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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LAY COUNSELING
PROGRAM AT OAK PARK BAPTIST CHURCH,
JEFFERSONVILLE, INDIANA

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LAY COUNSELING
PROGRAM AT OAK PARK BAPTIST CHURCH,
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PREFACE

The following individuals have trained, mentored, invested, encouraged, challenged, and raised me to make me the husband, dad, and pastor I am today. They have each left an indelible impression on my life. I am indebted to them, love and cherish them deeply, and thank God constantly for them: Drs. Jimmy Scroggins; Kevin Ezell; Stuart Scott; my dad, Nat Millican; and my brother, Micah Millican.

My deepest appreciation is certainly extended to my bride, best friend, and absolute love of my life, Lauren Millican. Your presence in my life is a constant reminder of the sweetness of God's grace. I love doing life with you, baby. I am so grateful and humbled that you said "yes."

To my three precious kids: Lucianne, Lydia, and Samuel. May you grow up seeing and hearing from your mom and me that Jesus is better than anything—I love you mtaplsits!

I am also grateful for the people of Oak Park Baptist Church—it is an absolute joy to serve you as pastor-teacher. Thank you for your investment in me and my family these last five and a half years and allowing me to invest in you.

Last, I want to thank Jesus, the Shepherd of my soul (1 Pet 5:4) and in whom I have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of my trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (Eph 1:7).

Nathan John Millican

Jeffersonville, Indiana
May 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to implement a lay counseling program to begin to equip and educate believers to competently and confidently counsel other believers from the Scriptures.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to evaluate how 10 to 12 couples used the Scriptures to counsel other believers at Oak Park Baptist Church. This goal was measured through a questionnaire administered to discern an individual's competency in employing the Scriptures to counsel other individuals or couples.

The second goal of this project was to develop a twelve-week counseling curriculum to educate and equip these 10 to 12 couples to competently and confidently counsel other believers. This goal was measured and accomplished by submitting a rubric to the elders of Oak Park Baptist Church, whereby they evaluated the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The third goal of this project was to implement a twelve-week counseling program to educate and equip 10 to 12 couples to counsel from the Scriptures. This goal was achieved by administering a pre-project questionnaire and a post-project questionnaire to discern an individual's competency and confidence in counseling from the Scriptures. A *t*-test was used to determine if there was a positive statistical difference between the pre- and post-questionnaires, evidencing an increase in knowledge and attitude of how to counsel other believers from the Scriptures.

Ministry Context

The aforementioned goals were accomplished as the project of a counseling curriculum was implemented at Oak Park Baptist Church in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Oak Park is a traditional Southern Baptist Church that has had its share of controversies. Three of the last four pastors are no longer in ministry due to various reasons, which has led to a very dominant lay leadership, as well as a posture that explicitly and implicitly communicates, “We were here when you came and we will be here when you leave.”

When I arrived, it was very apparent that very little pastoral care had been going on and there was little to no intentional discipleship or mentoring of anyone. In addition, the personality of the previous senior pastor was one of non-confrontation, which led to many sinful issues taking place in the church that were not addressed. In contrast to the previous leadership style, my pastoral ministry philosophy seeks to strike a balance of leading assertively, while also loving aggressively. That being the case, I was and continue to be very intentional in my preaching about high expectations for believing and following Jesus, as well as what that means for being a member of Oak Park Baptist. This ministry philosophy intentionality carries over into the interpersonal relationships I have with many of the individuals and couples at Oak Park.

I realized very quickly that sinful issues abounded. I was confronted with issues of delinquent membership, pornography, rampant adultery, homosexuality, confusion over roles and responsibilities within marriage, issues concerning communication, and extensive anger. As I met with each individual or couple, I felt a distinct sense of pastoral incompetence, as well as an understanding that there was a deficiency in my ability to take the Scriptures and apply them in a winsome and helpful manner for the purpose of giving hope to change.

As I began to counsel more often, I knew that without training more competent lay counselors, I was going to be completely exhausted. At the same time, there was a remnant of church members who misunderstood the role and responsibilities of a pastor.

Several believed that my role was relegated to delivering a sermon Sunday morning. Furthermore, they were subtly advocating that I did not need to get involved in the lives of the people at Oak Park. I explained through preaching, as well as through many sidebar conversations, that the Holy Spirit has set apart pastors to oversee the flock of God (Acts 20:28).¹ Thus, there was a palpable ignorance on the part of many at Oak Park in understanding the biblical teaching of the role and responsibilities of a pastor. Unfortunately, this ignorance also bled over into their understanding of covenant relationships that members have with one another (Eph 4:24). Issues abounded, but to get involved was considered nosey, wrong, and judgmental.

Some sought help, but whenever I would point to the Scriptures as the definitive source to counsel, I would incessantly get resistance. Ironically enough, that same ill-equipped feeling I had was present in many other people; the difference was seen in that I believed the Scriptures were truly sufficient to disciple and counsel people, whereas many of these people did not. Therefore, they were living out a functional disbelief in the sufficiency of Scriptures.

