and the contemporary context, by focusing on both the timely and timeless aspects of the text.¹ Scripture is timely because it addresses specific situations, problems, and questions. But these situations are now thousands of years old and people doubt how it may apply to them. The counselor must make a fresh application of the Word of God to contemporary problems, which allows the biblical message to speak with as much power today as it did when it was first written.²

The wise counselor understands that many people today seem to assume that God cannot communicate with us at all.³ The undermining of scriptural authority has been progressively described as “modernism” and “postmodernism.” David Peterson writes, “Postmodernism challenges the supremacy of scientific reason and speaks of

¹John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 8.

²Ibid., 9.

³David G. Peterson, “The Sufficiency of Scripture,” *Biblical Theology and Worship*, 2009 [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://davidgpeterson.com/biblical-theology/the-sufficiency-of-scripture/>; Internet.

many ‘truths’—many ways of understanding the world and interpreting the Bible.”⁴ Even among those who believe that God may speak, they find it difficult to connect divine communication with the Bible.

The influence of postmodernism is seen in how Christians discuss controversial topics and the often conflicting or contradictory positions they take. Peterson points out, “Postmodernism is flourishing in the Church, particularly in the western world and most obviously at the moment in debates about homosexuality and Scripture.”⁵ Peterson argues, “Christians cannot be satisfied with postmodern solutions to human problems because of what the Bible teaches about itself.”⁶ God’s solutions for humanity’s problems are based upon a serious examination of the biblical text, while acknowledging the overall story line of Scripture (biblical theology).⁷ The Bible’s story-line is fundamentally about salvation and the restoration of those who believe in Christ to a right relationship with God. Further research into the biblical story-line provides evidence that the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern form the basis of scriptural solutions for human problems.

God’s Commandment Promises Life in Genesis

The first chapter of Genesis stresses the importance of the Word of the Lord as the powerful means of creation (everything obeyed God’s decree). The second chapter employs the Word as the test of obedience in relation to the tree of knowledge of good

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷David G. Peterson, “The Interpretation of Scripture,” *Biblical Theology and Worship*, 2009 [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://davidgpeterson.com/biblical-theology/theinterpretation-of-scripture/>; Internet.

and evil (Gen 2:15-17). Allen Ross explains, “The Word of the Lord comes in the form of a command to be obeyed, one that the man and the woman are able to obey in view of their created nature.”⁸ The Word of the Lord, with its commandment of permission and prohibition, is accompanied by the significant use of speaking. God voices his evaluation of how it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Adam speaks as he names the animals (Gen 2:19-20) and, climactically, exclaims his joy over the provision of the woman (Gen 2:23).⁹ However, the third chapter of Genesis contrasts the deceptive speech of a subhuman creature, the serpent, with the life-giving words of the Creator. From chapter 3 forward, God makes it clear what happens when we obey or disobey the word of the Lord. Obedience produces life; disobedience spawns death, which is primarily characterized by loss of access to the presence of God.

The impact the creation narrative had on the Israelite audience who first heard the story must have been significant. Ross notes, “The report that his powerful Word was the agent of creation clearly shows that his creation did then, and must always, obey that Word.”¹⁰ Adam and Eve’s test was no less than a test of obedience to the powerful Word that spoke creation into existence but with one significant difference. They could disobey the powerful Word by eating of the forbidden tree (Gen 2:17). The tree of knowledge represents a test of allegiance to the Word of God. Man humbly lives under the sovereignty of God by choosing faithful obedience to the command of God; or man chooses to live independently and autonomously from God by willful rejection of God’s

⁸Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 118.

⁹Ibid., 119.

¹⁰Ibid., 114.

rule. The man who rejects the law of God seeks moral autonomy, deciding what is right without reference to God's revealed will.¹¹

The context for the test of obedience is the Garden of Eden. The presence of God is the key to understanding the garden. The language of the verbs used in verse 15 suggests the garden may be understood as a sort of sanctuary.¹² Many of the features of the garden may also be found in later sanctuaries, particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple. Concerning a comparison of the garden with the later sanctuaries, Victor Hamilton observes, "There is no magic in Eden. Gardens cannot look after themselves; they are not self-perpetuating."¹³ Man is placed there to "cultivate" and "keep" it. The Hebrew verb *דָּבַע*, "cultivate," can mean work, labor, or service to another and is often used of worship.¹⁴ The second verb, *רָמַשׁ*, "keep," is used of people overseeing flocks and property, protecting persons, and frequently of observing covenant stipulations.¹⁵ Kenneth Matthews explains the relationship of *דָּבַע* and *רָמַשׁ*, "Both terms occur together to describe the charge of the Levites for the tabernacle (Num 3:7-8; 18:7), thus again suggesting a relationship between Eden and tabernacle."¹⁶

The terms "cultivate" and "keep" do not indicate what people are to do to provide for themselves but what they are to do for God. John Walton contends, "Adam's

¹¹Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Dallas: Word Books, 1987), 64.

¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 182.

¹³Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 171.

¹⁴Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 209.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

duty in the garden is to maintain it as sacred space, not as a food cupboard. It is a high privilege to serve in the sacred precinct. He is to preserve its holiness and its character, just as priests did for the temple or tabernacle.”¹⁷ God placed man in the garden as a servant. Hamilton writes, “He is there not to be served but to serve.”¹⁸ The object of this service is God. Adam, through guarding the garden and the commandment, demonstrates obedient gratitude for the divine order of worship. Man is created to establish dominion over the earth and enjoy access to God’s presence in the garden.

God grants man access to the fruit of the tree of life, which apparently provides man with perpetual life. But God commands man not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Matthews notes, “The verb ‘commanded’ (v. 16) occurs twenty-five times in Genesis but this first occurrence is the only place in Genesis where the narrative introduces a divine command by this formula: ‘And the Lord God commanded.’”¹⁹ God prescribes boundaries for his creation, and human life has defined limitations, too. Matthews continues, “The prohibition against eating the fruit of the ‘tree of knowledge’ gave Adam opportunity to worship God through loyal devotion.”²⁰ Matthews concludes, “The instruction of the Lord is given as a positive expression of God’s goodness rather than a harsh restriction (v. 16b).”²¹

God, through the prohibition, retains his prerogative as benevolent Creator. Rather than withholding anything from man, God is seen as giving him everything that

¹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 185.

¹⁸Hamilton, *Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 171.

¹⁹Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 210.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 210-11.

²¹*Ibid.*, 211.

could make his life good. The prohibition frames the debate about how one becomes wise. Wenham explains it well:

The acquisition of wisdom is seen as one of the highest goals of the godly according to the Book of Proverbs. But the wisdom literature also makes it plain that there is a wisdom that is God's sole preserve, which man should not aspire to attain (Job 15:7-9; 40; Prov 30:1-4), since a full understanding of God, the universe, and man's place in it is ultimately beyond human comprehension. To pursue it without reference to revelation is to assert human autonomy, and to neglect the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1:7). "For the Yahwist the only proper posture of man if he would be truly wise and lead a full life is faith in God and not a professed self-sufficiency of knowledge. It is in this latter acceptance, then, that man is forbidden 'the tree of knowledge of good and bad.'"²²

God has not delegated to man the privilege of defining his own needs or constructing his own morality. The phrase "knowledge of good and evil" indicates moral autonomy. Hamilton says, "This view appeals to many OT passages where 'good and evil' is essentially a legal idiom meaning to formulate and articulate a judicial decision."²³ Man becomes his own judge and jury when he breaches his relationship with God. History teaches us that when man assumes these roles, dire consequences usually follow. Hamilton, in his discussion of Genesis 2-3, continues:

It is our position that this interpretation best fits with *the knowledge of good and evil* in Genesis 2-3. What is forbidden to man is the power to decide for himself what is in his best interests and what is not. This is a decision God has not delegated to the earthling. This interpretation also has the benefit of according well with 3:22, "the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Man has indeed become a god whenever he makes his own self the center, the springboard, and the only frame of reference for moral guidelines. When man attempts to act autonomously he is indeed attempting to be godlike. It is quite apparent why man may have access to all the trees in the garden except this one.²⁴

²²Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 63-64, quoting B. Vawter, *On Genesis, A New Reading* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977).

²³Hamilton, *Genesis*, 165.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 166.

Adam and Eve's decision to disobey God in Genesis 3 introduces a "worship disorder." Their disobedience to the original commandment creates serious problems for humanity, including spiritual and physical death. The serpent's counsel to Adam and Eve is just as appealing to people today. People are ensnared by human solutions divorced from God. Secular counsel, in the form of hundreds of psychotherapies, is the logical conclusion of the serpent's deception. Adam and Eve represent self-assertion and self-exaltation. However, man only becomes whole again as he submits himself to God's powerful written Word and to the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 1 Thess 5:23). The person who accepts Jesus' words is also accepting the commands of the Father who sent Jesus into the world. One's obedience to the Father's commandment is eternal life (John 12:48-50).

The Ministry of the Word Produces Harmony in Ephesians

The ascended Christ gives diverse spiritual gifts to every member of his body, the church (Eph 4:7). The Lord then gives the gifted people to the church for a distinctive service (Eph 4:11-12). The Lord appeals for gifted members to use their gifts for others. Some believers receive special communication gifts and they are to minister the word to other believers. Harold Hoehner observes, "These gifts were not to be used for self-promotion but for the building up of the saints."²⁵ Every believer has a part to play in enabling the church to attain to the unity and maturity which rightly belong to it.²⁶

Andrew Lincoln points out, "The appeal stresses the part all members must play and the

²⁵Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 547.

²⁶Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 264.

necessity of love if they are to function in harmony, but it singles out in particular the vital role of the ministers of the word in bringing about unity and maturity.”²⁷

The apostle Paul establishes the basis for Christian unity in Ephesians 4:4-6. God is the Creator of all living things, and their existence and significance depend on him.²⁸ In verse 6, God is the Father “of all who is over all and through all and in all.” Peter O’Brien contends, “Paul is affirming that God is supremely transcendent ‘over everything’ and that his immanence is all pervasive: he works ‘through all and in all.’ If this latter understanding is correct, then God’s universal sovereignty and presence are set forth as the climactic ground for the unity of the Spirit that believers are to maintain.”²⁹ Each person is to walk worthy of their calling and render an effective service for the function of the whole (4:1, 16).

In verse 11, the people themselves are the gifts Christ gives to the church. Christ, by his Spirit, is active in the church, giving it the necessary gifts to equip it for its task of being the pledge of the universe’s ultimate unity in him. These gifted ministers of the word are identified as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. The gifted ministers are emphasized because they provide the church with the teaching of Christ for the edification of the body (4:12) and the avoidance of false teaching (4:14). The role of the teaching leaders is significant, as O’Brien points out, “They enable others to exercise their own respective ministries so that the body is built to maturity, wholeness, and unity.”³⁰

²⁷Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 264.

²⁸Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 285.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 298.

The inclusion of evangelists, pastors, and teachers alongside the foundational apostles and prophets is significant. The apostles and prophets were the authoritative recipients and proclaimers of the mystery of Christ.³¹ In many ways, the prophet and apostle had similar roles for they were both involved in revelation.³² Hoehner writes, “The evangelists, pastors, and teachers exercised their ministry during and after the time of the apostles and prophets. The roles of these ministries often overlapped but their immediate purpose was preparing all the saints to minister.”³³

A single definite article in the Greek identifies each of the ministers in verse 11 but is omitted for “teachers.” Some interpret the phrase “pastors and teachers” (v. 11c) as identifying a gifted believer who functions as both a pastor and teacher or a “teaching shepherd.” However, the absence of the article likely indicates some degree of distinction between the pastor and teacher in describing two overlapping ministries.³⁴ The term “pastor” is used only here in the New Testament to refer to a ministry in the church, although the related verb “to shepherd” appears several times.³⁵ A pastor exercises leadership through nurture, care, exhortation, admonition, and administering activities in the local congregation. The teacher is an instructor in expounding, interpreting, and applying the apostolic gospel and tradition along with the Jewish Scripture.³⁶

³¹Ibid.

³²Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 542.

³³Ibid., 550.

³⁴Ibid., 544.

³⁵O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 299.

³⁶Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 251.

The ministers with special communication gifts help other members of the congregation carry out their diverse ministries for the good of the whole. The emphasis on ministries of the word highlights how important teaching is in the “equipping” process of verse 12. The purpose of “the equipping of the saints” is “the work of service” (v. 12a). The equipping or preparing makes God’s people fully qualified, thus enabling them to serve their Lord by serving one another.³⁷ The entire ministry for the saints is being done for “the building up of the body of Christ” (v. 12b). The activity of building is combined with an image of physiology. The physiological image stresses the growth of the church as an organism from within, by means of its own God-given life.³⁸

The final goal for the special ministers and the gifted people is maturity and completeness in Christ (4:13). The process begun by the ministries of the word and the gifted saints must continue until attaining to “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (v. 13b). The significance of the process of completion is that it occurs in community, not isolation. Three separate aspects of the goal of unity are mentioned. Everyone is to strive toward the “unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man” (v. 13a). With the immediate context emphasizing instruction, God’s people should be moving towards the goal of appropriating all that is included in the one faith and what is known of the Son of God.³⁹ The second part of this goal, “the mature man,” refers to the corporate growth of the body of Christ toward maturity and completeness. The final part of the goal, “the stature of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13c), measures this maturity by nothing less than Christ’s full stature. Hoehner concludes,

³⁷O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 303.

³⁸Ibid., 305.

³⁹Ibid., 306.

“Each member is to use the gift that has been given to him or her in measure (verse 7) and as each member fulfills this, then the body will measure to Christ’s full stature.”⁴⁰

Beginning in verse 14, a negative contrast is used to emphasize the perils of spiritual negligence and decline. The fickle and vacillating behavior of small children illustrates how opposition to unity, growth, and harmony may occur. Childish believers are characterized as looking out for their own selfish interests, unable to discern truth from error, and being easily manipulated. Deceptive teachers, whose false teaching methodically attacks immature believers, are contrasted with the mature adult of verse 13. The precise role of pastors and teachers is to prevent believers in their immaturity from falling prey to false teaching and to lead them to the stability of the truth.⁴¹

The positive growth of believers is the focus of verse 15. Spiritual growth occurs as believers are “speaking the truth in love” (v. 15a). Truth is the weapon believers use to oppose error but truth is also the means for the spiritual development of the “mature man” (v. 13b). Love tempers how they speak the truth to one another. Rather than being harsh and abrasive, the truth should be spoken and lived in such a way as to provide comfort and strength. The growing believer exemplifies a lifestyle of verbal witness and transparency in contrast to the deceptive ways of false teachers.

Verse 16 summarizes many of the themes already mentioned (4:7-16) and reinforces through the imagery of physiology and architecture how the church grows. The decisive role of Christ is again cited at the beginning of the verse. God’s dynamic enabling is through the Lord. Gifted ministers and gifted members have a part to play which “causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (v. 16c). The

⁴⁰Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 557.

⁴¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 259.

teaching leaders function as the connecting ligaments that channel support and resources to other parts of the body. The growth from Christ is mediated by these particular persons but “each individual part” must function for the “building” to achieve completion. The paragraph began with an emphasis to the church on love (4:2) and it ends with the church actively constructing “itself in love.” Love is the divine nature of the church and the indispensable means of building the body of Christ if it is to make a difference in the world.

The Intercessory Ministry of Prayer in Romans

Christians face many challenges each day. Some people think life will get easier when they become a Christian. There are believers who assume the pressures, trials, sufferings, and hardships will diminish because they have made peace with God (Rom 5:1). The admonition that Christians should “exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (5:3-4) teaches us that God uses suffering for spiritual formation. For many Christians, suffering is a difficult lesson to accept and learn. God uses suffering to instruct us and build character through patient fortitude and a humble heart. God’s gracious act of justification is not a euphemism for escapism but rather assurance that, in spite of the adversity from within and without, we can enjoy victory each day over sin and suffering. Victorious living is possible “because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (5:5b). Not only is the Spirit spreading the love of God in the hearts of believers, the Spirit is also active in prayer ministry for the saints (8:26-27). The Spirit of God gives a voice to suffering believers. The intercession of the Spirit becomes part of God’s solution for the stresses

and pressures of life. Thomas Constable points out, “‘Intercede’ means to pray for someone else.”⁴²

The consistent theme of the apostle Paul in Romans is that God’s plan for each believer’s life is based on his perfect counsel and will (12:2). The contradictions of life, which seem to question God’s purpose for our lives, are confidently asserted to be part of God’s plan (8:28). The Spirit of God comforts believers in the midst of the ironies of life through an intercessory ministry of prayer. The intercessory ministry of the Spirit is necessary because of God’s subjection of creation and the mind of man to futility (1:28; 8:20).⁴³ Paul says simply, “we do not know how to pray as we should” (8:26b). The apostle most likely has in mind the same sense of futility as expressed by the writer of Ecclesiastes. Man searches for meaning and finds life to be meaningless (Eccl 6:1-3). But through God’s new creation, the futility is reversed and the suffering of believers becomes a ground of hope because it is experienced as the formation of character and renewal of the inner man (Rom 5:3-4).⁴⁴

Christians find themselves living in a state of tension between the reception of the Spirit and the redemption of the body. The change created by the presence of the Spirit reinforces the idea that this life is not what it is supposed to be. The groans of creation, the believer, and the Holy Spirit testify to the reality of suffering in the current state of existence (Rom 8:22, 23, 26). But the groans of life can eclipse the certainty of the redemption of the body and drown out the voice of God. At the moment suffering

⁴²Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Romans 2010 Edition” [on-line]; accessed 17 February 2010; available from <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/romans.pdf>; Internet.