Additionally, there was a biblical illiteracy that littered the landscape of Oak Park. Certainly, there were many people who were versed in the Scriptures, but by and large biblical illiteracy was the culture. Consequently, this meant people were ill-equipped to handle their own problems, let alone handle other individuals' problems. Another by-product of biblical illiteracy and disbelief in the sufficiency of Scripture was that many people were more comfortable and willing to refer people in our church family to outside counseling than they were to labor alongside them to present them mature or complete in Jesus (Col 1:28-29).

¹Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

Rationale for the Project

Several characteristics of the congregational life at Oak Park Baptist Church warranted the implementation of a lay counseling program. The reasons, in no particular order of importance, were many. First, many in the church family lacked the skills to handle minor counseling issues. Related to the first characteristic is that there was a commonly held belief that the pastors solely need to do “the work of the ministry,” leaving marital issues, depression, anger, and countless other problems to the professionals. Additionally, the two full-time pastors that served at Oak Park lacked the time to be able to comprehensively deal with all of the issues. Last, biblical illiteracy pervaded many at Oak Park Baptist Church, undergirding a functional disconnect between believing the Bible as being sufficient and seeing this lived out in everyday life among the membership.

Due to the prevalence of these issues, there was a pressing need for training men and women to counsel other believers (1) to grow in maturity in their walk with Christ (Col 1:28-29) and (2) to equip them to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-12). This intentional training, by God’s grace and the work of the Spirit, created a culture where counseling issues were not exclusively assigned to vocational pastors, but all members felt the weight of responsibility and consequently were trained and equipped to help counsel their fellow believers.

I addressed the issues of biblical illiteracy and the attitude that pastors should exclusively do the hard work of counseling believers through the myriad of issues that plague any given church by putting together several lectures on the sufficiency of the Scriptures, as well as a thorough explanation of the nature of the heart. I presented an overview of the more prominent counseling issues that pastors typically encounter and then explained how a believer would counsel another individual through these issues. I used selected articles, along with one or two books, that served to bolster their knowledge and competency in thinking through and assessing counseling issues, while

also facilitating role-playing to see “counseling in action.” The required reading helped potential counselors wrap their heads around biblical truths and promises and to see how this information manifested itself in a counseling session. Last, Scripture memory was required for each participant.

Definitions

Biblical counseling. Biblical counseling presupposes that the Scriptures are sufficient to counsel for life and godliness. The aim of biblical counseling is that counselees would be sanctified by the work of the Spirit through the Word of God (John 17:17).

Sufficiency of Scriptures. “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture [contains] all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”²

Mature or complete in Christ. To be mature or complete in Christ is the goal that Paul sets forth in Colossians 1:28. Maturity, completion, or perfection means to be completely sanctified or “the work of grace in the believer’s life is completed; it is then that perfect conformity to the likeness of Christ is attained.”³

Put off. Colossians 3:5-11 teaches that believers have died with Christ, which necessarily means to be “done with all those things that were characteristic” of life before Christ.⁴ “In short,” put off means to “be (in actual practice) what you now are (by a divine act).”⁵

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

³F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 87.

⁴Ibid., 139.

⁵Ibid., 139-40.

Put on. Regarding those that have put on the new man, “Christians should cultivate and manifest the qualities which are characteristic of him. Those qualities are . . . seen to be those which were preeminently displayed in the life of Jesus.”⁶

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation was the fifteen-week time span of this project, which limited the ability to cover all issues related to biblical counseling. Therefore, it was important for me to be the best possible steward with the time I had with the individuals participating in the project.

For this project there were two delimitations. The first delimitation was that this project would take place within the context of one local church, which is Oak Park Baptist Church in Jeffersonville, Indiana. The second delimitation was that the individuals participating in this project would be members of Oak Park Baptist Church, not mere attenders.

Research Methodology

Three goals were presented to ascertain the effectiveness of the project. The first goal of this project was to evaluate how 10 to 12 couples who are serving in positions of leadership use the Scriptures to counsel other believers at Oak Park Baptist Church. This goal was measured through a pre-project questionnaire (appendix 1). The questionnaire consisted of basic questions regarding an individual’s competency in employing the Scriptures. Individuals identified themselves on their questionnaires by providing a personal code of their choice. I collected the questionnaires, reviewed the responses, and then compiled the results.

The second goal of this project was to develop a counseling curriculum to educate and equip these 10 couples to more competently and confidently counsel other believers. A rubric (appendix 2) was submitted to the elders of Oak Park Baptist Church,

⁶Ibid., 152.

whereby they evaluated the soundness, effectiveness, and clarity of the curriculum that was administered.

The third goal of this project was to implement a twelve-week counseling program to educate and equip 10 couples. This goal was measured by administering the same questionnaire to the participants after the curriculum had been implemented to ascertain whether or not there had been any knowledge increase regarding an individual's competence and confidence in the Scriptures for the purposes of counseling other individuals and couples. The individuals who had completed the pre-project questionnaire and who had also participated in the twelve-week curriculum completed the post-project questionnaire. Individuals identified themselves again by their personal codes. Last, I used a *t*-test to ascertain whether there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaire. I then collected, reviewed, and compiled the results.⁷

⁷All aforementioned research instruments were performed in compliance with and approval by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

CHAPTER 2
THE SCRIPTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL
BASIS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

Introduction

This chapter is a brief exegesis of five passages that teach that the Scriptures are sufficient. They are sufficient specifically in that they describe the role and responsibility of a pastor, how that role is to be carried out, what the aim of that role is, and how they are to equip God's people to carry out that role and to provide Christians with everything they need to see this manifested. The first passage is Acts 20:18-32, where the apostle Paul addresses the Ephesian elders, giving them several farewell instructions.

Acts 20:18-32

An exegesis of Acts 20:18-32 supports the thesis by showing that the Scriptures are sufficient in describing the role and responsibility of a pastor. The relevance of this passage is seen in the specificity that Paul gives in clearly describing what a pastor is to do. Paul's words can be outlined into two sections: his relationship with the Ephesians Christians and his exhortation to them in their role as leaders.¹ His words begin with a defense that resembles his words found in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, where he was also defending his pastoral ministry from those who impugned his motives.² In this passage, his desire is to give the Ephesian elders a word of

¹John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 423.

²Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 512.

encouragement, as well as instruction concerning the oversight they would exercise over various churches that Paul had planted.³ Apparently, Paul is under attack by Jews who desire to impugn his motives and lay siege to what the Lord had done through him. As Paul anticipates continued opposition, he exhorts the Ephesian elders to fulfill their role as shepherds of the flock of God.

Paul walks through several characteristics of the ministry in Ephesus. He does not appeal to behavior removed from their personal knowledge of him, but he does appeal to what they saw in him.⁴ He describes himself as one who served the Lord, and in that service to the Lord he exemplified humility, shed tears, and experienced trials. Paul's ministry was not one of self-aggrandizement, but in humility he put the spiritual well-being of the church before his own. The appropriate disposition of a servant of the Lord is one of humility, and Paul regularly references this as "a major hallmark of the Christian life" (Phil 2:3; Col 3:12; Eph 4:2).⁵

Paul's love and concern for the church is further substantiated by the fact that he was the recipient of various trials. A cursory reading of Paul's missionary journeys details that his life was incessantly in danger, whether it was in "Damascus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, or Jerusalem. His life always seemed to be in danger from bandits, Jews or Gentiles (1 Cor. 11:26); but the Lord protected him."⁶

Furthermore, one sees the heart of a pastor when Paul references the many tears shed in response to his deep love for them. Paul describes his ministry as one where he declared the Word of God publicly and privately (Acts 20:20). His gospel ministry to the Ephesian church was not relegated to one particular time, but took on a multifaceted

³F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 387.

⁴Ibid., 388.

⁵Polhill, *Acts*, 424.

⁶Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 725.

scope as he taught in public settings, as well as in more intimate ones. Paul's commitment to shepherding the Ephesian believers is seen in that he strived to hold nothing back that would benefit them spiritually, even amid imminent dangers.

Paul's commitment begs the question, What did Paul preach? What was the content of his preaching? He says in verse 21 that he testified to both Jews and Greeks about two things: repentance and faith. Paul's description of his preaching is a clarion call to pastors that faithful preaching and teaching is comprised of calling people to repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus Christ, which is again mentioned as Paul states he did not shy away from preaching the whole counsel of God's Word. Paul was faithful in doing this and he calls them to attest to this as they observed his ministry. In addition, he states later that he does not account his life of any value nor as precious but seeks to (1) finish the task that the Lord appointed him to do and (2) preach the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

Throughout Paul's letters, one sees the gospel. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul states emphatically, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Paul's words are not a statement of ignorance, but rather he is stating undeniably that the gospel is the priority in all that he does. The gospel is the foundation for everything. The role and responsibility of a pastor is seen as the Ephesians elders are tasked with preaching the gospel, which is the power and wisdom of God (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:26). This message is understood to effectively do that which no earthly wisdom or philosophy can do: cause the spiritually dead to become spiritually alive in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a pastor's role is to unashamedly and continually preach the gospel of the grace of God found in Jesus.

Moreover, the gospel is not only to be preached, it is also to be counseled or pressed into people's lives, as Paul calls the Ephesian elders to care for the flock of God. However, this care and attention should start with their own lives. He says to "pay careful attention to yourselves" (Acts 20:28). Pastors have responsibilities that are obviously

seen in the daily lives of the sheep, but their lives are not exempt from this same commitment to pastoral care. Pastors are to be examples to the flock by keeping watch over their lives and doctrine (1 Tim 4:16).

As elders set apart by the Holy Spirit of God, they are to exercise oversight as shepherds of the flock. F. F. Bruce states, “On those elders, then, lay a weighty responsibility. The Holy Spirit had entrusted them with the charge of the people of God in Ephesus; they had to care for them as shepherds cared for their flock.”⁷ He calls them to oversee the flock of God. The title “overseer” is a synonym for the term “elder.”⁸ Paul is not differentiating between an elder and an overseer. They are one in the same. This oversight is “loving care and concern, a responsibility willingly shouldered; it must never be used for personal aggrandizement. Its meaning is to be seen in Christ’s selfless service which was moved by concern for the salvation of men.”⁹

Paul continues to elucidate the role and responsibility of a pastor when he references his imminent departure and the danger that will inevitably ensue. When he leaves, he states emphatically that fierce wolves will come into the church that will not spare the flock and will seek to pervert and twist the things Paul had instilled into the saints at Ephesus. Thus, a pastor’s preaching of the gospel is to be seen in a public and private venue. His preaching should also take on an offensive posture in warding off any individual or group that would lay siege to the gospel of grace. “The metaphor of wolves attacking the flock is a portrayal of false teachers who enter the church to deceive the members and lead them away from the faith.”¹⁰

In highlighting the perilous circumstances of false teachers that will come from outside the church, as well as inside, Paul conveys the seriousness of responsibility

⁷Bruce, *Acts*, 392.