⁴³James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), 488.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

drowns out the voice of God, he assures us we are not alone, “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (8:26c). Douglas Moo thinks that the groanings are best understood as the Spirit’s own “unspoken” “language of prayer.”⁴⁵ The Spirit’s ministry of intercession takes place in the hearts of believers (8:27) in a manner imperceptible to them.⁴⁶

Paul does not place himself on a pedestal as someone who does not need the Spirit’s help in his own prayer life, but includes himself in the phrase “the Spirit also helps *our* weakness” (8:26a).⁴⁷ The help of the Spirit is present but it is important to note the Spirit does not remove our “weakness.” The inner groanings abide until the redemption of the body. Weakness may be specific references to our inability in prayer or external sufferings (8:18), but probably characterizes creation and humanity’s overall condition.⁴⁸ Weakness is not sin or suffering, but is simply an observation that salvation in the present works through human powerlessness. James Dunn contends, “God’s power is most effective in the locus of man’s powerlessness (2 Cor 12:9-10).”⁴⁹ Our imperfection and inadequacy in prayer is a part of our “weakness” in this life. We overcome this deficiency through the intercessory power of the Spirit as a very present help within.

⁴⁵Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 527.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 528.

⁴⁷Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 326.

⁴⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 525.

⁴⁹Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 492.

Concerning Romans 8:26-27, Robert Mounce states, “No passage of Scripture provides greater encouragement for prayer.”⁵⁰ As the believer engages God in prayer, the Holy Spirit is interceding with the Father. The effectiveness of the intercession is because “He who searches the heart knows what the mind of the Spirit is” (8:27a). Leon Morris comments, “God knows the Holy Spirit’s mind and thus takes full account of the Spirit’s intercession for the saints.”⁵¹ Constable observes, “The Bible presents God as a person who has communicated with us and who invites us to communicate with Him.”⁵² He listens as the Holy Spirit intercedes in accordance with the plan of God. Complete harmony exists between God and the Spirit “because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (8:27b). Dunn concludes that believers participate in this prayer experience by “the acknowledgment of dependence on God’s enabling which constitutes effective prayer, precisely because it is in and through such creaturely dependence on God that God can work to accomplish his will.”⁵³

The Divine Comfort in 2 Corinthians

The apostle Paul outlines a model of Christian ministry in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 that provides comfort to afflicted believers. The essence of the ministry model involves Christians comforting other believers with the divine comfort by which they have been comforted. The ministry of mutual concern and comfort is advocated by the apostle as

⁵⁰Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 187.

⁵¹Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 329.

⁵²Thomas L. Constable, “Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer,” Sonic Light Publishing 2003 [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/prayer/prayer.pdf>; Internet.

⁵³Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 492.

the God-ordained means of care for the fellowship of believers. Murray Harris adds, “The experience of God’s comfort (his help, consolation, and encouragement) in our suffering qualifies, equips, and obliges us to comfort others undergoing any type of suffering (1:4, 6).”⁵⁴ Similar experiences enable us to sympathize with others and thus be effective encouragers and comforters. Christians are interconnected to other believers in the community of faith where there should be reciprocity of concern. David Garland comments, “As Paul sees it, his affliction leads to consolation from God for consolation of others.”⁵⁵

In verses 3-7, Paul creates a unique Christian benediction by modifying a traditional Jewish blessing he was familiar with in the synagogue liturgy.⁵⁶ Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3). Paul Barnett notes, “It was important for Paul to establish at the outset that God, the God of the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was ‘the . . . Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’”⁵⁷ Paul makes it clear that Jesus is the Messiah and to receive him is to glorify the God of the Old Testament. Barnett concludes, “Let those Corinthians who are yielding to judaizing influence understand that God is now eschatologically revealed and defined under the new covenant as the Father of Jesus, their Lord.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴Murray J. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 123.

⁵⁵David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 49 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1999), 58.

⁵⁶Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 142.

⁵⁷Paul Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 68.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

Commenting on verse 3, Garland observes, “Paul launches his letter with a classic Jewish liturgical formula that praises God for his benefits.”⁵⁹ “Blessed be the God” (v. 3a) expresses a wish that God be praised or affirms that God is worthy of praise.⁶⁰ But it is the next phrase, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3b), that, according to Harris, “converts the regular synagogue blessing (‘Blessed be the God’) into a distinctively Christian doxology, for while God is called ‘the merciful and compassionate Father’ in the synagogue liturgy, only in Christianity is he the Father of an identified Messiah.”⁶¹ Garland comments, “For Christians, God is now revealed as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶²

The apostle identifies God as “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (v. 3c). The synagogue referred to “the Father of mercies” in prayers contemporary with Paul, which in turn derives from the Old Testament (Exod 34:6).⁶³ “Comfort” (παρακλησις) is the key word in the benediction and occurs frequently in the letter, evoking Old Testament images of the messianic age and messianic people.⁶⁴ Παρακλησις communicates the idea of one person standing alongside another to encourage and support his friend.⁶⁵ Commenting on the usage of the verbal form of παρακλησις (παρακαλεο) in the New Testament, Garland states, “It was used for

⁵⁹Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 58.

⁶⁰Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 141.

⁶¹Ibid., 141-42.

⁶²Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 58.

⁶³Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 69.

⁶⁴Ibid., 69-70.

⁶⁵Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 2 Corinthians 2010 Edition” [on-line]; accessed 17 February 2010; available from <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/2corinthians.pdf>; Internet.

making an earnest appeal, for consoling or comforting someone who is distraught, for admonishing another (to abjure), or for making amends (to apologize).”⁶⁶ Garland explains it well:

For us, the word “comfort” may connote emotional relief and a sense of well-being, physical ease, satisfaction, and freedom from pain and anxiety. Many in our culture worship at the cult of comfort in a self-centered search for ease, but it lasts for only a moment and never fully satisfies. . . . The comfort that Paul has in mind has nothing to do with a languorous feeling of contentment. It is not some tranquilizing dose of grace that only dulls pains but a stiffening agent that fortifies one in heart, mind, and soul. Comfort relates to encouragement, help, exhortation. God’s comfort strengthens weak knees and sustains sagging spirits so that one faces the troubles of life with unbending resolve and unending assurance.⁶⁷

The comfort the apostle writes about denotes God’s actual intervention to deliver him when he was “afflicted on every side: conflicts without and fears within” (2 Cor 7:5c). He possibly has in mind his devastating affliction in Asia (1:8-10) and his debilitating depression in Troas and Macedonia (2:12-13; 7:5-6).⁶⁸ Harris concludes, “In each case he was delivered by his all-merciful heavenly Father and experienced the all-embracing comfort of God.”⁶⁹

In verse 4, the apostle explains how God uses believers as channels or mediators of consolation to others in the midst of affliction. Barnett explains, “On his own, Paul cannot comfort anyone. The comfort is God’s, it merely flows through him.”⁷⁰ The verse begins by describing God as one “who always comforts” or “whose nature it is to comfort.”⁷¹ Harris points out, “The divine purpose in granting such strengthening

⁶⁶Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 60.

⁶⁷Ibid., 60.

⁶⁸Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 143.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 64.

⁷¹Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 143.

aid during suffering is to enable the sufferer to administer comfort to others.”⁷² God’s devotion and dedication to believers is no theoretical abstraction; God’s care is expressed through the reciprocity of the fellowship of believers as the divine comfort prompts them to pass on the comfort of God to others. Afflictions come from many sources but real comfort in every affliction can only come from God alone.⁷³

In verse 5, Paul begins to refer to the many afflictions he personally suffered. Although suffering is a dark theme, the apostle makes it clear it is the “sufferings of Christ” he experienced as he faithfully ministered the gospel. Barnett writes, “Just as Christ suffered in his ministry and death from forces hostile to God, so, too, the apostle, in continuity with Christ, suffered in the course of his ministry and proclamation.”⁷⁴ The extent and intensity of Paul’s sufferings for Christ were immense, yet the apostle could say, “so also our comfort is abundant through Christ” (v. 5b). God not only matched the sufferings Paul experienced with comfort, he far surpassed them in encouragement, strength, and compassion.

Verses 6 and 7 conclude the benediction with the apostle pointing to the commonality of suffering. An authentic Christian existence produces a witness for Christ in a hostile world. Although the Corinthians may have challenged Paul’s credibility as an apostle because of his intense suffering (vv. 10:10; 11:5), he makes it clear that afflictions in this world are a result of our Christian witness and service. The fact the Corinthians did suffer “the same sufferings which we also suffer” (v. 6c) is evidence of Paul’s credibility and their own Christian identity. Constable concludes, “They were representing Christ in

⁷²Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 143.

⁷³Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 63.

⁷⁴Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 75.

the world. More than that they would flourish because God’s super-abounding comfort (strength, encouragement) would cause them to stand and withstand the affliction they were experiencing.”⁷⁵

The Ministry of Mutual Concern in 1 Thessalonians

The essence of mutual care is outlined in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15. In what may be the earliest letter written by the apostle Paul, he frames who provides the care and the substance of the care. Paul advises church leaders and members on intracommunal relations concerning conditions and attitudes of individuals.⁷⁶ Abraham Malherbe comments, “The first part (vv. 12-15) specifies how the reciprocal edification (v. 11) is to be carried out, giving attention to the nature of the care and the emotional condition or disposition of those who receive the care.”⁷⁷ G. K. Beal notes that “this section expands on the directly preceding commands to ‘encourage one another and build each other up’” (5:11).⁷⁸ A sense of urgency and vigilance is stressed because of the imminence of the Lord’s return, which “will come as a thief in the night” (5:2b).

In 1 Thessalonians, Christian community is portrayed “as the family of God, whose members recognize and treat one another as sisters and brothers.”⁷⁹ Beale observes, “The fact that ‘brother’ (*adelphos*), which underscores the church as a family,

⁷⁵Constable, *2 Corinthians*, 11.

⁷⁶Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 32B (New York: Doubleday Publishers, 2004), 309.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary, vol. 13 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 157.

⁷⁹John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 117.

is repeated so many times in 5:12-27 (five times) points further to peace as the dominant theme. If earthly families should be characterized by peace, how much more the family of God.”⁸⁰ Believers are family members because, “if through Christ God is our Father, then *ipso facto* our fellow believers are our sisters and brothers.”⁸¹ Commenting on Paul’s theme of reciprocal concern among the Thessalonians, John Stott says,

Paul has already urged the Thessalonians to ‘love one another’ with *philadelphia* or ‘brotherly love’ (4:9-10), to ‘comfort one another’ (4:18, RSV), to ‘encourage one another and build each other up’ (5:11). Now he develops further his vision for the church family, and for the ‘one anotherness’ of its members.⁸²

Paul sees himself involved in fatherly activity among the Thessalonian converts (2:11). Stott contends that “pastoral care is parental care.”⁸³ The emphasis on church as “family” is God’s strategy for the complex task of community formation and resocialization. While addressing another believer as a “sister” or “brother” in Christ is commendable, Paul’s concern is that this language be “matched at the practical level by the ethical requirement that converts demonstrate their love and commitment to one another in their actions (cf. 1 Thess 4:1-11; 5:12-15; 2 Thess 3:14f.).”⁸⁴ The image of family conveys a sense of close relationship and helps the converts grasp a new understanding of their identity as Christians.

Verse 12 highlights those believers who function as leaders among the gifted members. The focus is on the function of leading as opposed to the office of leader.

⁸⁰Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 157.

⁸¹Stott, *Thessalonians*, 117.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³*Ibid.*, 112.

⁸⁴Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 16.

Malherbe explains, “It is clear that in vv. 12-14 Paul is interested in functions that are performed rather than in defining one group of individuals whose prerogative, duty, or special ministry it is to engage in communal care.”⁸⁵ The activity of the leaders is described by three participles: toil (κοπιᾶω), care (προΐστημι), and admonish (νουθετέω).

“Toil” is often associated with the ministry of the Word (1:3; 3:5; 1 Tim 5:17) and this is most likely the activity Paul has in mind here.⁸⁶ The ministry of the Word ordinarily took place in the house church and the workshop; the workshop is where believers often came in contact with pagans. The hard work of evangelism among the pagans and Christian discipleship is probably in view.

The second participle, according to Wanamaker, is “amenable to several different interpretations. Προϊστημι may mean ‘those who rule you,’ ‘those who are concerned about you,’ or ‘those who stand before you as protectors.’” Malherbe argues προϊστημι means “care” or “concern” and “describes those who care for others in the congregation.”⁸⁷ The care is stated to be “in the Lord” (v. 12b). Malherbe continues, “The phrase characterizes the care as Christian, given by virtue of the caregivers’ relationship with Christ.”⁸⁸

The third participle, “to admonish,” refers to a form of ancient “psychagogy” practiced by the Greek philosophers. Psychagogy is an art that leads the soul by means

⁸⁵Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 311.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., 313.

⁸⁸Ibid., 314.

of words.⁸⁹ Admonishment (νουθεσια) is explained by Malherbe, “The literal meaning is to instill sense in someone and teach him what should and should not be done.”⁹⁰ Jay Adams contends, “*Nouthesis* is motivated by love and deep concern, in which clients are counseled and corrected by verbal means for their good, ultimately, of course, that God may be glorified.”⁹¹ The person-to-person care advocated by the apostle stands in contrast to the Greek philosophers, as Malherbe explains:

The detailed psychagogy that Paul desires of his readers sounds remarkably like that of the moralists from whom he derived the technique. Completely different from them is that Paul’s readers are to engage in it as children of the Day who soberly look forward to living with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to be the goal of their care for each other, not the development of character or the fulfillment of human potential.⁹²

The apostle taught that admonition is best exercised individually and privately (2:11; 5:11).⁹³ Paul believed all Christians were capable of admonishing one another (Rom 15:14) and he taught that admonition leads to mutual edification (5:11-12; Rom 14:19; 15:2). The apostle uses admonition and encouragement to prompt the Thessalonians to make progress in mutual concern and edification “just as you also are doing” (v. 11c).

The proper posture of the Thessalonian fellowship toward those exercising care and correction is reinforced in verse 13: “and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.” Beale says, “When we understand what leaders actually do, love should well up in our hearts for them because of their

⁸⁹Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 323.

⁹⁰Ibid., 314.

⁹¹Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 50.

⁹²Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 308.

⁹³Ibid., 315.

sacrificial work on our behalf.”⁹⁴ Even if the church had only twenty or thirty members, there would be potential for conflict and division, which may be implied in the command to live peaceably. Beale concludes, “Therefore Paul encourages his readers in the following section to take definite steps to create a climate of peace within the church.”⁹⁵

First, Paul says, “admonish the unruly” (v. 14a). Wanamaker identifies the “unruly” (ατακτος) as being “undisciplined or disorderly” persons or those who are “idle or lazy.”⁹⁶ Based on Paul’s concern in 4:11-12, the unruly had a tendency to not work and refused to submit to accepted forms of behavior.⁹⁷ Paul repeats *νουθετέω* (admonish) from verse 12 as he directs the congregation to make serious demands upon the belief and behavior of the disorderly. The apostle is aware of the potential consequences of such frank speech but the disorderliness that had developed since his departure was “sufficiently serious to require sterner attention.”⁹⁸ The apostle makes it clear correction is to occur in the context of edification (v. 11) and those receiving admonition should receive it as though it were from a concerned family member. Malherbe comments, “Admonition was harsh, and those on the receiving end would be tempted to dismiss it as denunciation and reviling rather than an attempt to do good.”⁹⁹ The use of corrective speech should always have peace and harmonious relationships in the Lord as its goal.

⁹⁴Beale, *Thessalonians*, 162.

⁹⁵Ibid., 162.

⁹⁶Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 196.

⁹⁷Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 317.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid., 326.

⁹⁹Ibid., 318.

Second, Paul says, “encourage the fainthearted” (v. 14b). The term for “fainthearted” (ολιγοψύχους) is rare, appearing only here in the New Testament. Ολιγοψύχους literally means “the small of soul.” Malherbe speculates these believers may have been anxious about persecutions (2:14), the deceased (4:13-18), temptation to sin (4:3-8), or their salvation (5:1-11).¹⁰⁰ Malherbe continues, “It is futile to focus on one of these items, for Paul’s interest is in a psychological condition, one that allows a wide range of experiences that create a need for comfort.”¹⁰¹ Wanamaker, in his discussion about the fainthearted, concludes: “Obviously, Paul was concerned for any who struggled with worry or doubt regarding their new faith, or feared rejection or persecution because of it. Such people, Paul recognized, needed encouragement from the stronger and more confident members of the community to enable them to persevere.”¹⁰²

Third, Paul says, “help the weak” (v. 14c). The text does not specify whom the weak represent but the term ἀσθενῶν literally means “without strength.” An unusual word is used for “help.” Stott comments, “The verb for *help* (*antechomai*) presents a graphic picture of the support which *the weak* needed. It is as if Paul wrote to the stronger Christians: ‘Hold on to them,’ ‘cling to them,’ even ‘put your arm around them.’”¹⁰³ The picture Paul is presenting may be characterized as “human scaffolding.” The picture emphasizes the sense of pastoral responsibility the whole community should have for those without strength.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 197.

¹⁰²Stott, *Thessalonians*, 122.

¹⁰³Ibid.

Finally, Paul says, “be patient with everyone” (v. 14d). The scope of the admonition includes not only the unruly, the anxious, and the weak, but healthy believers as well as those outside the family of God. Believers tend to shun those who have tremendous needs, whether they are emotional, physical, or ethical. Stott says, “We have no excuse for becoming impatient with them on the ground that they are difficult, demanding, disappointing, argumentative or rude. On the contrary, we are to be *patient* with all of them.”¹⁰⁴

The goal of harmony and peace among the Christians can only be attained through obedience to the command, “See that no one repays another with evil for evil” (v. 15a). Rather than retaliate against those who have offended us, Paul exhorts the community, “but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people” (v. 15b). Beale comments, “Revenge is one of the most instinctive and natural sins, and it was the early Christian practice of the radical ethic of 5:15 that likely had significant impact on the spread of Christianity throughout the ancient world.” The whole congregation must cultivate patience, renounce retaliation, and pursue kindness, in order to create a community of mutual concern and care.