⁸Kistemaker, *Acts*, 732.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 733.

that the Ephesian elders have. As outlined in Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders, the role and responsibility of a pastor is to preach the gospel of Jesus, publicly and privately. This preaching is to be day-in and day-out, coupled with a heartfelt devotion to those to whom he preaches. The oversight to which pastors are called is not merely one of a teaching posture, but is one of a defensive and even offensive posture, as there will undoubtedly be individuals who will seek to undermine and pervert the gospel of Jesus.

Ephesians 4:11-13

An exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-13 will support the thesis by showing that the Scriptures are sufficient to explain and describe how to carry out ministry in the local church. Within the local church there is a myriad of emphases that consume the landscape. These emphases, more often than not, facilitate a challenge for pastors as they discern how to do the work of ministry. In fact, if one were to poll any number of pastors in a local church, one would no doubt receive a multitude of ways in which ministry is to be done. However, Paul makes it clear that leaders in the church are to equip the saints through the preaching and teaching of the Word. As they do this, the body is given the resources it needs to do ministry.

Specifically, in verses 11-13, the apostle Paul states how to carry out the gospel ministry in the local church. Paul describes various roles and offices that are given to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. This paper's focus is not to describe and define in depth these roles, but merely to point out that Jesus, in his wisdom and goodness, gave these gifts to the church for a specific purpose. That purpose is seen in verse 12: that these roles would facilitate the equipping of the saints for the work of gospel ministry.

To understand this passage, it is necessary to look back to Paul's words in verse 7, where he states that grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. He goes on to recount the historical ascent and descent of Christ in verses 8-10. Though some might perceive this as an interruption in the epistle, Paul is clearly seeking to lay

the foundation that it is the exalted Jesus Christ who “has endowed his church with gifts-by-grace, so that it may indeed be his body in the world (Eph 1:23; 4:4).”¹¹

The dispensing of these gifts to the church is not for individual edification, but for the spiritual well-being of the entire faith community.¹² A brief definition of these offices will suffice. Apostles are those who were personally set apart by Jesus himself and who were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus or of his person. Prophets are those individuals who “were the recipients of direct revelation from God, either with regard to foretelling God’s will in relation to future events, or forth-telling God’s Word in present circumstances.”¹³

The title of evangelist is difficult to define, due to the fact that there are two references in the New Testament (Acts 21:28 and 2 Tim 4:5).¹⁴ The verbal form of evangelist, “to evangelize,” literally means “to proclaim the good news.”¹⁵ Additionally, it is understood that evangelists were missionaries who pioneered outreach in areas where the faith had not yet been proclaimed.¹⁶ Shepherd is a word likened to overseer, in that it denotes “care and nurture of the congregation.”¹⁷ To be a teacher is to be an individual who “combines both exposition and application of Scripture together, with exhortation and explanation of apostolic injunctions.”¹⁸ Debate continues, however, as to whether shepherds and teachers comprise one group or two. Harry Upchurch notes that “all

¹¹A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 58.

¹²*Ibid.*, 59.

¹³Harry Uprichard, *A Study Commentary on Ephesians* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2004), 220.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 223.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Wood, *Ephesians*, 58.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 224.

pastors teach (since teaching is an essential part of pastoral ministry), but not all teachers are also pastors. There is a distinction of office, but not rigidly so.”¹⁹

As stated previously, the purpose of these gifts is for the equipping of God’s people so that the church of Jesus Christ can be built up. The phrase “to equip” is also translated “to prepare,” which can also be understood to mean “to put right.”²⁰ William Hendriksen states that “Christ gave some men as apostles, others as prophets, etc., for the purposes of perfecting (cf. 1 Thes 3:10; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 5:10) or providing the necessary equipment for all the saints for the work of ministering to each other so as to build up the body of Christ.”²¹ While it may appear that the responsibility of building up the body of Christ lay solely with individuals who have one of the titles previously mentioned, the passage teaches that it is the responsibility of every member to be engaged in spiritual labor, not just a select few. However, the passage is clear that the “how” of seeing ministry carried out in the local church is to be facilitated and led by various officers in the church. Again, Hendriksen notes that “the meaning of 4:11, 12, is, moreover, that it is the task of the officers of the church to equip the church for these tasks.”²² Uprichard articulates the thrust of this passage well when he writes,

As the minister of the Word exercises his work, the building of a superstructure worthy of Christ, the foundation, and the education of a people from infancy to maturity in Christ, the head, are the motivating means. On this view, the ministers given by Christ (4:11) are the means by which this completion is effected and they achieve this through their ministries of proclamation, teaching and leadership.²³

The ultimate goal of this equipping is seen in verse 13: “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,

¹⁹Ibid., 225.

²⁰Wood, *Ephesians*, 58.

²¹William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 198.

²²Ibid.