Conclusion

Four principles relating to biblical counseling can be derived from the preceding scriptures. First, the ministry of the Word is the foundation of all counseling. The Word of God guides Christians in every sphere of life and one must align with the Word of God to experience harmony with God and others. Second, believers’ prayers engage God in the ministry of intercession. Third, God comforts us with his comfort

¹⁰⁴Beale, *Thessalonians*, 167.

in order that we may comfort others. God's pattern of comfort becomes the model for the ministry of mutual concern. Fourth, biblical counseling stresses person-to-person and small group ministry. God expects each member of his family to be involved in the activity of building other believers.

Biblical counseling skills are derived from the counseling principles listed above. First, one must cultivate the ability to understand and apply the Word of God to oneself and others. Applying the Word to others demands communication and interaction skills. Second, the ministry of prayer requires the involvement of the counselor and counselee. Prayer must be understood as basic communication with God for oneself and for others. Third, believers should learn how reciprocal concern repairs the lives of the hardened and hurting. In chapter 3, essential biblical counseling skills for ministering person-to-person and in small groups will be considered from the standpoint of contemporary needs and challenges.

CHAPTER 3

ESSENTIAL BIBLICAL COUNSELING SKILLS

Why should small group leaders be concerned about improving their counseling skills? The answer is found in the Great Commission. The Great Commission is the biblical mandate for all believers to cultivate intensive discipleship and counseling skills.

A Counseling Ministry Model

Scripture records the Great Commission following the drama of events surrounding the resurrection, with Jesus speaking to his disciples:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt 28:18-20 NIV).

Paul Tripp comments, “The Great Commission is not only a missionary commission; it is also a pastoral, fellowship, and counseling commission.”¹ While the first half of the Great Commission commands all believers to be globally-minded missionaries, Tripp notes that the second half of the Great Commission “defines and directs the life and ministry of the local church, for the pastor, the biblical counselor, the small group leader, and the brother and sister in Christ committed to biblical, mutual ministry.”²

¹Paul David Tripp, “The Great Commission: A Paradigm for Ministry in the Local Church,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 3 (1998): 2.

²Ibid.

Counseling with Purpose

The ministries of the local church should reflect a common goal. Tripp explains how the Great Commission clarifies the objective of every ministry:

There is but one goal for the ministry of the body of Christ: the glory of Christ. Christ's call to "teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" must be understood in this context. Matthew's gospel focuses on the identity of the Son of Man. . . . The resurrected, Savior King, who will return in victorious glory with all of His angels (Matt 25:31-33), stands now and says to His children, "The goal of it all is that you would live in joyful submission to all that I have commanded you."³

Counseling with Intention

The competent counselor's methodology is also defined by Christ's call to "teach them to obey" (28:20a). The trained shepherd teaches the Word of God in a way that clarifies and encourages practical obedience. Leith Anderson explains how twenty-first century church leaders must combine revelation and relevance in the practice of ministry. He says, "Until Christians own and understand a theological truth, it is merely an academic exercise rather than a means of ministry."⁴ Biblical, mutual ministry is helping people learn how to solve problems as opposed to sharing mere information. Anderson explains how the Great Commission differentiates between knowledge and wisdom:

Too many have assumed with Aristotle that knowing truth will automatically change behavior. Truth must be acted on, and that is different from knowledge. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 calls for making disciples by teaching them to *obey* all that Christ commanded, not just to *know* all that Christ commanded.⁵

³Ibid., 2-3.

⁴Leith Anderson, "Christian Ministry in the 21st Century Part 2: Theological Issues of 21st Century Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151, no. 602 (1994): 132.

⁵Leith Anderson, "Christian Ministry in the 21st Century Part 4: Practice of Ministry in 21st Century Churches," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151, no. 604 (1994): 392.

Some counselors help counselees achieve happiness or a better marriage.

The biblical counselor carefully helps the counselee for the greater purpose of leaving counseling with a more insightful, practical commitment to obey everything their Savior has commanded. What if the counselee never has a good marriage or understands their past? The counselor helps the counselee move toward the goal of counseling. Tripp explains, “We want horizontal change, but we recognize that the Great Commission calls us to a deeper purpose. . . . As radical and unpopular as it may be in our self-absorbed culture, the primary goal of counseling is not to be happy but to obey. The primary method of getting us there is the faithful, loving intervention of the Word.”⁶

Counseling with Character

The force of Jesus’ words, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go,” (28:18a) conditions the counselor’s attitude. Tripp says, “Only one attitude fits the glory of the Savior King! It is joyful, worshipful submission, seen not only in corporate worship on Sunday but also in self-sacrificing obedience every other day of the week. . . . Only worshippers will go, teach, and obey.”⁷ The basis of a servant, relational mind-set is found in the attitude of Christ who submitted his heavenly glory to the Father’s plan and demonstrated how service is in the very nature of God (Phil 2:5-7). John Piper comments on how Christ’s attitude transforms the counselor-comforter relationally, “It makes us more loving, more helpful, more servant-like, less proud, less selfish, less withdrawn, more caring.”⁸ An attitude of worship is the heart of counseling

⁶Tripp, “The Great Commission,” 3.

⁷Ibid.

⁸John Piper, “We Beheld His Glory, Full of Grace and Truth” [on-line]; accessed 27 March 2011; available from <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/we-beheld-his-glory-full-of-grace-and-truth>; Internet.

and the means God uses to redeem the church from horizontal self-satisfaction for the glory of Christ.

Counseling with Anticipation

Mutual ministry finds its hope in the final words of the Great Commission, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (28:20b). Jesus makes himself the focus of ministry. Intensive discipleship and counseling ministries originate in the Lord Jesus who is the source of all ministry. Counseling ministries often contradict the focus on the Lord by emphasizing the counselor. Tripp rightly asserts, “The most important encounter in counseling is not with the human counselor but with the Wonderful Counselor who works in the counselor and counselee alike. He is our hope!”⁹

How do small group leaders or counselors “teach them to obey”? The mission is accomplished by equipping saints with practical skills related to the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern. Additionally, the equipped counselor, sensitive to how the secular therapeutic has influenced Christians in the twenty-first century, addresses the integration of psychology with Christianity.

The Ministry of the Word

The ability to minister the Word of God is considered the foundation of all counseling skills. Andrew Lincoln, in his discussion of Ephesians 4:20-21, comments, “Since Christians believed that Christ was a living person whose presence was mediated by the proclamation and teaching about him, learning Christ involved not only learning about, but also being shaped by, the risen Christ, who was the source of a new way of

⁹Tripp, “The Great Commission,” 4.

life as well as of a new relationship with God.”¹⁰ Steve Viars explains how mediating the presence of Christ is practiced in his own life as pastor of a local church:

I enjoy preaching and studying for preaching, but that is just a part of what I do. I also like shepherding people in one-on-one relationships and in small groups. I don't believe in the “primacy of preaching” as much as the primacy of the ministry of the Word of God. That allows me the opportunity to pastor seven days a week. It is not just something I do on Sunday mornings. I get to minister the Word of God to people in all sorts of ministry through the week.¹¹

The Great Commission paradigm integrates the ministry of the Word with preaching, private counseling, and small group ministry. David Powlison clarifies how counseling correlates with preaching, “Counseling is the private ministry of God’s truth to human need, but *biblical* counseling occurs in continuity with the public ministry of God’s truth.”¹² Powlison notes that evangelical churches challenge the pastor who fails to “preach the Word,” but hardly flinch when someone fails to “counsel the Word.”¹⁷ He warns, “Millions of Bible believers lay down their discernment in the face of unbiblical counsel. . . . The Word tends to play a distinctly secondary role, appended to an alien message, or even no role at all.”¹³ The accomplished biblical counselor possesses convictions about the text and confidence that Scripture can solve problems in contrast to those who minimize or ignore the Word in counseling.

Counseling with Conviction

The postmodern age assumes any attempt to find God is as good as any other. David Peterson critiques the assumptions of those who advocate a postmodern

¹⁰Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 280.

¹¹David Powlison, “A Nouthetic Philosophy of Ministry,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 3 (2002): 27.

¹²David Powlison, “Counsel the Word,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 11, no. 2 (1993): 3.

¹³*Ibid.*, 2.

perspective, “If there is truth anywhere about God, this can only be discovered by combining insights from different religions and philosophies.”¹⁴ John Stott adds, “People also resent having to make up their minds about anything. They have imbibed the easygoing tolerance of the age and are devotees of the open mind.”¹⁵ The effective counselor moves in opposition to the postmodern mind-set because he has conviction that the God of the Bible is a speaking God who has communicated to mankind in a trustworthy manner. Peterson explains how God communicates to mankind through natural revelation and Scripture, “But the Bible indicates from the beginning that the one true Creator God is *able to reveal himself* to us infallibly and that he *has done so*, in several important ways.”¹⁶

God speaks the universe into existence, but uniquely expresses himself in his written word. The counselor must see the biblical text as exclusive among all books in its origin, nature, and authority. Commenting on the infallibility of Scripture, Peterson states,

The idea of infallibility flows from the belief that Scripture is *God-breathed*. God has ensured that his people have an accurate and trustworthy revelation—one that will not lead us into error about God and his will. Sometimes people say, ‘If God used human agents, there must be errors in the Bible.’ But the whole point of claiming that ‘men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit’ and that ‘all Scripture is God-breathed’ is that God sovereignly overruled to make sure that his revelation was infallibly conveyed to us.¹⁷

Ministering the Word in a rapidly changing world requires conviction. The minister of the Word does not merely speculate about the human condition based upon

¹⁴David Peterson, “The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture,” *Biblical Theology and Worship*, 2009 [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://davidgpeterson.com/biblical-theology/the-inspiration-and-authority-of-scripture/>; Internet.

¹⁵John R. W. Stott, “Christian Ministry in the 21st Century Part 3: Christian Preaching in the Contemporary World,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145, no. 580 (1988): 363-64.

¹⁶Peterson, “The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture.”

¹⁷Ibid.

one's own frayed ideas. The biblical counselor believes that since God has spoken, the minister of the Word must speak, communicating godly counsel to others (Mark 12:24; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Cor 4:1-3).

Jay Adams argues the reason why Christian counseling depends so heavily on the Scriptures at every point is “because the Scriptures are the peculiar product of the Counselor Himself.”¹⁸ He says,

When I say that the Counselor Himself is the Author of Scriptures, I refer, of course, not to the human counselor, but to the Holy Spirit, who is called by John “the paraclete” (counselor) and by Isaiah “the Spirit of Counsel” (Is 11:2). He is the Spirit by whom God breathed out His Words in written form in the Scriptures, the One who patiently spent long years bearing along men of God that by His holy superintendence they might write inerrant counsel. It should be no surprise, then, to find that He works through the Bible when carrying out His paracletic functions. . . . Paul has no difficulty in sometimes identifying the source of this paracletic work as the Spirit and at other times as the Scriptures since it is *by means of the Scriptures* that the Spirit counsels.¹⁹

Counseling with Confidence

The attitude of the counselor must be confidence and relief. Adams explains, “I do not have to *counsel alone*, when I counsel biblically the Holy Spirit has promised to work through my counseling.”²⁰ The Holy Spirit, as our God-given teacher, enables even the simple and uneducated to read and understand the Scripture. But, as Stott notes, this must be qualified:

The Reformers' insistence on the perspicuity of Scripture referred to its central message, the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ crucified. . . . But the Reformers did not claim that everything in Scripture was equally plain. How could

¹⁸Jay E. Adams, “The Use of Scripture in Counseling Part 4: Scriptural Counseling Is Spiritual,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131, no. 4 (1974): 291.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 291-92.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 292.

they, when Peter wrote that some things in Paul's letters were 'hard to understand' (2 Pet 3:15-16)?²¹

Jesus' counseling paradigm demands we make "disciples" through "teaching" "all the Scriptures" of which he is the express subject (Luke 24:27). Jesus enables the counselor and counselee to recognize and understand his words by an ongoing process termed "illumination." Peterson explains, "Illumination refers to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, enabling believers to hear God's voice through the Scriptures, to understand what is written and to apply the message to their own situation."²²

The apostle Paul expects God to continue to assist believers in the application of the gospel as shown in Philippians 3:15, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal (*αποκαλύπτω*, 'make clear') that also to you." The seasoned counselor reads and reflects on Scripture daily, praying for faithfulness in personal application. Adams notes the counselor must exegete the Scriptures with a practical, personal slant. He says, "Good counselors are concerned about becoming wise in their own personal living and, as a result, they also become wise in the ministry of the Word to others."²³

The Christian counsels with confidence because the Scriptures are sufficient for salvation and the Christian life. Paul reminds Timothy that the Bible is able to give him "wisdom that leads to salvation" (2 Tim 3:15). The counselor should always affirm the primacy of Scripture in genuine evangelism, as Peterson argues,

We may need to answer various questions and seek to persuade them. We will certainly need to pray for the Holy Spirit to give them understanding and to soften

²¹Stott, "Christian Preaching in the Contemporary World," 365.

²²Peterson, "The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture."

²³Jay E. Adams, "The Use of Scripture in Counseling Part 2: Five Factors in Scriptural Counseling," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131, no. 522 (1974): 102.

their hearts. But we can be confident in the sufficiency of the Scriptures to convert people. Indeed, we must be aware of downplaying the Scriptures in evangelistic efforts, giving the impression that we have little trust in the effectiveness of God's word to convict and change people, whether young or old.²⁴

“All Scripture,” declares the apostle Paul, “is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Adams writes about the implications for scriptural counseling, “In the passage from which these words come, Paul piled words and phrases upon one another to convey the idea of *complete adequacy*: the Scriptures not only make the Christian minister ‘adequate’ for his work, but, as Paul put it, ‘entirely equip him for it.’”²⁵ The contemporary counselor demonstrates the sufficiency of Scripture by advocating the Bible as the essential tool for equipping the saints for the work of the ministry and promoting Christian maturity.

Counseling with Competence

John Henderson writes about training biblical counselors. He says, “The public exposition or preaching of God's Word is reserved for those both called and equipped to teach publicly, whereas the private counseling of God's Word belongs to all believers, especially when they are adequately equipped.”²⁶ What does it mean for a believer to be “adequately equipped”? As previously noted, Stott argued that the Reformers taught that Scripture has a “‘see-through’ or transparent quality” which made the Bible

²⁴David G. Peterson, “The Sufficiency of Scripture,” *Biblical Theology and Worship*, 2009 [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://davidgpeterson.com/biblical-theology/the-sufficiency-of-scripture/>; Internet.

²⁵Jay E. Adams, “The Use of Scripture in Counseling Part 1: Christian Counseling is Scriptural,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131, no. 521 (1974): 17.

²⁶John Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel: Leader Notebook* (Mustang, OK: Dare 2 Dream Books, 2008), 22.

understandable to everyone.²⁷ The church needs gifted leaders and members who can expound or explain the Scriptures. The equipped counselor bridges the biblical and modern worlds by being faithful to the text and sensitive to the contemporary world. A faithful exposition of Scripture avoids reading twenty-first century thoughts into the minds of the biblical authors.

The trained biblical counselor, according to Stott, becomes an interpretive bridge between a difficult text, understanding, and application. He says,

When a person picks up the Bible and reads it, he steps back two millennia, beyond the microchip revolution, the electronic, scientific, and industrial revolutions, back into a world that long ago ceased to exist. . . . The reader is tempted to ask what that old book has to say to the contemporary world. Bible students must think back into the situation of the biblical authors, into their history, geography, culture, grammar, and vocabulary. To neglect this task or do it halfheartedly or in a slovenly fashion is inexcusable, because it expresses contempt for the way in which God chose to speak.²⁸

The committed counselor is aware of how postmodernism advocates a variety of scriptural interpretations on a given topic. Even among Christians, it is common to hear one say, “This is what the verse means to me,” as though there were an innumerable variety of possible interpretations. Scripture is a unified whole but postmodernism implies that God is not powerful enough to reveal his will in Scripture in a clear and discernable way. When postmodernism becomes the interpretive norm, Peterson warns, “All we can hear are confusing human voices in the different strands of Scripture, reflecting on what the will of God might be.”²⁹

²⁷Stott, “Christian Preaching in the Contemporary World,” 365.

²⁸Ibid., 366-67.

²⁹Peterson, “The Sufficiency of Scripture.”

The equipped counselor explains the text while drawing out the thoughts and intents of the writer so that the counselee's mind is opened to understanding (Luke 24:27, 32, 45). Systematic biblical counseling interprets Scripture by Scripture and, as Powlison observes, rationally explains human problems by the categories with which the Bible teaches us to understand life.³⁰ As a result of careful observation and interpretation, the counselor expects that God's voice will be heard and that God's people will obey him.

The skillful counselor applies the meaning of the text to the modern world. Stott comments on how the interpreter must be perceptive to the modern world: "The expositor must struggle to understand the world, which is rapidly changing; to listen to its many discordant voices, especially its questions, to feel its pain, its disorientation and its despair. All this is part of Christian sensitivity."³¹ The accelerating changes of modern life make the task of cultural sensitivity even more important than in the days when changes in culture occurred over decades or even centuries.

The culturally sensitive counselor must reach a biblical understanding of the counselee's problem. According to Adams, the counselor "must discover the significant data concerning the problem that may be provided by the counselee, parents, spouse, or others."³² The equipped counselor also evaluates the counselee's symptoms and behavior with biblical criteria. The counselor interviews, investigates, and involves himself in the life of the counselee for the purpose of applying scriptural counseling. Henderson summarizes the process, "The biblical counselor makes application by combining

³⁰David Powlison, "The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 2 (2005): 2.

³¹Stott, "Christian Preaching in the Contemporary World," 367.

³²Adams, "The Use of Scripture in Counseling Part 2," 99.

the precise meaning of *God's Word* (Observation and Interpretation) with a suitable understanding of the present *audience* and a suitable comprehension of the *present time or situation* in order to help the counselee connect these three domains in his or her life (Application).”³³

The effective counselor assists the counselee in the formulation of an action plan. The action plan correlates with the personalized scriptural counseling and homework. The objective is to move the counselee from being a hearer of the Word to a doer (Jas 1:23-25). Each action plan varies according to the content of the Word applied to the problem and the counselee's response. An action plan is of little value unless the counselee agrees to its execution; therefore, the counselor obtains a commitment to scriptural action by the counselee.³⁴

In summary, the equipped counselor is skilled in scriptural observation and interpretation in order that biblical application and meaningful interpersonal engagement may be realized in the life of the audience with the result that a biblical plan of action is obeyed. The competent counselor uses biblical categories to diagnose problems and lovingly applies scriptural guidance with wisdom.

The Ministry of Prayer

The Bible asserts that prayer alone can accomplish mighty things (Jas 5:17-18). God's mighty power working through prayer demonstrates God's ability to change lives (Eph 1:18-20). Thomas Constable is a seminary professor and church planter who has spent a lifetime writing and teaching about prayer. He contends, “The power of prayer is

³³Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel*, 103.

³⁴Jay E. Adams, “The Use of Scripture in Counseling Part 3: Five Factors in Scriptural Counseling—Continued,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131, no. 522 (1974): 205.

that it secures the powerful working of God.”³⁵ The apostles understood the significance of prayer and placed a priority on the ministry of prayer as recorded in Acts 6:4, “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Concerning this passage, Eugene Bradford observes that “prayer is joined to the ministry of the Word as being of equal importance with it; indeed prayer is mentioned first.”³⁶ Early Christians knew of Jesus’ devotion to prayer and teachings on prayer (Luke 5:15-16; 9:28; 18:1-8; 22:39-44). Jesus corrected false concepts regarding prayer and demanded that his disciples practice authentic prayer (Matt 6:9-13). Small group leaders should approach prayer with the same attitude of humility exhibited by the disciple who asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1a). Jesus’ response indicates that he delights to instruct believers in the ministry of prayer (Luke 11:1-13). Jesus wants the counselor to comprehend what prayer is and understand how to pray for oneself and others.

Prayer Defined

What is prayer? Constable contends that biblical prayer is essentially “talking to God. It is expressing our thoughts and feelings to deity.”³⁷ Jesus brings progressive revelation about prayer in his words and life. Jesus models how and what to pray in what is commonly called the “Lord’s prayer” (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). The words “Our Father” emphasize the believer’s access and communication with God based on the parental relationship God establishes with his children (Matt 6:9). The apostle Paul defines another dimension of prayer in Romans 8:26-27. The sixteenth-century French

³⁵Thomas L. Constable, “Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer” [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/prayer/prayer.pdf>; Internet.

³⁶Eugene Bradford, “Intercessory Prayer: A Ministerial Task,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (1959): 15.

³⁷Constable, “Talking to God.”

Reformer Guillaume Farel comments on the passage, “Prayer is an ardent speaking with God, in which man does not know what he must say or ask, but the Spirit who is in believers prays for us with great inexpressible groanings.”³⁸ James 5:13-18 specifically defines prayer as petitions or requests of God. All prayers can be understood as either asking God for something or telling God something.

Prayer as a Means of Ministry

Terry Johnson advocates a return to the Puritan’s practice of using scriptural language in prayer as the biblical pattern for effective prayer ministry. He states, “Prayer, like preaching is a means of grace. . . . This is true not just of private prayers, but public as well. Troubled souls at times need not counsel, even nouthetic counseling, but passionate and biblical prayer.”³⁹ Johnson argues that the language of prayer is not simply a matter of style, “Prayer, particularly Christian prayer, *uses biblical language.*”⁴⁰ How does one become proficient in praying the language of Scripture? Believers should study and use the prayers in Scripture (1 Chr 29:11-13; Ps 51) as well as incorporate the language of Scripture, including God’s own promises and nature, in prayers. Matthew Henry’s *A Method for Prayer* is a good example of how to integrate the language of Scripture in prayers. Henry writes to help those leading in prayer according to the standard categories of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession.

³⁸Theodore G. Van Raalte, “Guillaume Farel’s Spirituality: Leading in Prayer,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70, no. 2 (2008): 293.

³⁹Terry L. Johnson, “The Pastor’s Public Ministry: Conclusion,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60, no. 2 (1998): 304.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

Constable compares the different kinds of biblical prayers to a tool kit. He states, “Our prayers are our verbal tools that we use to get things done with God.”⁴¹ The seasoned counselor identifies and uses the right kind of prayer in private and public ministry.

Petitioning God for Ourselves and for Others

God reveals himself in the Bible as a person who has infinite knowledge and wisdom (Rom 11:33; Col 2:3; Eph 3:10). Constable contends that God “knows how everything began and how it will all end. He knows what works best in human life, and He wants people to experience what is best. It is natural, therefore, that we should ask God questions.”⁴² God’s recorded answers to the questions asked in prayers teach us what to expect from God.

Grant Osborne says that true prayer entails “a total God-dependence and complete God-centered approach to life.”⁴³ God-centered praying includes adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication; but sometimes Christians think that asking God tough questions displaces him from the center of one’s life. However, the Bible never rebukes anyone for asking honest questions in their struggle to trust God. Job asks God more questions than anyone in the Bible and God never reproves Job for asking too many questions (Job 7:11-21). In response to questions, God essentially tells us to make decisions in dependence on him by applying the wise precepts and examples he has recorded for us in the Bible (Prov 3:5-6).⁴⁴

⁴¹Constable, “Talking to God.”

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Grant R. Osborne, “Moving Forward on Our Knees: Corporate Prayer in the New Testament,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 2 (2010): 250.

⁴⁴Constable, “Talking to God.”

God requires that we pray for ourselves (Matt 6:11). Private prayer ensures the believer is dependent upon God and prepares the believer to receive God's provision with thanksgiving in order that God may be glorified.⁴⁵ Edmond Hiebert comments on the importance of thanksgiving, "Paul affirmed that a thankful personal relationship with God is an essential feature of an effective prayer ministry."⁴⁶

God urges us to pray for others (1 Tim 2:1). Intercession describes the activity of praying for another person with the feeling of boldness or confidence fostered by a life of fellowship with God. How should intercessory prayer be done? Hiebert asserts, "Effective intercession for others, like effective praying for our own needs and interests, assumes that Christians are maintaining a personal relationship with their Lord."⁴⁷ A caring counselor's intercessory ministry includes praying individually or in groups for the unsaved and the saints. Praying for the unsaved is an essential part of an intercessory ministry because the lost may not pray for themselves (Ezek 8:18; Zech 7:13).

The intercessor might easily be overwhelmed by the magnitude of needs for the lost and the saved. Curtis Mitchell explains how the small group leader finds help in the Holy Spirit's intercessory ministry (Rom 8:26-27), "The significance of praying is not so much the fact of Christians' praying, but the assurance that it triggers the Holy Spirit's intercessory praying. The value of prayer ultimately lies in his intercessory groanings, not the believers' ignorant praying."⁴⁸

⁴⁵Glenn R. Kreider, "Jonathan Edwards's Theology of Prayer," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160, no. 640 (2003): 444.

⁴⁶D. Edmond Hiebert, "The Significance of Christian Intercession," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149, no. 593 (1992): 18.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁸Curtis C. Mitchell, "The Holy Spirit's Intercessory Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139, no. 555 (1982): 239-40.

Just as the Holy Spirit is interceding for believers, Jesus Christ's present ministry today is mainly intercessory. Constable explains, "He prays for believers from heaven (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). Theologically Jesus' intercessory ministry involves his praying that prevents our falling before temptation and our failing because of weakness."⁴⁹

Telling God Something

Many prayers involve someone telling God something rather than asking him for something. The counselor encourages believers to tell God about their concerns because God presents himself as being open and interested (Jas 5:13; 1 Pet 5:7). Constable calls this "narrative prayer" and divides it into two sections: those occasions when one makes a report-like comment (1 Sam 8:21; Ezek 20:49) and those times when one responds verbally to someone else's initiative by making a reply or a response (1 Sam 3:4; Acts 9:10).⁵⁰

Confession is a specific kind of narrative prayer that is prominent in the Bible (Ps 51). A prayer of confession is one in which we agree with God that what we have done is contrary or opposed to his purpose, plan, or will. The counselor encourages and admonishes people to admit their sin through prayer (1 John 1:9). The prayer of confession can be private (Ps 66:18) or public (Acts 19:18-19). The Bible admonishes us to confess our faults to one another (Jas 5:16). Sometimes the scale of the sin merits public confession (Ezra 10:11). Public confession should be practiced with wisdom and sensitivity. Counselors should exercise wisdom by limiting the circle of confession to those whom the offense has affected.

⁴⁹Constable, "Talking to God."

⁵⁰Ibid.

The biblical counselor must be familiar with prayers of thanksgiving (Eph 1:3-14) and praise (2 Chr 29:28-30). Praise refers to Christians' positive responses to the revelation of God's person in nature and Scripture; thanksgiving expresses a positive reaction to God's works. These prayers promote growth and are indicative of authentic spirituality.

Prayers of complaint are conspicuous in the Bible (Exod 5:22-23; Jer 4:10). The counselor acknowledges that people may have grievances against God. Many of God's choice servants complained to him (Moses and Jeremiah). Prayers of complaint to God maintain the proper orientation even though the content may express a range of negative emotions and thoughts. The ministry of the Holy Spirit should comfort both counselor and believer in this context. Mitchell comments, "Since the Spirit in His intercession is helping them in their inadequate praying, then their praying (complemented by the Spirit's praying) is inevitably in harmony with the will of God. All prayer in harmony with God's will be answered (1 John 5:14-15)."⁵¹

In summary, the skilled counselor possesses a functional understanding and practice of prayer. The ministry of prayer is the Spirit of Scripture, and the language of the Bible should frame and fill the counselor's prayers.⁵² The artful counselor identifies the appropriate kind of prayer for a counselee and guides the counselee to engage God in prayer. Finally, the counselor encourages believers to pray because the Spirit only prays in the hearts of those who pray.⁵³

⁵¹Mitchell, "The Holy Spirit's Intercessory Ministry," 238.

⁵²Van Raalte, "Guillaume Farel's Spirituality," 299.

⁵³Mitchell, "The Holy Spirit's Intercessory Ministry," 235.

The Ministry of Mutual Concern

The postmodern age is destructive of humankind's universal search for transcendence (God), community (one's neighbor), and significance (oneself). The modern era tells man there is no reality beyond the material universe, which assaults personal significance. The loss of transcendence and significance is also an attack on human community. Stott comments, "The present age is an era of social disintegration. People are finding it increasingly difficult to relate to one another in love."⁵⁴ Stott says Christians dare to claim that man's universal search for God, one's neighbor, and oneself is found in Christ and his new society. Stott identifies personal and social alienation as a challenge to the church and the quality of Christian fellowship. He says,

Jesus Christ offers true community. The church is part of the gospel. Christ's purpose is not to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate their loneliness, but to build a church or a new society, in which racial, social, and sexual barriers have been transcended, which offers itself to the world as the true alternative society, and which challenges the values and standards of the world.⁵⁵

Why is reciprocal ministry an important part of God's solution to the world's challenges? Reciprocal ministry is a crucial part of the solution because it focuses on relationships. The etymology of the word "relationship" suggests the idea of devotion or dedication to another person. In contrast to secular ideals, the purpose of relationships is to reflect what it means to be made in the image of God. Human relationships should pattern the most crucial relational blueprint—how God relates to himself.⁵⁶ Stuart Scott says, "The most important thing for us to remember in our relationships is that the way the Trinity

⁵⁴John R. W. Stott, "Christian Ministry in the 21st Century Part 1: The World's Challenge to the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145, no. 578 (1988): 132.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁶Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002), 51.

relates to one another gives us our model for relationships.”⁵⁷ He notes that within the relationships of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) there is a willingness to deny self (Mark 14: 32-36); there is submission (1 Cor 11:3); there is perfect communication (John 8:28); there are verbal expressions of love (John 10:17); and there are visible expressions of love, goodness, blessing, and service (John 15:9-10, 17:4, 23).⁵⁸

Peterson explains how the apostle Paul understood mutual care, “If God is the source of true comfort through the Scriptures and ultimately through salvation in Christ, Christian ministry involving exhortation or appeal on that basis will be the means of mediating the divine comfort to other people (2 Cor 1:9-10).”⁵⁹ Powlison suggests that mutual concern occurs best in the context of a long-term friendship where there is mutually invited counsel generating dependency on God as well as a constructive interdependency on one another.⁶⁰ The New Testament emphasizes two overlapping dimensions of mutual concern: public and private. The artful counselor encourages and builds up others in small groups and private conversations (1 Thess 2:11; 5:11, 14).

A Community of Caring Counselors

Jerry Bridges writes about why there is a crisis of caring in the church. He says, “We believers today do not know, either intellectually or experientially, the meaning of true fellowship as it was practiced in the early Church and passed on to us by the writers

⁵⁷Ibid., 52.

⁵⁸Ibid., 51-52. Scott cites other verses supporting how the Trinity relates to itself and how these examples should guide biblical relationships.

⁵⁹David G. Peterson, “The Ministry of Encouragement,” *Biblical Theology and Worship*, 2009 [on-line]; accessed 30 October 2010; available from <http://davidgpeter.com/biblical-theology/the-ministry-of-encouragement/>; Internet.

⁶⁰David Powlison, “Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling,” *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988): 66.

of the New Testament.”⁶¹ Bridges’ comments are based on a study of the Greek word for fellowship (*koinonia*) and its nuanced usages in the New Testament. He notes a diversity of topics associated with κοινοῖα:

We have seen that fellowship is a caring community and a partnership in the gospel, a sharing with one another spiritually and a caring for each other materially. Suffering together, serving one another, and using our spiritual gifts for the benefit of the entire Body are all conscious expressions of true biblical fellowship.⁶²

With such a diversity of topics, how can one tie them all together? Bridges’ asserts,

The foundation of daily experiential fellowship among believers is found in Paul’s statement that “in Christ...each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:5). I belong to you and you belong to me, and we each belong to and have “ownership” in every other believer in the world. This mutual belonging to one another is the thread that ties together all the seemingly diverse elements of fellowship.⁶³

Paul Tripp compares public worship to a workshop where Christ continues to rescue, restore, and conform his people. He says, “The public sermon should equip the body of Christ for the innumerable private moments of life-transforming ministry that occur every day.”⁶⁴ The teacher must recognize that he is the counselor of counselors. Each believer who hears the message is an instrument of influence. Believers give and receive counsel daily. Believers receive the word of grace so they can give to others. Commenting on Ephesians 4:29, Tripp explains how giving occurs, “*Every* word we say is meant to be ‘constructive, according to the need of the moment, giving grace to those who hear.’”⁶⁵

⁶¹Jerry Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1985), 10.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 189.

⁶³Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring*, 190.

⁶⁴Paul David Tripp, “A Community of Counselors: The Fruit of Good Preaching,” *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 21, no. 2 (2003): 52.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

While acknowledging the importance of the sermon, Peterson cautions believers against expecting the ‘sermon’ to do everything that a range of verbal ministries accomplished for the earliest churches. He says,

We need to think carefully about ways of encouraging verbal contributions apart from the sermon in our services, not least because of the evangelistic potential suggested by 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. These might include testimonies, informal responses to the preached word and opportunities for brief words of exhortation. Some people can bring great encouragement to others by the way we pray or sing or lead a meeting.⁶⁶

In addition to a range of verbal ministries, communal care includes serving, contributing to the needs of others, listening with discernment, and showing mercy to others (Rom 12:3-8; 14:18-19; Phil 2:17-18; 4:18). Timothy Keller views the ministries of mercy as a crucial part of the local church. He uses Jesus’ story about the Good Samaritan to explain how ministries of mercy operate (Luke 10:30-37). He says, “The kingdom means bringing the kingship of Christ in both word and deed to broken lives. . . . We must minister to the whole person.”⁶⁷

Counseling in Private

Wayne Mack says God uses believers who are willing to be involved with others. He states, “God has specifically and unmistakably commissioned Christians to help one another.”⁶⁸ The purpose of the counselor’s involvement is to enhance the counselee’s relationship with Christ. A counseling relationship is effective only when an acceptable level of involvement has been established with the counselee. Paul Tripp

⁶⁶David G. Peterson, “Worship and Evangelism,” *Biblical Theology and Worship*, 2009 [on-line]; accessed 27 October 2010; available from <http://davidgpeterson.com/worship-and-evangelism/>; Internet.

⁶⁷Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997), 112.

⁶⁸Wayne A. Mack, “Biblical Help for Solving Interpersonal Conflicts,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 2, no. 1 (1978): 52.

says we are “called to a ‘total involvement paradigm’ where each person in the church understands his responsibility to be part of God’s ongoing work of redemption in the lives of those around him.”⁶⁹

The artful helper possesses biblical interpersonal communication skills. Christian communication has a notable goal as Keller explains, “Biblical communication aims to change people. It aims for their well-being and God’s glory.”⁷⁰ How does one communicate in a biblical manner? Biblical interaction requires one to listen first and speak last (Jas 1: 19). Many people like to engage others in a one-way conversation: you listen while I talk. Biblical interpersonal engagement assumes each person needs information before they are equipped to say anything helpful to a person. Proverbs 18:13 states, “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.” Godly listening eventually requires the listener to speak. The Bible cautions the counselor when he does speak, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Prov 18:21). The counselor’s words must be chosen carefully because it is by means of words we serve and love one another. The counselor’s speech sometimes must be firm and corrective to those who are out of line (1 Thess 5:14). Paul balanced out his harsh speech with the idea that speaking redemptively includes encouragement and building each other up (1 Thess 5:11). Encouraging speech is seen in the words of Jesus who spoke words of affirmation, comfort, concern, and wisdom to his listeners.

Tripp suggests that private ministry is “the repairing, sustaining, correcting, protecting discipline of the church. It is the work of hands-on restoration.”⁷¹ The goal

⁶⁹Tripp, “A Community of Counselors,” 52.

⁷⁰Timothy Keller, “A Model for Preaching Part 2: The Situational Aspect,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 1 (1994): 42.