²³Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 227.

to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Paul is speaking about several things here in this verse. First, he reaches back to the beginning of chapter 4 where he proclaimed there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father who is over all. Thus, the unity that believers are to practically live out is due to the fact that believers truly are one in Christ. Furthermore, Paul makes it clear in verse 13 “that the entire church—consisting not only of apostles, prophets, evangelists, ‘pastors and teachers,’ but of all besides—should be faithful to its calling of rendering service, with a view to the upbuilding of the body of Christ, so that true, spiritual unity and growth may be promoted.”²⁴ Thus, Scriptures are sufficient in giving the means by which the church is to be built up: the officers of the church equipping other believers to do the work of gospel ministry. “Christ is the centerpiece, but the means to that end is traced through the ministry of the Word.”²⁵

Colossians 1:28-29

An exegesis of Colossians 1:28-29 will support the thesis by showing that the Scriptures are sufficient in showing what is the aim of Christian ministry. In the Ephesians 4:11-13 passage, Paul made it abundantly clear how to carry out gospel ministry in the local church through the body of Christ. Church leaders are to impress and seek to inculcate the truths of God; namely, the gospel in the hearts and minds of hearers who, in turn, will reproduce this in others. However, what does this specifically look like? In Paul’s letter to the saints of Colossae, one sees that the Scriptures are sufficient in elucidating what is the aim of Christian ministry.

Paul incessantly made it his aim to preach Christ and nothing else (1 Cor 2:1-5). “This Christ, whose life flows in all his people, is the one whom the apostle and his associates proclaim. He is the sum and substance of their message, whether in the

²⁴Wood, *Ephesians*, 199.

²⁵Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 228.

saving news which they announce in the world to bring men and women to faith, or in the teaching which they impart to those who have believed.”²⁶ For Paul, Christ was and is everything. Thus, it is no surprise that to see Paul unequivocally state that his aim is to present all persons mature in Christ.

Paul utilizes three verbs in verse 28: proclaim, warn, and teach. These verbs summarize Paul’s apostolic ministry. He unashamedly and forthrightly proclaims Christ. To proclaim is to preach. To warn or admonish has “to do with setting the mind of someone in proper order, correcting him or putting him right.”²⁷ This is consistent elsewhere with Paul’s teaching as he describes the posture of an unbeliever as a child of wrath (Eph 2:3) and a mind that is hostile towards God (Rom 8:7). Thus, part of the plea and action of preachers is to warn them of the condemnation they are currently under (John 3:17) and point them to the One who can remove the sentence of condemnation (Rom 8:1) and grant them freedom (Gal 5:1). Paul routinely warns and pleads with people to be reconciled with God (2 Cor 5:20). The third verb is “teach,” which refers to the instructional nature that is implicit in preaching or proclaiming.²⁸

Paul’s proclaiming, warning, and teaching involves an inclusivism that stands in contrast to the false teachers who had in some capacity infiltrated Colossae. The false teachers exemplified an exclusivism that taught that “the way of salvation could be understood only by a select few who made up a sort of spiritual aristocracy,”²⁹ whereas with Paul no such discrimination existed in his preaching and teaching. He included everyone.

²⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 86.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 88.

²⁸Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gabelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 193.

²⁹*Ibid.*

The manner of Paul’s proclaiming, warning, and teaching was done “with all wisdom.” Again, Paul writes in this way to juxtapose the apparent “wisdom” of the false teachers with the wisdom that is in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Hendriksen explicates the phrase “with all wisdom” to mean “in a truly practical manner, for in strict compliance with the will of God his ambassadors use the best means to reach the highest goal.”³⁰ Again, the aim is not to reach just a select few, but everyone. Paul’s goal and ambition is to see that all persons are presented mature in Christ.

The word “perfect” is used in the Old Testament twenty times and denotes “that which is whole, perfect or intact.”³¹ In Colossians, when Paul uses the word, he is referring to the Parousia, which refers to events surrounding the second coming of Christ.³² In this short verse, there is an explicit call for a steadfastness by pastors, for Paul will not be satisfied until every person is fully mature or complete in Jesus. This will only be realized as believers are presented on the last day, whereby they will be sanctified with finality.

Consequently, Scriptures do outline that the aim of Christian ministry is nothing less than the full maturity of every believer. Furthermore, this ambition that Paul put forth in his letter to the Colossians is to be adopted by every pastor. This passage gives the marching order that is to order the step of every pastor for the entirety of the ministry in which the Lord allows him to partake. As no one attains perfection this side of heaven, the task at hand is one that is to be pursued and cultivated every day. Paul states this emphatically as he says this is what he toils after; this is what he struggled toward with all his might. So, one sees that “his apostolic tasks were not completed with the conversion of men and women. This was only the beginning and the end would not be reached until the day of Christ when the quality of his ministry would be tested.”³³ And

³⁰Hendriksen, *Colossians*, 93.

³¹Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 89.