⁷¹Paul David Tripp, “Speaking Redemptively,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 3 (1998): 53.

of person-by-person restoration is harmonious relationships with the Lord and one another (Eph 4:25). Reciprocal ministries provide individual attention (1 Thess 2:11, 5:11) and visible expressions of love. Scott notes that *visible expressions of love* include “encouraging one another when discouraged, forgiving one another, stirring up one another to love and good deeds, gently admonishing one another, firmly and lovingly rebuking one another, and bearing one another’s burdens.”⁷²

In summary, the ministry of mutual concern encourages and strengthens the hearts of Christians “in every good work and word” (2 Thess 2:16-17). The effectual counselor exercises a range of verbal and mercy ministries with constant reference to the work of salvation. Christ-centered reciprocal concern is the means of mediating the divine comfort to others. Most importantly, the Spirit-led counselor concentrates on the objective nature of *koinonia*—the belonging to one another in Christ.⁷³

The Ministry of Christian Integrationists

Beginning with the late 1800s, David Powlison writes about the successive displacement of church and community by hospital, clinic, and office as the locus of care for mental and emotional illness. He explains how the professional jurisdiction over Americans’ problems in living gradually passed from the religious pastorate to various medical and quasi-medical professions: psychiatry, neurology, social work, and clinical psychology. He says, “Pastoral retreat and subordination mirrored the advancing authority of those secular professions offering and administering psychotherapy, psychotropic

⁷²Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 52.

⁷³Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring*, 190.

medication, and psychiatric institutions.”⁷⁴ The consequences were substantial, as Powlison notes, “The ‘therapeutic’ was triumphant. Psychiatry and psychotherapy displaced the cure of souls, reifying the medical metaphor and so ordaining ‘secular pastoral workers’ to take up the task.”⁷⁵

Powlison contends the rise of modern psychological theories and professions is closely tied to the history of mainline Protestantism. Mainline Protestantism conditioned American psychology with an optimism about human nature and the potential for salvific cures; psychology in turn gave mainline Protestantism a strongly therapeutic cast. He argues,

The assimilation of the modern psychologies into liberal theology created the “first crucial turning point in the history of American pastoral theology,” as concern for a transcendent salvation receded into the background, and the urgencies attending individual adjustment and self-realization advanced into the foreground. One can trace a massive shift in clerical consciousness—a transition from salvation to self-fulfillment—which reveals some of the forces that helped to ensure the ‘triumph of the therapeutic’ in American culture.⁷⁶

Although the alliance between mainline Protestant pastoral counseling and the psychotherapeutic professions sought the well-being of clients’ mental health, the church’s subordination became more pronounced as psychology dominated through academic, medical, and governmental institutions. Powlison states it succinctly, “Invariably, pastoral counseling drifted toward a junior version of psychotherapy.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 23.

⁷⁵Ibid. ‘Secular pastoral worker’ is Sigmund Freud’s provocative term.

⁷⁶Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 23, quoting Brooks E. Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

⁷⁷Ibid.

The latter half of the twentieth-century saw conservative Protestants begin to “integrate” biblical faith with modern psychology. The catchword “integration” typically served to represent both the intellectual and professional tasks of minister and counselor. Academic institutions and churches witnessed the rise of a new kind of professional in both ecclesiastical and mental health circles: a conservative Protestant psychotherapist. Powlison notes that evangelical counselors faced challenges about the legitimacy of psychotherapy in their church communities but as early as the 1960s counselors “had gained a growing measure of recognition as the church’s experts in the personal problems sphere.”⁷⁸ Large segments of evangelical denominations and institutions acquiesced to the mystique of the expert counselor on whom a counselee depended.

The contemporary biblical counselor encounters counselees who have been conditioned by Christian integrationists. However, integrationists are increasingly confronted by the challenges of biblical counseling and its influence among laypersons. In defense of the “integrative enterprise,” James Beck cites a common refrain, “All truth has its source in God. This theological certainty, expressed in the phrase ‘All truth is God’s truth,’ is a guiding principle for those involved in the collaboration between biblical studies and counseling.”⁷⁹ The underlying assumption of Beck’s position is the value of interdisciplinary studies. Beck states, “Biblical studies and counseling/psychology need each other!”⁸⁰ Beck does not clarify which psychology or psychotherapy among the hundreds that exist is the one needed by the biblical

⁷⁸Ibid., 28.

⁷⁹James R. Beck, “Collaboration between Biblical Studies and Counseling: Five Crucial Questions,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 25, no. 2 (2006): 102.

⁸⁰Ibid., 108.

counselor; he only affirms the benefits of interdisciplinary intellectual activity. The practice of selectively using ideas and practices from various disciplines, especially from psychotherapies, is called eclecticism.

The breadth of differences along the integrationists' counseling continuum is substantial. Andrew Peterson is a psychologist who teaches and practices biblical counseling. He describes the psychotherapy spectrum of methods of counseling as ranging from the scientific (e.g., medical and behaviorist models) to the subjective (e.g., Gestalt and New Age models).⁸¹ Peterson recommends using the spectrum as a means of assessing therapeutic ideas, skills, and diagnoses.

Counseling skills training varies, but common elements have been popularized and taught to clergy and laypeople. Anthony Taylor's approach to training clergy with counseling or "helping" skills is representative of many Christian integrationists. He makes extensive use of Gerard Egan's *The Skilled Helper*, which teaches cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills. Taylor de-emphasizes background theories of personality and psychopathology. Counselor skills are divided into two sections: relationship-building (attending) and influencing (directing). Relationship-building skills include nonverbal behaviors (body language), questions, minimal prompts, verbal following, paraphrasing of content and/or feeling, and summarization.⁸² Influencing skills include advanced level empathy, self-disclosure, confrontation, and immediacy. Taylor

⁸¹Andrew J. Peterson, "Existential and Transpersonal Approach" (classroom lecture notes, OPT516–Pastoral Counseling, Lesson 7, 2008, download), 116.

⁸²Anthony Taylor, "The Systematic Skill-Building Approach to Counselor Training for Clergy," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 34, no. 3 (1980): 160-61.

summarizes the skills as being “*interpersonal competencies*, necessary for close, decent, and harmonious relationships.”⁸³

Christian integrationists adapted relational skills training as a means to build community and enhance interpersonal relationships. Dennis Kinlaw acknowledges the theological imperatives Christians have for community formation, but warns that believers may be lacking “the behavioral skills to enact such a community.”⁸⁴ Rather than find the answers to community building in Scripture, Kinlaw embraces an eclectic version of skills development.

Counseling skills training redefines the meanings of common words shared with biblical counselors. Taylor and Kinlaw both teach “confrontation” as a core element in their training curriculum. Kinlaw says, “If, for example, the helper ‘confronts’ the helpee with something about his attitude or behavior because the helper has need to parade his own values or beliefs, then the helping process has been aborted because the process has come under the control of the helper’s needs rather than the helpee’s needs.”⁸⁵ In contrast to biblical admonition, Kinlaw values acceptance of the helpee’s reality and a client-centered approach. The counselor assumes the client has resources for growth and healing within them already and the skilled counselor facilitates the counselee to draw out the inner resources.

In summary, secular theories of counseling form the foundation of integrationists’ skills training models. Believers should reject the quasi-Christian

⁸³Ibid., 161.

⁸⁴Dennis C. Kinlaw, “Helping Skills for the Helping Community,” *Religious Education* 71, no. 6 (1976): 574.

⁸⁵Kinlaw, “Helping Skills for the Helping Community,” 578.

gloss placed on counseling skills development that excludes scriptural counseling and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The postmodern age worships relationships, but biblical relationships have a greater purpose than interpersonal satisfaction. Scott concludes,

In our relationships with others, we must address any tendency **to give or require an *inordinate* amount of attention**. People who have this wrong focus are actually in the relationship for themselves since they are not in it for God's glory or the good of the other person. They may be under the mistaken assumption that giving this worshipful attention is the way it is supposed to be. The theater has encouraged this thinking, depicting that life is about an all-consuming and near perfect human love. To pursue such a fanciful relationship is neither right nor living within reality. God is the one with whom we should be consumed.⁸⁶

⁸⁶Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 52-53. Emphasis Scott's.

CHAPTER 4

ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT

The ministry research project consisted of a fifteen-week time frame that included three weeks of identifying and recruiting participants, a ten-week biblical counseling lesson series, and two weeks of analyzing data collected from the students. The elements of the project were comprised of a pre-test and post-test questionnaire, biblical counseling seminars, structured interviews, student manual, and weekly email devotionals. These elements were based on the project's five goals: (1) enlighten small group leaders about their identity as counselors, (2) help small group leaders build biblical counseling skills to care for others, (3) equip small group leaders with counseling diagnostic skills in order to evaluate one's relationship with God and others, (4) demonstrate to small group leaders the importance of a conversational-relational model in their biblical counseling, and (5) strengthen my skills as a small group leader and trainer. The elements of the project assisted in the measurement of the effectiveness of obtaining the goals.

Enlistment of Participants

The implementation of the project was assisted by David Griffin, co-pastor of Community Life Church. He volunteered as the point of contact for the enlistment of project participants. With the input and support of co-pastor Griffin, I held a meeting with small group pastor Don Griffin. We collaborated about who would be good participants

for the project and created a list of names. I contacted the people on the list. Griffin recommended that I send out a group email to a select group of potential participants who had indicated interest in small group leader training. I spent two weeks sending and receiving emails about the project. At the end of two weeks, I identified 25 potential participants. After orientation and completion of an agreement to participate in the project, 16 people committed to the project.

The group reflected a balanced diversity of 7 females and 9 males. Each participant represented different kinds of small group ministry leadership experience. Eight of the participants were experienced small group leaders. The breadth of the ministry experience among the leaders ranged from youth, women, men, singles, special need populations (e.g., abused women, widows), and traditional couples' ministries. Four of the participants were apprentices for small group leadership. The remaining 4 participants possessed leadership roles within their respective small groups.

The participants represented diversity in other categories in addition to ministry service. The oldest participant was an eighty-year-old female and the youngest participant was a twenty-four-year-old male. A review of the participants' ages indicates 2 of the students were over sixty in age. Ten of the students were between forty and forty-nine years of age, 3 were between thirty and thirty-nine years of age, and 1 was between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine years of age. The formal education background ranged from 9 students with a Bachelor of Arts degree, 4 with a Master's degree, 1 with a Doctorate of Jurisprudence, 1 with a high school diploma, and 1 currently in college.

At the end of the orientation, a pre-test questionnaire was administered to 16 participants. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess each student's identity and experience as a biblical counselor.

The Pre-test Questionnaire Administered

The questionnaire was composed of 22 questions with the answers set up on a 10-point Likert scale (a copy of the questionnaire is included in appendix 1). The questionnaire was designed to measure each participant's identity as a counselor and experience in using Scripture, prayer, and mutual concern as a means of ministry to others.

Fourteen questions measured the participants' identity regarding biblical and secular counseling. Seven questions (2, 7, 8, 13, 14, 17, and 18) focused on attitudes and assumptions toward the secular counselor and counseling. For example, question 7, "I believe counseling is the domain and prerogative of licensed professionals," was designed to measure the participants' viewpoints of who is qualified to counsel. Many Christians think that counseling is restricted to professional counselors based on state licensure or credentialing as opposed to the biblical directive of Romans 15:14.

Seven questions (3, 5, 9, 15, 19, 20, and 21) measured the identity of the student as a Christian counselor and caregiver. For example, question 15, "I believe I am competent to counsel other people," focused on the individual's viewpoint of his or her capability of being a counselor.

The remaining eight questions measured each one's experience and ability ministering the Word (questions 1, 10, and 12), prayer (questions 4, 6, and 22), and mutual concern (questions 11 and 16). As a group, these questions focused on one's utilization of the Bible in personal and public life, the practice of prayer for oneself and others, and various expressions of mutual care. Question 1 illustrates the practical nature of these questions: "I use the Bible on a daily basis for personal devotions and study."

Synopsis of Counseling Seminar

The biblical counseling seminar consisted of ten 90-minute lessons taught over a ten-week period (appendix 2 contains an example of a lesson). The seminar was titled “The Skilled Counselor” based on Psalm 78:72. A notebook was created for each participant that contained an introduction, ten lessons, and a diagnostic chart to help students diagnose and prescribe help for counselees. Additionally, permission was obtained from the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF) for the use of ten articles published in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*.¹ Eight of the ten lessons had accompanying CCEF articles to enhance the students’ learning experience. For example, Paul David Tripp’s article, “The Great Commission,” was used in conjunction with lesson 1 as an aide to the introduction of biblical counseling.²

The structure of each lesson was framed by the “GUIDE” learning methodology.³ The five-part GUIDE method reinforces student learning through preparing for the lesson with a reading assignment, identifying purposes and objectives of the lesson, integrating readings and the outline by notating information in a manner that will prove beneficial for study and examination (accomplished with blank spaces in the curriculum for students to complete), further development of the concepts presented with other readings and applications, and providing study questions to help students synthesize the material covered. Lessons 6 and 10 did not use any accompanying CCEF articles.

¹CCEF is a Christian counseling and training ministry located in suburban Philadelphia, PA. Their Internet address is www.ccef.org. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (CD version) was purchased from CCEF and used to copy the articles.

²Paul David Tripp, “The Great Commission: A Paradigm for Ministry in the Local Church,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 3 (1998): 2-4.

³The GUIDE acronym represents the following: (1) Getting Started, (2) Understanding, (3) Investigating, (4) Developing, and (5) Evaluating.

Lesson 6 reviewed the ministry of prayer and how prayer can be used in interpersonal ministry. Lesson 10 was a case study created by John Henderson in his comprehensive biblical counseling curriculum.⁴ The students reviewed and discussed the case study. The lessons contained homework and encouraged application of the material during the following week. Each lesson focused on developing counseling skills to apply biblical knowledge in conversational-relational contexts.

Lesson 1

The first lesson introduced the overall theme of the ten-week series as well as the specific theme of “An Introduction to Biblical Counseling.” The purpose of lesson 1 was to introduce students to the general concept of biblical counseling in distinction from secular counseling and present the Book of Ephesians as an overview of a biblical example. The primary objectives of lesson 1 were (1) help students understand the place of biblical counseling in the world as well as the purpose of this training program, (2) help students see how salvation and sanctification represent the most fundamental and comprehensive improvements in a human life, and (3) assist students in expressing a definition of biblical counseling. David Powlison’s article, “Affirmations and Denials: Toward a Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling,” was used to prompt students to discuss the meaning of biblical counseling in greater detail.⁵

⁴John Henderson, *Equipped to Counsel: Leader Resource Book* (Mustang, OK: Dare 2 Dream Books, 2008), 15-17.

⁵David Powlison, “Affirmations and Denials: Toward a Definition of Biblical Counseling” [on-line]; accessed 10 September 2011; available from <http://www.ccef.org/affirmations-denials-proposed-definition-biblical-counseling>; Internet.

Lesson 2

Lesson 2, “Christian Communication,” focused on biblical communication principles found primarily in Ephesians 4. The purpose of the lesson was to examine biblical communication and interaction principles. The lesson had three objectives: (1) highlight essential biblical communication principles, (2) engage one another using biblical communication principles, and (3) help students assess their conversational-relational abilities as they apply to godly communication. Jeffrey Forrey’s article, “Christian Communication,” was used to stimulate students to further discussion.⁶

Lesson 3

The third lesson, “The Ministry of the Word–Part 1,” provided an overview of using the Word of God as a means to help others. The purpose of the lesson was to introduce students to the ministry of the Word and define how the sufficiency of Scripture applies to intensive discipleship and counseling. The lesson had two objectives: (1) understand the unique nature, origin, and authority of Scripture; and (2) explore how the sufficiency of Scripture applies to life problems. Participants were asked to read Edward Welch’s article, “What Is Biblical Counseling, Anyway?” as an overview of the ministry of the Word in relation to counseling.⁷

Lesson 4

Lesson 4, “The Ministry of the Word–Part 2,” built upon lesson 3. The purpose of the lesson was to foster an appreciation for Scripture in personal and interpersonal

⁶Jeffrey Forrey, “Christian Communication,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 2 (1998): 37-41.

⁷Edward T. Welch, “What Is Biblical Counseling, Anyway?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 1 (1997): 2-6.

ministry and assist students in making a relevant application to life problems. The lesson had three objectives: (1) instruct basic Bible study methods and cultivate an appreciation for the place of Scripture in counseling; (2) examine how personal Bible reading, reflection, and application take precedence before ministering to others; and (3) arouse in counseling students a true knowledge and love of God through careful biblical examination and application. Students aided their understanding of using Scripture in counseling by reading a CCEF article by Jay Adams titled, “Biblical Interpretation and Counseling.”⁸

Lesson 5

The fifth lesson completed the final part of “The Ministry of the Word–Part 3.” The purpose of the lesson was to explore the different ways Scripture counsels us about issues, instructs us about life’s choices, and corrects us when we depart from the path of wisdom. The lesson focused on three objectives: (1) overview of a general counseling method; (2) help students apply and practice specific counseling methods related to teaching, encouraging, and correcting; and (3) assist students in connecting specific counseling methods to specific personal problems. Students were able to identify a general counseling method applicable to all people in all places at all times while being introduced to specific ways the ministry of Word applies to unique problems. Tripp’s article, “Strategies for Opening Blind Eyes: Data Gathering Part 3,” supplemented the lesson.⁹

⁸Jay E. Adams, “Biblical Interpretation and Counseling,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 1 (1998): 5-9.

⁹Paul David Tripp, “Strategies for Opening Blind Eyes: Data Gathering Part 3,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 15, no. 1 (1996): 42-51.

Lesson 6

The sixth lesson introduced participants to “The Ministry of Prayer.” The purpose of the lesson was to apply the different ways the ministry of prayer can be used in one-on-one or small group settings. Students gained confidence in their prayer ministry through an understanding of the Holy Spirit’s intercessory ministry of prayer. The lesson had three objectives: (1) research the scriptural basis for the ministry of prayer, (2) experience how the ministry of prayer spawns confidence in God’s work in the midst of suffering, and (3) help students realize how the ministry of prayer reaches troubled souls oftentimes when no other counseling will. Students reviewed a synopsis of Matthew Henry’s *A Method of Prayer* as an example of someone who framed and filled his prayers with Scripture.

Lesson 7

Lesson 7, “A Comparison of Biblical and Secular Counseling,” introduced students to a critical review of secular psychology and its influence upon Christian counseling. The purpose of the lesson was to compare secular models of counseling with a biblical model of counseling. Students were encouraged to cultivate a basic appreciation for the place of Scripture in counseling. The lesson had three objectives: (1) help students understand the basic assumptions of secular counseling as compared to biblical counseling, (2) provide counseling students an overview of the impact of secular and integrationists’ counseling methods on everyday people, and (3) develop a diagnostic system for determining how Christians are impacted by secular and Christian influences.

Students were encouraged to read David Powlison's CCEF article, "Modern Therapies and the Church's Faith," as part of the lesson.¹⁰

Lesson 8

The eighth lesson, "The Ministry of Mutual Concern—Part 1," oriented students to specific ways that community care or mutual concern may help those who are suffering or ruled by life-dominating problems. The purpose of the lesson was to instill in students an appreciation for the body of Christ and how each person is designed to be a part of the helping process. The lesson had three objectives: (1) orient students to reciprocal ministry and how God uses interpersonal ministry to advance his kingdom, (2) help students appreciate the role of community and how God uses people to minister to the needs of others, and (3) provide an overview of specific ways a caring community of believers may minister to those with diverse needs. The lesson emphasized God's use of body or "team" as opposed to individualistic, isolated Christians to help others. Tripp's article, "The Present Glories of Redemption," reinforced the lesson.¹¹

Lesson 9

Lesson 9, "The Ministry of Mutual Concern—Part 2," provided an overview of how small groups and private ministry help people. The purpose of the lesson was an appreciation for person-by-person ministry as the method God has chosen to impact the world on a daily basis. The lesson had three objectives: (1) offer students biblical models for interpersonal ministry, (2) help students apply and practice specific counseling

¹⁰David Powlison, "Modern Therapies and the Church's Faith," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 5, no. 1 (1996): 32-41.

¹¹Paul David Tripp, "The Present Glories of Redemption," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 2 (1999): 32-37.

methods, and (3) orient students to specific human conditions that call for application of specific biblical counseling methods. The lesson had a special focus on admonition, encouragement, and comfort as they applied to specific ministry situations. As part of an effort to expand the students' knowledge of biblical counseling, Welch's article, "Addictions," was used to demonstrate how biblical counseling meets the needs of those with demanding problems.¹²

Lesson 10

The final lesson differed from the first nine lessons in that lesson 10 was primarily a case study about a couple with marriage and family problems. The purpose of the lesson was to integrate the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern with other biblical counseling skills in helping those who have problems come to a Christ-centered, Bible-based, and believer-caring solution. The lesson had three objectives: (1) help students blend the skills they have learned in a counseling case study; (2) orient students to a biblical view of mental, emotional, and behavioral troubles; and (3) offer students a biblical model for understanding the root and development of common mental, emotional, and behavioral troubles in our lives. Two CCEF articles supplemented the lesson. John Street's article titled, "Counseling People Who Resist Change," provided a basic model of how a biblical counselor can use visual aids to help someone.¹³ Powlison's article, "Anger Part 1," expanded the knowledge base of students to address the common problem of anger.¹⁴

¹²Edward T. Welch, "Addictions: New Ways of Seeing, New Ways of Walking Free," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 19, no. 3 (2001): 19-30.

¹³John Street, "Counseling People Who Resist Change," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 3 (1998): 38-39.

¹⁴David Powlison, "Anger Part 1: Understanding Anger," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, no. 1 (1995): 40-53.

Diagnostic Chart

The last section of the student manual contained a diagnostic chart to assist Christians in evaluating the spiritual conditions of nonbelievers and believers. The chart assessed the beliefs of five categories of nonbelievers and provided the counselor with the corresponding attitudes and needs of the nonbeliever. Additionally, four categories of Christians were evaluated: (1) infant or new believer, (2) child or growing believer, (3) young adult, and (4) a parent. Each Christian category had corresponding attitudes and needs defined to assist the biblical counselor with prescribing help. The chart was informed with assistance from Jim Putman's "Summary and Profile of Each Stage of Spiritual Growth"¹⁵ and Redeemer Presbyterian Church's *Fellowship Group Handbook* section titled, "Diagnosing Spiritual Conditions."¹⁶

Devotional Emails

The use of emails to communicate counseling truth and practical application of each lesson was used throughout the ten weeks of lessons. The purpose of the emails was to reinforce an awareness of how biblical counseling occurs in conversational-relational contexts. Emails were delivered to each participant on different days and times throughout the week. The emails corresponded with the weekly lesson and built progressively upon the lesson. Each email provided a terse, pithy point to help the participants apply the lesson during daily living.

¹⁵William James Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 187-191.

¹⁶Timothy J. Keller, Jeffrey O. White, and Andrew E. Field, *Fellowship Group Handbook: A Manual for Leaders and Coordinators* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church of New York City, 1997), 4:1-6.

Structured Interview Questions

A set of structured interview questions was asked to 10 participants (appendix 3). The first ten questions were asked to 5 participants at the conclusion of lesson 5. Each participant received an email asking for a convenient time to conduct the interview telephonically. Five participants averaged approximately fifteen minutes each to answer the questions. The final structured interviews were conducted at the conclusion of lesson 9. In addition to questions 1-10, this interview contained an extra question that asked, "How have the diagnostic counseling tools helped you to understand a counseling situation?" Once again, the participants received emails asking for a convenient time to conduct the interview telephonically. Five students completed the entire structured interview questionnaire.

Post-test Questionnaire

The post-test questionnaire was administered on Saturday, December 10, following the final lesson. This questionnaire was the same as the pre-test questionnaire. The purpose of administering the same questionnaire was to evaluate the effectiveness of the counseling lesson series in achieving the project's goals by comparing the pre-test and post-test results. The same format was also used in administering the test.

Conclusion

The research component of the project provided clarity from the students and answers to many questions about how the project was progressing. In chapter 5, the research data will show how the project was successful in accomplishing its goals and was beneficial to the 16 class participants.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter completes the demonstration of the project by providing a seven-step analysis. First, the research data of the project is evaluated. Second, comments shared during structured interviews are presented and analyzed. The third section evaluates the project goals. In the fourth section, an analysis of the project process is conducted with recommendations to enhance future projects. The fifth section is a theological reflection about God and how one understands his work among the saints. Sixth, a personal reflection shares the lessons learned during and after the project. The final section summarizes the project for expectations of future ministry.

Evaluation of Research Data

One set of data was obtained from the participants based on the completion of the pre- and post-project questionnaire. Thirteen of 16 participants completed both the pre- and post-project questionnaire. Two participants failed to return the post-test questionnaire by the December 24, 2011, deadline. One participant's pre-test was not found for comparison with that person's post-test.

The pre- and post-test data from the questionnaire was entered on a spreadsheet for analysis. The pre- and post-tests responses were compared to determine if there were significant changes. A ten-point Likert scale was used in a forced choice method where the middle option of neutral or undecided was not available. For each item, respondents

were forced to decide whether they lean more towards the “Always” or “Never” end of the scale. Two research methods were used to evaluate the data.

The first method summed the scores of the students’ pre- and post-project responses for each statement (see appendix 4). A final score was created for each pre- and post-test statement that represents the group’s percentage increase or decrease.

The second method examined the responses from each statement in order to determine the percentage of people who responded in each possible category (see appendix 5). Once each person’s responses were recorded for every question, a review of the responses determined averages of the responses, the percentage point difference between the responses, and the percentage increase or decrease. The averages for the pre- and post-tests were compared as a measure of central tendency. The tables in appendix 5 make a conclusion about each statement based on a comparison of the pre- and post-test averages.

Each of these tools was used to measure progress toward three of the project’s goals: to enlighten small group leaders about their identity as counselors, to build biblical counseling skills to care for others, and to equip small group leaders with counseling diagnostic skills to evaluate one’s relationship with God and others. After examining the results, it is satisfying to conclude that positive statistical change occurred as a result of the project. However, as I have learned, the secular therapeutic model has a deep influence on Christians and tempers the progress I experienced in the project. Some students’ responses demonstrate the conflict of integrating Christian beliefs with psychology. Yet, when Christ-followers have a chance to learn about biblical counseling and God’s plan for interpersonal ministry, they are far more receptive than I originally anticipated.

For example, in statement 1, “I use the Bible on a daily basis for personal devotions and study,” the pre-test average response was 6.92 and the post-test response was 7.75, for a percentage point increase of .83, or a 12 percent increase. The students showed movement toward increasing their use of the Bible in daily devotions (see table 1 in appendix 5).

An example of the students’ use of secular resources involves statement 2, “When I have a personal crisis I go to secular, non-Christian resources for help.” Statement 2 indicates a percentage point increase of .70, or a 34 percent change in students’ attitudes and practices (see table 2, appendix 5). The post-test scores indicate a student increase of using secular resources during a crisis. The students possessed a personal knowledge of secular resources and most used non-Christian resources for help at different times in their lives. As the course progressed, students became more comfortable sharing with each other about their use of non-Christian resources. Answers to statement 2 represent the contradictory claims among the students who value biblical counsel while still retaining affinities for secular resources.

When the group is considered as a whole, one can see substantial growth when the statements are categorized according to Christian identity, secular identity, and the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern. The most significant change occurred in the area of identity as a Christian counselor.

For example, in statement 15, “I believe I am competent to counsel other people,” there was substantial movement between the results of the pre- and post-tests (see table 15 in appendix 5). The average pre-test response was 4.83 and the post-test response was a 7.25, for a percentage point increase of 2.42, or a 50 percent increase. This change represents the largest percentage increase of any question. Likewise,

statement 5, “I believe there are absolute truths in the Bible for all people, in all places, at all times,” received higher than expected responses in both the pre- and post-tests (see table 5 in appendix 5). The participants possessed strong convictions about God’s Word and once students connected God’s Word with the practice of counseling their identity as counselors progressed.

Growth in one’s identity as a Christian counselor is not always as simple as attending class and practicing their faith throughout the week, as evidenced by statement 3, “Personal problems may be resolved through Christian friends and fellowship.” This statement demonstrates the challenges of involving oneself with others’ problems. The average pre-test response was 6.92 and the post-test response was 7.77, for a percentage point increase of .85, or a 12 percent increase (see table 3 in appendix 5). Similarly, statement 9, “The Bible is sufficient to solve my spiritual or non-physical problems,” indicated the tension students felt in their answers. The students showed a percentage point decrease of .31, or a 4 percent decrease, in affirming the sufficiency of Scripture (see table 9 in appendix 5). A small number of students are challenged to see the Bible as the sole source of help for their spiritual problems. The conflicting answers reflect the paradox of Christians affirming biblical counseling while struggling with deeply held beliefs about the relevance of secular psychology.

A significant change in students’ beliefs about secular counseling is evidenced by the responses to statement 18, “I believe churches should refer troubled people to a professional counselor.” The average response of the students on the pre-test was 5.08 and the post-test response was 3.25, for a percentage point decrease of 1.83, or a 36 percent decrease (see table 18 in appendix 5). This represents the second highest percentage of change in participants’ responses. Likewise, statement 8, “I believe

psychology is based on objective research and science,” demonstrates a 21 percent decrease (see table 8 in appendix 5). Similarly, statement 7, “I believe counseling is the domain and prerogative of licensed professionals,” reflected an 18 percent decrease (see table 7 in appendix 5). These statements indicate that some students demonstrated a lower view of secular counseling at the end of the course. One concludes that students progressed in their understanding of secular assumptions about life and grew in their ability to critically evaluate psychology from a biblical viewpoint.

Students demonstrated a change toward secular attitudes as evidenced by statement 13, “I believe tolerance and individualism are important values.” The students’ average pre-test response was 5.18 and the post-test response was 4.64, for a percentage point decrease of .54, or a 10 percent decrease. Most students moved toward a stronger viewpoint against the secular values of tolerance and individualism (see table 13 in appendix 5). Likewise, statement 14, “I believe mankind possesses the ability to determine and bring about good and lasting change in humanity,” recorded scores indicating a growing understanding of a biblical view of humanity. The students indicated a 9 percent decrease in their responses that man can change himself. Students showed a modest increase in their biblical view of mankind as opposed to the assumptions of secular psychology (see table 14 in appendix 5).

Students had modest changes in their responses to the ministry of the Word as indicated by statement 10, “I believe I could use Scripture to help someone with depression.” The average pre-test response was 7.83 and the post-test response was 7.58, for a percentage point decrease of .25, or a 3 percent decrease. Although the students showed a modest decrease, both of their tests indicated a high appreciation of Scripture (see table 10 in appendix 5). The responses reflect the growing awareness of personal

deficiencies in the ministry of the Word in contrast with a growing desire towards more confidence and skill in helping someone with depression. Some growth in the ministry of the Word is confirmed by statement 12, “I quote or paraphrase the Bible in daily conversations.” The students demonstrated a slight improvement with a .75 percentage point increase in the post-test average, or a 12 percent increase in the use of the Bible in daily conversations (see table 12 in appendix 5). Both statements confirm that the students became more aware of the need for biblical counseling, which was often voiced as a desire to become more skilled in the use of their Bibles.

Two statements measured the ministry of mutual concern. A large change was measured in statement 11, “I think involvement with other people’s problems has its limits.” The students’ pre-test response was 7.58, with a 5.50 response on the post-test, for a percentage point increase of 2.08, or a 27 percent decrease (see table 11 in appendix 5). The responses indicate a movement toward involvement with others as a critical part of biblical counseling. Similarly, statement 16, “I think the Bible demands that we carry each other’s burdens,” indicated a 12 percent increase toward caring for others (see table 16 in appendix 5).

The final category of statements analyzed one’s involvement in the ministry of prayer as indicated by statement 4, “I pray on a daily basis.” The students’ responses indicated a strong existing level of personal prayer (9.38 pre-test), and their practice of prayer remained strong throughout the project (9.62 post-test), for a 3 percent increase (see table 4 in appendix 5). For statement 6, “I pray with people when I feel like it is important,” the students showed a 1 percent increase (see table 6 in appendix 5). A small number of the students indicated slight growth in their ministry of prayer with others.

Evaluation of Structured Interviews

A standard set of interview questions was administered privately to two different sets of people at the five- and nine-week marks of the project. By interviewing a total of ten people, or 62 percent of the class, a reliable and valid sample was obtained about the students' experiences in the class. As the interviewer, I explained the nature of a structured interview and emphasized that the interviewee would do most of the talking with minimal prompting and interaction from me. The overall feedback of the interviews demonstrated the students were challenged and stimulated to spiritual growth from several sources. For example, for question 1, "How has this training been helpful to you," one student cited an article in the student manual as "challenging their concepts of spiritual strongholds and discipleship." And this student's comments are insightful: "The biggest thing about the training was it opened our eyes to the premise of the course: how to apply Scripture to life situations. We are putting biblical worldviews on issues instead of the world putting its views on us."

Another example of student growth involved question 2, "What area of your life has been challenged the most? Have any changes occurred as a result?" One student stated, "Prayer. The whole idea of prayer. I don't do enough of it." Another student commented, "The biggest challenge is getting into Scripture during a counseling session. Verses tell us to do this but it is hard from memory." One participant acknowledged that biblical counseling challenged "my traditional notion of counseling and core issues like the biblical emphasis on the heart."

Question 3 asked, "How have your views of the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern changed?" One student responded, "The practicality of it is the most interesting part." Another student stated, "I have seen how important it is to

understand the Bible on a deeper level so that you can properly counsel a need in truth.” Some participants reflected on the need for God’s help, as noted by this student: “One thing is that God, with Scripture and the Holy Spirit, equips us to minister or counsel. Prayer is an important part that is not accomplished.” Similarly, one student expressed a growing insight among all the students after week 9: “Knowing there is power in all three ministries. I don’t connect into power as much as I should.”

Question 4 asked, “How has your view of biblical counseling changed?” Some students did not acknowledge any change in their view, while most did admit substantial change, as evidenced by this statement: “Before the class I did not have a definition of counseling and this class has helped shape what is true counseling.” Another student compared secular assumptions with a theological reflection: “Most think of counseling as a worldview but most problems are heart problems as opposed to working on the surface.” One respondent goes even further by commenting on the integration of psychology with Christianity: “Secular counselors treat symptoms; then there are Christian counselors who don’t counsel Christianly. They are treating symptoms as opposed to focusing on the person and getting to heart issues.” Two responses focused on their Christian identity as noted by this response, “I used to think only a professional could counsel. Now my view is any Christian can be used as a counselor. I have to step out of my comfort zone and get involved to be used as an instrument in the hands of the Redeemer.”

Questions 5 and 8 focused on the use of skills learned from the class. Question 5 asked, “Have you experienced any situations where you have applied skills from the class? Please give a brief description.” Four of five interviewees in the initial interviews did not cite any examples where they had applied skills from the class. However, one

student gave an illustration of how he counseled an eleven-year-old niece who was living in an abusive situation. He stated that she had made a profession of faith and been baptized prior to their conversation, which he used as the basis for a counseling session about Psalm 23. After week 9, all five interviewees provided examples of how they have used counseling skills learned from the class. Four of the illustrations were derived from work relationships, while one came from a family situation. All respondents listed the skill of listening as an area of current growth. The second most common response was a practical knowledge and application of Scripture.

Question 6 asked, “Do you think of yourself as being competent to counsel? Please give an example of your rationale.” The responses generally affirmed their identity as being competent to counsel, but as one student stated, “I am competent to counsel but maybe not comfortable.” Two other responses stated their level of confidence needed to increase before they practiced counseling others on a regular basis. One student gave a biblical basis for his answer, “I do feel competent to counsel because Scripture says we are competent.” Another student said, “I must be somewhat capable because several call me for counsel and I just use the Bible for my reference and if I don’t have the reference I just ask them for time to get back to them.” Three students tempered their affirmative responses as needing more expertise in Scripture, and one student negated her competence with this comment, “I do not think I am competent to counsel because I think I need to study God’s Word more.”