³²Ibid.

the strength for such a lofty task is not derived or produced in Paul apart from God. The strength “requisite for such unremitting labor is not his own; it is the strength powerfully wrought within him by his enabling Lord.”³⁴

2 Timothy 3:16-17

An exegesis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 will support the thesis by showing that the Scriptures are sufficient to equip God’s people to counsel fellow believers for every good work. The sequence of passages in this chapter show a progression of thought that hopefully has become apparent to the reader: the role and responsibility a pastor has to the flock of God (Acts 20:18-32); that role and responsibility is seen, understood, and realized as Christian leaders equip other believers to do gospel ministry (Eph 4:11-13); and the aim of gospel ministry is that men and women would mature or grow up in Jesus (Col 1:28-29). This section demonstrates the means by which this equipping is accomplished.

Paul says that the sacred writings that Timothy, his young protégé, has been acquainted with since his childhood are able to make him wise for salvation. This salvation he describes can only come about through personal faith in the risen Savior Christ Jesus. These writings in and of themselves do not bring salvation, but they do point to the salvation that is a reality in Jesus. These sacred writings are the means by which men and women can know how to be reconciled to their Creator (2 Cor 5:20), how a person can be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son (Col 1:15), how a person can experience new birth into the kingdom of God (John 3:3), and how a person can be adopted into the family of God (John 1:12). However, the Scriptures are much more. Paul says that these writings provide the equipping that the man of God needs for every good work.

³³Ibid., 90, quoting F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 221.

³⁴Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians*, 88.

Paul posits several realities about Scripture that are important. First, all Scripture is breathed out by God. Note that Paul uses the word “all.” Although at the time of Paul’s composition of 2 Timothy, he did not have the entire New Testament, it is clear that there were other writings Paul was referencing, due to the fact that Paul uses a different word than he had used in verse 15 (i.e., sacred writings). Paul uses the word “all” in reference to the “totality of divine revelation.”³⁵

The phrase “breathed out by God” is a “literal translation of the Greek word that has traditionally been translated ‘inspired.’”³⁶ Paul’s use of this word indicates that the whole of Scripture comes from the very mouth of God.³⁷ Elsewhere, the apostle Peter states the same thing: “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20-21). Another way to understand this phrase is to imagine God inhaling. As he exhaled, what came forth were the very words recorded in the Bible. Moreover, “Paul was not asserting that the Scriptures are inspiring in that they breathe information about God into us, even though the statement is true. The Scriptures owe their origin and distinctiveness to God himself.”³⁸ Thus, when Scripture speaks, God speaks. And when God speaks, he speaks truthfully and authoritatively.

Paul’s intent in using this phrase is to speak to the divine source of the Bible, as well as to its usefulness.³⁹ In verse 16, he submits four ways in which Scripture is useful: for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. William Barclay

³⁵William B. Barclay, *1 and 2 Timothy*, Evangelical Press Study Commentary (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2005), 280.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 236.

³⁹Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 585.

notes that “teaching heads the list, focusing on Timothy’s primary responsibility.”⁴⁰ Teaching is understood to be the imparting of knowledge, specifically in reference to God’s revelation of his Son.⁴¹

Scripture is useful for reproof, which entails the exposing and rebuking of individuals who are teaching error.⁴² The threat of errors surfacing in the lives of believers, let alone false teachers who may infiltrate the church (Acts 20:29), is ever-present. Thus, the man of God must know the Word of God to appropriately refute error.⁴³ Third, Scripture is profitable for correction. Correction denotes setting right what is wrong or that which is in error. Fourth, Scripture is useful to train up believers in righteousness. This means that the Word of God can lead people to “holiness in doctrine and to a life that pleases the Lord.”⁴⁴

Thus, the way in which men and women grow up and mature in Jesus is seen as they believe and live out the truth of Scripture. Paul’s point is that believers are equipped with everything they need to be competent and capable to do God’s work in the world.⁴⁵ In fact, the word “equipped” refers to “someone who is ‘in fit shape or condition.’”⁴⁶ In addition, the tense of the word “equipped” is in the perfect, denoting “that this is an abiding condition,” not one particular moment in time.⁴⁷

Paul’s words are specifically directed to Timothy so that he will understand that to be competent and equipped for gospel ministry only becomes a reality as he avails

⁴⁰Barclay, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 280.

⁴¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 303.

⁴²Barclay, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 280.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 281.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237, quoting R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartberg, 1946), 847.

⁴⁷Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

himself to the Word of God. As he does this, “he would be fully qualified and prepared to undertake whatever tasks God put before him.”⁴⁸ Though the immediate application is to Timothy, the implication of Paul’s words has a far-reaching affect, in that it applies to all believers. This passage is beaming with promise for believers in that they can be competent to meet all the demands that God places on them. “Since God created Christians for good works and calls on them to do good works (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:21), he has given scripture to instruct them so that they may know in principle what God expects of them and thus be equipped to do that particular ‘good deed’ called for in each situation.”⁴⁹

Barclay summarizes Paul’s words well as he communicates how the Word of God is relevant for Christian ministry. The Word of God

is a means by grace, a way that we are transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. The psalmist says that we keep our ways pure by living according to the Word of God (Ps. 119:9) and that the Word hidden in your hearts keeps us from sin (Ps. 119:11). Paul states that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2), and surely reading, reflecting and meditating on the Word of God are essential to this renewal process. The primary reason for the effectiveness of Scripture in the lives of believers is that it is none other than the God-breathed, eternal Word of the holy God. What we have through human instruments is directly from the mouth of God.⁵⁰

2 Peter 1

An exegesis of 2 Peter 1 will support the thesis by showing that the Scriptures are sufficient in providing God’s people all things they need that pertain to life and godliness. In closing, Peter’s epistle gives a statement that encapsulates the objective in this chapter: the Scriptures are sufficient in providing the answer to what the role of a pastor is, what the aim of Christian ministry is, and how Christian leaders are to

⁴⁸Ibid., 238.