The student manual was a major part of the project. Question 7 asked, “How has the participant manual aided you in understanding biblical counseling?” The answers provided by the interviewees indicated that most studied the manual, read the articles, and enjoyed writing in their manuals. One student noted, “The articles are great. The notes

are great. Having something to complete as we listen is real helpful.” A general consensus of the interviewees about the manual was that one could go back to it as a resource or reference when the class was over.

The most disappointing answers were stated in response to question 9, “Have the daily email devotionals helped you understand the class material?” The subject of the emails was titled “Counseling One Another” and I assumed people would read their emails and apply them to their lives and others. One person stated, “I did not read all of them but the ones I did read were helpful.” Another student commented, “I was hit and miss on reading them but I can’t really say I read them.” Some students gave a favorable review of the emails as noted by this response: “Yes, the emails were helpful, especially the first one on speech.”

The students were asked for their advice in question 10, “If you were the course trainer, how would you change the class?” Their responses ranged from making the lessons more of a workshop, adding role-plays, continuing the course as an advanced course, and extending the time to two hours per session. The general comment was to add more time so that a thorough discussion of the topic could be concluded.

The week 9 interviewees were asked question 11, “How have the diagnostic counseling tools helped you to understand a counseling situation?” The lack of time in the class minimized the amount of time spent on the diagnostic chart. The students offered minimal feedback and commented they knew it was discussed.

Evaluation of Project Goals

The first goal of the project was to enlighten small group leaders about their identity as counselors. The data clearly indicated a positive change in the participants’

identity as able and willing Christian counselors. Although the group consisted of students who already possessed a strong Christian foundation and functioned as leaders in various ministries, most grew in their identity as a Christian counselor. However, even among Christians with strong biblical knowledge, most students expressed a keen awareness of needing more practice and exercise as biblical counselors.

The second goal of building biblical counseling skills to care for others was achieved. The small group leaders in the course expressed strong thoughts about being liberated to “counsel” people. Although some had never thought of themselves as “counselors,” the class equipped them with a counselor identity and the tools to engage others with the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual care. Additionally, an early emphasis in lesson 2 on biblical communication skills made a positive impact on the students.¹ Most of the students spoke of biblical communication skills as being fundamental to Christian counseling ministry.

The third goal was to equip small group leaders with counseling diagnostic skills to evaluate one’s relationship with God and others. This goal was partially achieved. The student manual included a chart for diagnosing the spiritual conditions of those they counsel. The time restraints in the class did not accommodate extensive review of the chart. There were occasional references to the chart but there was never a specific time when the various categories in the chart were analyzed. However, an emphasis upon assessing one’s relationship to God was a primary focus of the course. Students were constantly reminded about beginning a counseling session by determining the counselee’s

¹Thomas Garland Vaughn, “Building Ministry Team Skills through the Development of a Biblical Counseling Program” (D.Ed.Min. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003). Dr. Vaughn and I spoke on the phone and exchanged emails about his project and recommendations for mine. He emphasized an early focus on communication skills.

relationship with the Lord. By the end of the course, the students were emphasizing salvation or sanctification as the starting point in any counseling relationship. More time should have been spent on understanding the various reasons people are unbelievers and the counselor's responses to the attitudes of the unbeliever.

The fourth goal was to demonstrate to small group leaders the importance of a conversational-relational model in their biblical counseling. This goal was achieved because most of the students testified about involving themselves with others through listening and speaking. The leaders of small groups emphasized how the conversational-relational model helped them understand how Christian fellowship is an instrument of service. The linkages between corporate worship, small groups, and interpersonal ministry provided a holistic picture of how God uses each dimension of the Christian life to help and heal others.

The fifth goal was personal and I can say unequivocally that I am a better small group leader and trainer as a result of the course. I have been encouraged by several students to continue the course with an advanced class. Some have shared with me how the skills they learned in the class have helped them deal with relational conflicts in their small groups. A few have told me the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual care helped them serve more effectively as small group leaders.

Evaluation of Project Process

There are several things I would change about the process if I had it to do all over again. First, I would engage all three of our pastors in identifying and encouraging small group leaders to participate. One of the co-pastors acted as the point of contact for the other two pastors, but without the help of the small group pastor, I would have

failed in identifying prospective participants. I learned that leadership from all the co-pastors is critical for this kind of a project to succeed. Small group leaders, as well as other members, respect the authority of the co-pastors, and it is critical to have pastoral authority behind the recruiting of participants. A project can be done with the help of a small group pastor but nothing can replace the leadership of a pastor.

The second thing I would change is the structure of the ten-point Likert scale. I made two mistakes regarding the use of the scale. First, I used some statements that are reversed in meaning from the overall direction of the scale. Most of the statements followed the way people think instinctively with one being the strongest disagreement and ten being the strongest agreement. Statements 11 and 13 are called reversal items because I reversed the response value for each item in comparison to the other statements. I should have avoided the use of reversal items.

A second mistake I made regarding the Likert scale was using a ten-point scale as opposed to a seven-point scale. The ten-point scale created two related problems. First, the lack of a middle or neutral choice, such as four on a seven-point scale, forced the students to choose between five or six as a middle option. This was confusing to some students. The forced choice option made it difficult to analyze scores in the middle of the ten-point scale. Second, only two words, “Never” and “Always,” were used as anchors to identify the polar values of the scale. I think fewer scale items and more verbal descriptors of the scale values would have assisted the students in providing more accurate responses. Ten options spread the students’ responses across the scale and made the responses harder to analyze. I think a seven-point scale would produce better direct ranking matches and students would find it more accurate and easier to use.

The participants commonly cited the student manual as a valuable tool. The manual reinforced the Bible-based nature of the course. Students cited the CCEF articles and the lesson plans as something they could use now and in the future. Although the manual was a strength of the course, it also proved to be a time management liability. The manual used the GUIDE learning method as an interactive strategy to get the students to write in their manuals to complete the blanks. After the first class, and based on the level of student interaction, it became apparent the manual contained too many blanks for students to complete in the allotted time. Additionally, the case studies and questions at the end of the lesson were too involved to be finished. The manual must be reduced in content or each class extended from one-and-a-half hours to two hours.

Several students told me they wished the class contained more opportunities for practicing counseling skills. Each lesson contained an evaluation component that encouraged application; additionally, each lesson focused on using the lesson throughout the week with Scripture readings and emails. The group was interactive in discussing counseling case studies but very little time was given to one-on-one counseling practice. The level of counseling experimentation was comfortable for the majority of the class but some students expressed a need for more practice. I conclude that the students experienced a balanced approach in developing counseling skills but a similar project could narrow the scope of the course and add more skills development.

Theological Reflection

While this project has many meaningful aspects, none was more meaningful than seeing a student become engaged in the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual care. As I watched students each week grow in confidence and competency, I was

reminded of how God uses the maturation process for all of us. Believers need someone to help them learn, practice, experiment, and put their faith into practice. Biblical counseling amazes students because they realize these ministries are exactly what God himself wants all of us doing daily.

Most students navigate the ministry of the Word with minimal frustration. But when a student comes to the ministry of prayer, students make it clear they are entering into unfamiliar terrain. Biblical counseling emphasizes prayer or talking to God because God makes it a priority (Rom 8:26-27). Jesus prayed often and taught others how to follow his example (Luke 11:1). Jesus taught his followers that God desires for us to ask him for help and wisdom. Biblical counseling bridges personal and interpersonal prayer.

While most students can pray and do pray for themselves and others, the same students stumble when asked about how to pray for someone in a counseling relationship. As the class studied the prayers of the Bible and the detailed instructions found in the New Testament about prayer, many students spoke of prayer as a new tool in their ministry repertoire. Biblical counseling uses prayer as a means of mediating the presence of God in the lives of others. The use of Scriptural prayer in counseling removes the misuse of prayer observed in the world, models authentic prayer for the counselee, and fills the counselee with hope about God's plan for their life. Indeed, the biblical counselor as a model of the Christian life may never be as genuine as when they lead a counselee in prayer. Many students shared stories in the class about attending Christian counseling and the counselor never mentioned praying for or with them. As biblical counselors and ambassadors for Christ, each student left the class knowing prayer is an indispensable part of Christian counseling.

The students learned how God tells us to counsel one another. Once the mystique of secular counseling was eliminated and light shed on how God wants us to counsel, a sense of liberation was felt among the students. Students often quoted Romans 15:14 as a banner of truth that indeed they were competent to counsel. Students learned the Love, Know, Speak, Do methodology of counseling as articulated by David Powlison and Paul David Tripp. Because this method is biblical and clearly outlined in Scripture, it proved to be a tremendous boost of encouragement to the class.

During the administration of this project, the students learned the importance of godly communication patterned after the Godhead. The class progressed toward an understanding of how God uses fellowship in worship, small groups, and interpersonal ministry to help the hurting and hardened. Students provided weekly testimonies about how God is using these truths in their small groups. The students learned that freedom in Christ allows them to counsel others and demonstrate to a hurting world the sufficiency of the gospel.

Personal Reflection

My involvement in the project and the Doctor of Ministry program has impacted me in several ways. After graduating from seminary twenty-eight years ago, I wanted to renew my learning interests and pursue studies in counseling. First, and probably the most significant thing, I wanted to refresh my spiritual life with intensive Christian discipleship. As a prison chaplain, I had spent over twenty years of my life counseling the most distraught members of our society, and I wanted to improve my counseling skills. As someone who was helping develop a small group leader ministry at a new church plant, I wanted to learn how to use the best tools available to train small

group leaders. Both of these needs were fulfilled through the leadership of Stuart Scott and the biblical counseling program. Not only has this program met my needs, but also my expectations have been exceeded and replaced by a new set of goals and vision for ministry. I have grown spiritually, become more aware of my responsibilities as a husband and father, made new friends in my cohort, learned new counseling skills, and discovered a new academic paradigm.

Second, I gained an appreciation for biblical counseling as God's model for helping others. I read new books, discovered new authors, and became a member of a cohort of men who were committed to biblical counseling. As a result of the discipline of academic study, I grew spiritually. Seminars on Christian parenting and family made me aware of how we are all fellow sojourners and need one another. I watched a young professor named Heath Lambert passionately explain to us the recent history of secular psychology in contrast to biblical counseling. I was inspired and motivated to be a part of the biblical counseling movement and help others throw off the yoke of the secular therapeutic for Christ-centered living.

Finally, this project helped me become a better small group leader and trainer of small group leaders. God continues to surprise me with new venues for sharing biblical counseling. For example, an unexpected guest attended the first lesson of the project. He was a pastor from Ghana, Africa. He was so moved by the class that he asked me to come to Ghana and teach his fellow pastors. In spite of whatever prompted the pastor to beseech me to come to Ghana, I remain keenly aware of my need for God's grace and mercy in daily living. As someone who tends to take the easy path of ministry, I pray God enlarges my heart to carry the burdens of training others in biblical counseling. Just as my commitment to biblical counseling won the hearts and minds of the class, may the

Lord convict me of my failures to live faithfully and convince me to share with others the wisdom that so many faithful teachers have sacrificed to share the past few years.

Conclusion

I leave the Doctor of Ministry program a much different person than when I arrived. I leave more disciplined in focusing on heart issues, more committed to fulfilling the ministry God has given to me, and motivated to implement biblical counseling training. I depart more sensitive to the grip secular counseling has on fellow Christians and how biblical counseling liberates them. I see the tremendous ministry possibilities that biblical counseling offers to the body of Christ. I envision churches implementing biblical counseling as a part of their small group ministries and some institutionalizing Christ-centered counseling as a formal ministry. I take a thankful heart with me, as I know I am the recipient of privileged instruction from gifted teachers. I pray that I will be found faithful in my stewardship of God-given ability to the Lord of the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16; 25:14-30).

APPENDIX 1

PRE-TEST/POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your spiritual identity, knowledge, and experience relating to interpersonal ministry. Matt Harness is conducting this research for purposes of evaluating the efficacy of a biblical counseling skill development course as part of a doctoral project. In this research, you will simply answer the questions before we begin training and you will answer the same questions after we complete the training. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified in your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Demographic Information

Name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____

Years you have been a Christian: _____ Years at Community Life: _____

Highest level of education completed:

HS _____ *Technical* _____ *Associates* _____ *Bachelors* _____

Masters _____ *Doctorate* _____

Level of education you are currently pursuing:

None: _____

Informal: Self-study _____ *On-line* _____

Formal: Associates _____ *Bachelors* _____ *Masters* _____ *Doctorate* _____

Spiritual Identity and Ministry Experience

1. I use the Bible on a daily basis for personal devotions and study.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
2. When I have a personal crisis I go to secular, non-Christian resources for help.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
3. Personal problems may be resolved through Christian friends and fellowship.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
4. I pray on a daily basis.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
5. I believe there are absolute truths in the Bible for all people, in all places, at all times.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
6. I pray with people when I feel like it is important.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
7. I believe counseling is the domain and prerogative of licensed professionals.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
8. I believe psychology is based on objective research and science.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
9. The Bible is sufficient to solve my spiritual or non-physical problems.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
10. I believe I could use Scripture to help someone with depression.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
11. I think involvement with other people's problems has its limits.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always

12. I quote or paraphrase the Bible in daily conversations.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
13. I believe tolerance and individualism are important values.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
14. I believe mankind possesses the ability to determine and bring about good and lasting change in humanity.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
15. I believe I am competent to counsel other people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
16. I think the Bible demands that we carry each other's burdens.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
17. I believe family, society, personality, and physiology influence my thinking.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
18. I believe churches should refer troubled people to a professional counselor.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
19. God has ability to determine and bring about good and lasting transformation in humanity.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
20. As a Christ-follower, my presence can minister to other people.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
21. The mission and master of my heart determine my thinking, feeling, and acting.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always
22. I think prayer can help people when other things have failed.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never Always

APPENDIX 2
COUNSELING SEMINAR LESSON SAMPLE

GETTING STARTED

- Read Jeffrey Forrey, “Christian Communication.” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16 (2). Pages 37-41.
- Read Ephesians 4

UNDERSTANDING

Purposes

- To examine biblical communication and interaction principles.

Objectives

- Highlight essential biblical communication principles.
- Engage one another using biblical communication principles.
- Help students assess their conversational-relational abilities as they apply to godly communication.

INVESTIGATING

- I. Biblical communication aims to change people. It aims for their well-being and God’s glory.
 - a. God reveals himself in Genesis as a speaking God. All of God’s Word is words! There are no pictures or sketches.
 - b. The biblical model for interpersonal engagement is to listen first and speak last. Proverbs 18:2 says, “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.” See James 1:19. The success of face-to-face communication depends to a large extent on one’s ability to listen effectively. How do we improve our listening skills?

- i. Focus on the speaker.
 - ii. Summarize what the speaker says.
 - iii. Ask open-ended questions that produce understanding.
- c. Biblical communication is receiver-oriented. Ministry goals are achieved by understanding the audience and shaping the message accordingly.
- d. Jesus modeled a ministry of presence. This earned him the right to speak into the lives of others.
- e. There is a reason why it is biblical to listen before speaking. The reality is that a person (counselor or otherwise) needs knowledge before they are equipped to say anything helpful to a person. Proverbs 18:13 says, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”
- f. Listening enables consistency in data-gathering. Good listening enables the counselor to ask questions about the situation the counselee is facing and what God has to say about the situation. A thorough data-gathering process enables the counselor to help the counselor move beyond raw facts to the reasons behind their behavior, the significance of what is going on, and the purposes and promises of God’s redemptive intervention.
- g. Scriptural counseling stresses the importance of Christians to walk together and instruct one another. Prov 6:23; Matt 22:29; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 4:6.
- h. If we want to help people change, we must be skilled in scriptural instruction and we must make it an important part of our counseling.

Since Christ is our model for personal ministry, we too want to understand people so that we can serve him in their lives. We too must be committed to entering their worlds. We can begin by taking the time to ask good questions and listen well. Our hope is that others would seek us out and share more of their true struggles, so that they may find, through us, the Lord himself. Entering a person’s world enables us to apply the truths of the gospel in a way that is situation- and person-specific.

Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Hands of the Redeemer*

II. Ephesians 4: Principles of Communication for the Counselor and Counselee.

Adapted from “Equipping Designated Married Couples to Perform Pre-marital Counseling at Immanuel Baptist Church, Danville, Kentucky,” by Harold Best.

- a. Be a good example 4:1. “Live a life worthy.” A godly communicator is humble (v 2), gentle (v 2), patient (v 2), bears with one another in love (v 2). A counselor is a peacemaker (v 3-6).
- b. Be honest. 4:15, 25. A continual demand to practice edifying speech. Put off falsehood. What about body language?
- c. Keep current. 4:26-27. Commit to solve each day’s problems as opposed to attacking the other person or avoiding resolution. Three practical steps toward quick resolution:
 1. Reaffirm your commitment of love to your brother or sister.
 2. Acknowledge your desire to work out your problem.
 3. Schedule a time to do so as soon as possible.
- d. Attack the problem not the person. 4:29. Put off unwholesome speech (5:4) and put on edifying speech. See Prov 18:21.
- e. Act instead of react. 4:31-32. Godly communicators are to put off malicious, impulsive speech and to put on gracious, thoughtful speech. Note the dense description of anger. Contrast 1 Cor 13.

III. Dimensions of communication.

- a. In spoken communication, words alone count for only 7 to 10 percent of the message, whereas tone inflection contributes 35 percent, and body language contributes 55 percent. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, in his book *Silent Message*, refers to this data as the verbal, vocal, and visual components of communication.
- b. Face-to-face communication is the richest form because we can draw on the resources of words, body language, voice, or even the physical arena itself to deliver our ideas.

- c. The listener focuses on the person they are listening to, whether in a group or one-on-one, in order to understand what he or she is saying. Here are practical tips:
1. Avoid distractions. Put away electronics.
 2. Be aware of your posture, eye contact, non-verbal language, and facial expressions.
 3. Be quiet. Don't interrupt.
 4. Take notes!
- d. As the listener, you should be able to repeat back in your own words what they have said to their satisfaction.
- e. Active listening does not mean that you agree, but rather understand, what is being said.

Speaking redemptively is all about choosing our words carefully. It is not just about the words we say but also about the words we have chosen not to say. Speaking redemptively is about being prepared to say the right thing at the right moment and exercising self-control. Speaking redemptively is refusing to let our talk be driven by passion and personal desire but communicating instead with God's purposes in view. It is exercising the faith needed to be part of what God is doing at that moment.

Paul David Tripp, "Speaking Redemptively" (JBC)

DEVELOPING*Further Reading*

Galatians 5

Application

1. Participants will divide into pairs. Designate one member to be the speaker and one to be the listener. Speaker will be asked to, in 2-3 sentences, describe their first car. After this task is completed, listeners will be asked to repeat what is said. Speakers will confirm whether or not the information was repeated accurately. Trade speaker/listener roles and repeat the exercise.
2. Participants will divide into (new) pairs. Designate one person to be the speaker and one the listener. Speaker will spend 2-3 minutes talking about their first job. Listeners will be instructed to identify the emotion communicated by the speaker. Speakers will confirm whether or not the emotion was correctly identified.

EVALUATING

1. Observe your co-workers or some friends in a conversation. Pay attention to body language and their words. Do they match or are there discrepancies? Does their speech edify or tear down the other person?
2. Case Study: Rick and Rhonda were people with lots of insight yet they had never been able to solve the problems in their own relationship. By the time they come to counseling, their problems in their marriage were severe. Both had taken 'vacations' from the other over the past three years. Rhonda had spent the past two weeks at her parents' home. Here is a Christian couple, married for twenty years, with a solid understanding of Scripture and lots of insight into one another, yet they could not solve their own problems. Rhonda grew up in a family where verbal conflict was normal. Her father's harsh, demeaning speech made her life fearful. Rick's family was harmonious. He married his dream when he met Rhonda. Yet both sought to bring the other person into submission through verbal combat. Rick and Rhonda looked to be served. In their anger and disappointment with one another, they beat one another with words. How does Ephesians apply to them? How can you guide them in their speech?

APPENDIX 3

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Structured Interview Questions

1. How has this training been helpful to you?
2. What area of your life has been challenged the most? Have any changes occurred as a result?
3. How have your views of the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern changed?
4. How has your view of biblical counseling changed?
5. Have you experienced any situations where you have applied skills from the class? Please give a brief description.
6. Do you think of yourself as being competent to counsel? Please give an example of your rationale.
7. How has the participant manual aided you in understanding biblical counseling?
8. What biblical counseling skills do you find the most challenging? Why?
9. Have the daily email devotionals helped you understand the class material?
10. If you were the course trainer, how would you change the class?
11. (Ninth week only) How have the diagnostic counseling tools helped you to understand a counseling situation?

APPENDIX 4

PRE-TEST/POST-TEST AVERAGE RESPONSES

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	
	<i>Never</i>									<i>Always</i>	
								<u>Pre-Test Average</u>	<u>Post-Test Average</u>		<u>Percentage Increase/ Decrease</u>
Question 1. I use the Bible on a daily basis for personal devotions and study.								6.92	7.75		12%
Question 2. When I have a personal crisis I go to secular, non-Christian resources for help.								2.07	2.77		34%
Question 3. Personal problems may be resolved through Christian friends and fellowship.								6.92	7.77		12%
Question 4. I pray on a daily basis.								9.38	9.62		3%
Question 5. I believe there are absolute truths in the Bible for all people, in all places, at all times.								9.92	10.00		1%
Question 6. I pray with people when I feel like it is important.								8.46	8.54		1%
Question 7. I believe counseling is the domain and prerogative of licensed professionals.								5.00	4.08		-18%
Question 8. I believe psychology is based on objective research and science.								4.77	3.77		-21%
Question 9. The Bible is sufficient to solve my spiritual or non-physical problems.								8.77	8.46		-4%

	<u>Pre-Test Average</u>	<u>Post-Test Average</u>	<u>Percentage Increase/ Decrease</u>
Question 10. I believe I could use Scripture to help someone with depression.	7.83	7.58	-3%
Question 11. I think involvement with other people's problems has its limits.	7.58	5.50	-27%
Question 12. I quote or paraphrase the Bible in daily conversations.	6.42	7.17	12%
Question 13. I believe tolerance and individualism are important values.	5.18	4.64	-10%
Question 14. I believe mankind possesses the ability to determine and bring about good and lasting change in humanity.	4.33	3.92	-9%
Question 15. I believe I am competent to counsel other people.	4.83	7.25	50%
Question 16. I think the Bible demands that we carry each other's burdens.	8.50	9.50	12%
Question 17. I believe family, society, personality, and physiology influence my thinking.	8.17	8.17	0%
Question 18. I believe churches should refer troubled people to a professional counselor.	5.08	3.25	-36%
Question 19. God has ability to determine and bring about good and lasting transformation in humanity.	10.00	10.00	0%
Question 20. As a Christ-follower, my presence can minister to other people.	9.00	9.00	0%

	<u>Pre-Test Average</u>	<u>Post-Test Average</u>	<u>Percentage Increase/Decrease</u>
Question 21. The mission and master of my heart determine my thinking, feeling, and acting.	9.33	9.17	-2%
Question 22. I think prayer can help people when other things have failed.	9.75	9.92	2%

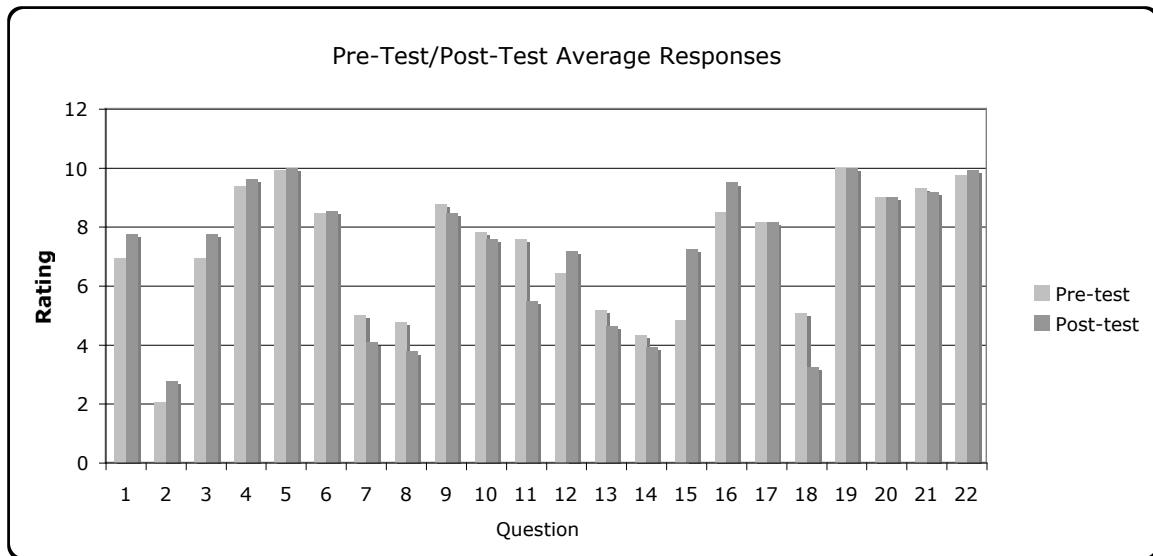


Figure 1. Pre-test/post-test average responses for participants

APPENDIX 5

PRE-TEST/POST-TEST ANALYSIS OF
RESPONSES TO EACH QUESTION

Table 1. Actual responses to question 1: “I use the Bible on a daily basis for personal devotions and study.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3	3	25%		
4				
5				
6	1	8%	3	25%
7	2	17%	1	8%
8	2	17%	5	42%
9	2	17%	2	17%
10 Always	2	17%	1	8%
Averages	83/12 = 6.92		93/12 = 7.75	
Percentage point difference			.83	
Percentage increase/decrease			12%	
Conclusion: There was a 12% increase toward ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 2. Actual responses to question 2: “When I have a personal crisis I go to secular, non-Christian resources for help.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never	4	31%	2	15%
2	5	38%	5	38%
3	3	23%	3	23%
4	1	8%	2	15%
5				
6				
7			1	8%
8				
9				
10 Always				
Averages	27/13 = 2.07		36/13 = 2.77	
Percentage point difference			.70	
Percentage increase/decrease			34%	
Conclusion: There was a 34% increase toward ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 3. Actual responses to question 3: “Personal problems may be resolved through Christian friends and fellowship.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2	2	15%		
3				
4	1	8%		
5	1	8%	1	8%
6			1	8%
7			3	23%
8	5	38%	4	31%
9	3	23%	3	23%
10 Always	1	8%	1	8%
Averages	90/13 = 6.92		101/13 = 7.77	
Percentage point difference			.85	
Percentage increase/decrease			12%	
Conclusion: There was a 12% increase toward ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 4. Actual responses to question 4: “I pray on a daily basis.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8	3	23%	1	8%
9	2	15%	3	23%
10 Always	8	62%	9	69%
Averages	122/13 = 9.38		125/13 = 9.62	
Percentage point difference			.24	
Percentage increase/decrease			3%	
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

Table 5. Actual responses to question 5: “I believe there are absolute truths in the Bible for all people, in all places, at all times.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9	1	8%		
10 Always	12	92%	13	100%
Averages	129/13 = 9.92		130/13 = 10.00	
Percentage point difference			.08	
Percentage increase/decrease			1%	
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

Table 6. Actual responses to question 6: “I pray with people when I feel like it is important.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5			2	15%
6	1	8%	1	8%
7	2	15%	1	8%
8	3	23%		
9	4	31%	2	15%
10 Always	3	23%	7	54%
Averages	110/13 = 8.46		111/13 = 8.54	
Percentage point difference			.08	
Percentage increase/decrease			1%	
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

Table 7. Actual responses to question 7: “I believe counseling is the domain and prerogative of licensed professionals.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never			1	8%
2	1	8%	2	15%
3	2	15%	4	31%
4	2	15%	1	8%
5	4	31%	2	15%
6	2	15%		
7			2	15%
8	1	8%	1	8%
9	1	8%		
10 Always				
Averages	65/13 = 5.00		53/13 = 4.08	
Percentage point difference			.92	
Percentage increase/decrease			-18%	
Conclusion: There was an 18% increase toward ‘Never’ as the most common response.				

Table 8. Actual responses to question 8: “I believe psychology is based on objective research and science.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never			2	15%
2	1	8%	1	8%
3	3	23%	4	31%
4	1	8%	2	15%
5	4	31%		
6	2	15%	3	23%
7	1	8%	1	8%
8	1	8%		
9				
10 Always				
Averages	62/13 = 4.77		49/13 = 3.77	
Percentage point difference			1.00	
Percentage increase/decrease			-21%	
Conclusion: There was a 21% increase toward ‘Never’ as the most common response.				

Table 9. Actual responses to question 9: “The Bible is sufficient to solve my spiritual or non-physical problems.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3			1	8%
4				
5	1	8%	1	8%
6				
7				
8	4	31%	4	31%
9	3	23%		
10 Always	5	38%	7	54%
Averages	114/13 = 8.77		110/13 = 8.46	
Percentage point difference			.31	
Percentage increase/decrease			-4%	
Conclusion: There was a 4% decrease away from ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 10. Actual responses to question 10: “I believe I could use Scripture to help someone with depression.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3			1	8%
4				
5	1	8%	1	8%
6	1	8%	1	8%
7	3	25%	1	8%
8	3	25%	3	25%
9	2	17%	4	33%
10 Always	2	17%	1	8%
Averages	94/12 = 7.83		91/12 = 7.58	
Percentage point difference			.25	
Percentage increase/decrease			-3%	
Conclusion: There was a 3% decrease away from ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 11. Actual responses to question 11: “I think involvement with other people’s problems has its limits.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never			1	8%
2				
3			2	17%
4			1	8%
5	2	17%	2	17%
6	1	8%	1	8%
7	2	17%	2	17%
8	4	33%	2	17%
9	1	8%	1	8%
10 Always	2	17%		
Averages	91/12 = 7.58		66/12 = 5.50	
Percentage point difference			2.08	
Percentage increase/decrease			-27%	
Conclusion: There was a 27% increase toward ‘Never’ as the most common response.				

Table 12. Actual responses to question 12: “I quote or paraphrase the Bible in daily conversations.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3	1	8%		
4	1	8%		
5	1	8%	2	17%
6	3	25%	2	17%
7	2	17%	2	17%
8	3	25%	4	33%
9	1	8%	2	17%
10 Always				
Averages	77/12 = 6.42		86/12 = 7.17	
Percentage point difference			.75	
Percentage increase/decrease			12%	
Conclusion: There was a 12% increase toward ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 13. Actual responses to question 13: “I believe tolerance and individualism are important values.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never			1	9%
2	1	9%	1	9%
3			1	9%
4			3	27%
5	8	73%	2	18%
6				
7	1	9%	1	9%
8	1	9%	2	18%
9				
10 Always				
Averages	57/11 = 5.18		51/11 = 4.64	
Percentage point difference			.54	
Percentage increase/decrease			-10%	
Conclusion: There was a 10% increase toward ‘Never’ as the most common response.				

Table 14. Actual responses to question 14: “I believe mankind possesses the ability to determine and bring about good and lasting change in humanity.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never	1	8%	1	8%
2	1	8%	1	8%
3	3	25%	5	42%
4	1	8%	1	8%
5	4	33%	3	25%
6	1	8%		
7				
8				
9				
10 Always	1	8%	1	8%
Averages	52/12 = 4.33		47/12 = 3.92	
Percentage point difference			.41	
Percentage increase/decrease			-9%	
Conclusion: There was a 9% increase toward ‘Never’ as the most common response.				

Table 15. Actual responses to question 15: “I believe I am competent to counsel other people.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2	2	17%		
3	2	17%	1	8%
4	2	17%		
5	1	8%	2	17%
6	1	8%	1	8%
7	3	25%		
8	1	8%	5	42%
9			2	17%
10 Always			1	8%
Averages	58/12 = 4.83		87/12 = 7.25	
Percentage point difference			2.42	
Percentage increase/decrease			50%	
Conclusion: There was a 50% increase toward ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 16. Actual responses to question 16: “I think the Bible demands that we carry each other’s burdens.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2	1	8%		
3				
4				
5				
6				
7	1	8%		
8	2	17%%		
9	3	25%	6	50%
10 Always	5	42%	6	50%
Averages	102/12 = 8.50		114/12 = 9.50	
Percentage point difference			1.00	
Percentage increase/decrease			12%	
Conclusion: There was a 12% increase toward ‘Always’ as the most common response.				

Table 17. Actual responses to question 17: “I believe family, society, personality, and physiology influence my thinking.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5	1	8%	1	8%
6			1	8%
7	3	25%	2	17%
8	3	25%	2	17%
9	2	17%	3	25%
10 Always	3	25%	3	25%
Averages	98/12 = 8.17		98/12 = 8.17	
Percentage point difference			.0	
Percentage increase/decrease			0%	
Conclusion: There was no movement at all.				

Table 18. Actual responses to question 18: “I believe churches should refer troubled people to a professional counselor.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never	1	8%	1	8%
2	1	8%	3	25%
3	1	8%	3	25%
4			2	17%
5	5	42%	3	25%
6				
7	2	17%		
8	2	17%		
9				
10 Always				
Averages	61/12 = 5.08		39/12 = 3.25	
Percentage point difference			1.83	
Percentage increase/decrease			-36%	
Conclusion: There was a 36% increase toward ‘Never’ as the most common answer.				

Table 19. Actual responses to question 19: “God has ability to determine and bring about good and lasting transformation in humanity.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10 Always	12	100%	12	100%
Averages	120/12 = 10.00		120/12 = 10.00	
Percentage point difference			.0	
Percentage increase/decrease			0%	
Conclusion: There was no movement at all.				

Table 20. Actual responses to question 20: “As a Christ-follower, my presence can minister to other people.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6	1	8%	1	8%
7			1	8%
8	3	25%	2	17%
9	2	17%	1	8%
10 Always	6	50%	7	58%
Averages	108/12 = 9.00		108/12 = 9.00	
Percentage point difference			.0	
Percentage increase/decrease			0%	
Conclusion: There was no movement at all.				

Table 21. Actual responses to question 21: “The mission and master of my heart determine my thinking, feeling, and acting.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6			1	8%
7				
8	2	17%	2	17%
9	4	33%	2	17%
10 Always	6	50%	7	58%
Averages	112/12 = 9.33		110/12 = 9.17	
Percentage point difference			.16	
Percentage increase/decrease			-2%	
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

Table 22. Actual responses to question 22: “I think prayer can help people when other things have failed.”

Possible Responses	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1 Never				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8	1	8%		
9	1	8%	12	8%
10 Always	10	84%	11	92%
Averages	117/12 = 9.75		119/12 = 9.92	
Percentage point difference			.17	
Percentage increase/decrease			2%	
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS WITH BIBLICAL COUNSELING SKILLS AT COMMUNITY LIFE CHURCH, FORNEY, TEXAS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
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This project equips small group leaders with biblical counseling skills at Community Life Church, Forney, Texas. Chapter 1 describes the ministry context of Community Life Church. Chapter 2 examines the biblical and theological basis for this project. The paper emphasizes the ministries of the Word, prayer, and mutual concern as primary examples of biblical counseling. Chapter 3 compares the biblical counseling skills consistently emphasized throughout the Bible with the skills emphasized by integrative Christian ministers and psychologists. Chapter 4 explains the methodology undertaken in implementing the project. Chapter 5 evaluates and analyzes the results of the project.

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