⁴⁹George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 450.

⁵⁰Barclay, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 281.

effectively do this. Peter, like Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, makes an emphatic statement about the effect of God's divine power in the life of a believer. He states that God's "divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us" (2 Pet 1:3a).

The focus of this section is on what God has given us, which, according to Peter, is all the things a believer needs in this life to be godly. Whether the calling that is expressed in this verse is attributed to the Father or to Christ is unclear. "Typically in the New Testament calling is attributed to God,"⁵¹ however, the point of the verse is that he who calls also enables. Furthermore, "everything needed for eternal life is mediated through the knowledge of the Christ."⁵² This knowledge that Peter speaks of is in reference to an individual's conversion and a reality that continues on throughout their life.⁵³ Thomas Schreiner notes that "English readers are apt to understand calling in terms of an invitation that can be accepted or rejected. Peter had something deeper in mind. God's call is effective, awakening and creating faith."⁵⁴

So, he who called also enables. The enabling in this verse is the reality of living a godly life. "In other words, there is no excuse for not living a godly life, for believers have already received everything that is necessary to do so" in Christ.⁵⁵ In Christ, believers are expected to live a life of godliness. Through God's divine power, a believer participates in the divine nature and escapes the corruption of the world. This participation Peter speaks of happens in two ways: "First, the promises themselves have a purifying effect on the believer's life (c.f., 1 John 3:3). Second, conversion entails a

⁵¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 291.

⁵²Ibid., 292.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 168.

definite break with the corruption caused by evil desire.”⁵⁶ As a result, a believer “escapes the corruption of sin” and “Christ renews and restores the image of God in him.”⁵⁷

Moreover, the expectation is that a believer would live a godly life. The term “godliness” is a term that refers to a life that pleases the Lord. Thus, this passage demonstrates one of the many promises of God, in that he gives to the believer all that he or she needs to live a life of which God would approve.⁵⁸

The source of this godly life is not through sheer moral effort on the part of the believer, but comes from the divine power of God. Believers “must not conclude that godliness comes from their own inherent abilities since the gifts given” to them come as they place their faith in Christ.⁵⁹ Peter has stated several realities indicative of a believer and then explains what this necessarily looks like in their life. A believer is to exert with all diligence an effort to live a godly life (faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love) for several purposes. First, this is the expectation that God submits to a believer: the exhortation to holiness in every facet of their life. This exhortation is grounded in the work of salvation and has been secured through the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ Therefore, the call to live a godly life comes after the call to holiness. The grace given to a believer that transfers them from darkness to God’s Kingdom (Col 1:15) and expresses itself in faith in Jesus (Eph 2:8-9) prompts people to live a life of good works (Eph 2:10), which is necessarily seen in the cultivation of godly character (2 Pet 1:5-11). Thomas Schreiner aptly and succinctly puts it this way: “the imperative stands on the indicative.”⁶¹

⁵⁶Edwin A. Blum, *1, 2 Peter*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gabelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 268.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸ Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 168.

⁵⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 292.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 298.

⁶¹ Ibid., 300.

The seriousness of this passage must not be overlooked. Peter gives an emphatic statement that these qualities must be increasing in measure so that a believer will not be unfruitful, will not be nearsighted or blind, and will not forget that they were cleansed from their sins. Verses 10-11 elucidate what Peter means in verses 8-9:

Believers are enjoined to confirm their calling and election *by practicing the virtues* described in vv. 5-7. It is only by practicing these virtues that the readers will avoid stumbling. That is, the readers will escape apostasy if they put into practice such godly qualities. In this way, that is, by living a godly life, they will enter into the eternal kingdom on the day of the Lord.⁶²

Moreover, due to the important nature of what Peter has previously mentioned, the apostle Paul does not shy away from reminding them as he does in verses 13 and 15. As Edwin Blum states in his commentary of 2 Peter, “Truth needs to be repeated.”⁶³ In fact, Peter will remind them of this four times (1:13, 15; 3:1, 2), underscoring the seriousness of his words. Peter, again in verse 15, unequivocally tells his readers the purpose: “I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things” (2 Pet 1:15). “These things” is referencing that they have everything granted to them through God’s divine power for life and godliness and that they are participators in the divine nature. These stated indicatives of the promises that a believer possesses manifest themselves in godly character. “As is typical in the New Testament, grace precedes demand. The priority of grace, however, does not cancel out strenuous moral effort.”⁶⁴

⁶²Ibid., 301.

⁶³Blum, *2 Peter*, 272.

⁶⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 298.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES OF
VARIOUS COUNSELING APPROACHES

Biblical counseling stands over against other counseling approaches in terms of the foundation of authority and actual objective of counseling. The apostle Paul says, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Col 1:28-29). This is the aim of Christian ministry—that men and women everywhere would turn from their sins and trust in Christ. As they do this, it is the believers’ aim to see that they and fellow believers “grow up” in Christ.

Several approaches to counseling would take issue with the aforementioned statements. In fact, “there is growing confusion in today’s Christian community about the best way to help people overcome their personal problems of living. Some believe that Christians should submit only to biblical counseling, while others passionately support psychological counseling so long as it is integrated with the Scriptures.”¹ The various approaches address complicated issues in different ways. For example, questions are raised such as, What is the aim or objective of counseling? Are the Scriptures sufficient to provide the means by which a person can live a godly life? Where do counselors derive their authority? and Is there a palpable commitment to the Bible as the very words of God? These issues and more litter the landscape of the counseling field.

David Powlison is correct when he writes,

What is at stake is understanding all that people are and do, and curing all that ails us. Current wisdom, current knowledge and current practice in various academic

¹Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 23.

and professional disciplines, whether secular or theological, may help—and, if we are incautious, will certainly hinder—our growth toward true understanding and helpfulness.²

To that end, this chapter is an explication that Biblical Counseling is a more robust, holistic approach regarding authority and the actual objective of counseling than the Levels of Explanation, Integration, Christian Psychology, and Transformational approaches to counseling.

Levels of Explanation Approach

The Levels of Explanation approach gathers the most up-to-date information concerning science and practice that enhances an individual’s understanding of human behavior. Once a person’s behavior is understood, the counselor will be better prepared to formulate intervention strategies to help that person improve his or her behavior.³

The Levels of Explanation approach takes into account several different perspectives: biological, psychological, social, and spiritual. A word commonly used throughout is “biopsychosocialspiritual integration.”⁴ This approach seeks to work towards an understanding of each of the previously mentioned aspects and their influence on human behavior “in order to improve the complex lives and functioning of people who seek professional health and mental health services.”⁵

The weaknesses and deficiencies of the Levels of Explanation approach are many. In the following paragraphs, I will highlight the more salient, as well as the more serious ones. The first and most flagrant deficiency with this view is the assessment on how behavioral change is possible. The Levels of Explanation approach to counseling

²Eric L. Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, 2nd ed., ed. Eric L. Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 143.

³Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sisemore, *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 61.

⁴Ibid., 67.

⁵Ibid., 67-68.

advocates that behavioral change is possible, it will just require hard work, which will take time. This approach seeks to understand the dysfunction of human behavior as the result of some sort of breakdown, whether it is biological, psychological, social, or spiritual. However, the one “level of explanation” that is missing is a theological explanation. As individuals created in the image of God (Gen 3; Jas 2), we are wholly spiritual creatures. This obviously does not mean that everyone understands and embraces such a reality in their life, but fundamentally all persons find true meaning to the degree that they avail themselves to the reality that God created them. To suppress or neglect that truth is dangerous and leads to a skewed interpretation of man, not to mention an orientation that leads away from the Creator (Rom 1).

I do not deny that “external social forces shape our social behavior.”⁶ The Levels of Explanation view fails to take into account the words of Jesus. In Mark 7, Jesus said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (Mark 7:20-23). In my reading of the Levels of Explanation view, I cannot recall a robust explanation and understanding of the nature of man. Specifically, what has been completely absent is a discussion of the sinfulness of man. This is attributed to the fact that either there is an outright rejection of the utter sinfulness of man or that man’s sin is understood to not be the all-consuming problem and foundation upon which all other problems arise. The Bible teaches that man is an enemy of God (Eph 2) and he is absolutely depraved. “An unbiblical view of man leads one to unbiblical solutions with unexpected results.”⁷

In addition, the Levels of Explanation approach seeks to define realities apart from the truth of Scripture. For example, love is defined and understood in a myriad

⁶Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 61.

⁷Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 188.

of ways, as the Bible readily acknowledges. However, the Levels of Explanation view advocates degrees of love.

A physiologist might describe love as a state of arousal. A social psychologist would examine how various characteristics and conditions—good looks, similarity of the partners, sheer repeated exposure to one another—enhance the emotion of love. A poet would express the sublime experience that love can sometimes be. A theologian might describe love as the God-given goal of human relationships. Since love can often be described simultaneously at various levels, we need not assume that one level is causing the other.⁸

The problem with this explanation is that it falls short of biblical revelation. The Bible says that God is love (1 John) and that love is not a mere emotion, but is an action that is manifested in the lives of believers as they are kind, patient, not rude, etc. (1 Cor 13:4-7). In the Levels of Explanation, there is a continual defining and explaining of realities that fail to take into account the revealed Word of God. To this point, Levels of Explanation advocates state that “recognizing the complementary relationships of various explanatory levels liberates us from useless argument over whether we should view human nature scientifically or subjectively: it’s not an either-or-matter.”⁹ Thus, a theological view is one among many: philosophical, sociological, psychological, biological, chemical, and physical.

The objectives of the Levels of Explanation view also fall short of the biblical teaching that men and women need to be reconciled to God through the person and work of Jesus and then grow up in him. David Myers, a Levels of Explanation advocate, states,

Don’t expect [psychology] to answer the ultimate questions, such as those posed by Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1904): “Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there in life any purpose which the inevitable death that awaits me does not undo and destroy?” Instead, expect that psychology will help you understand why people think, feel, and act as they do. Then you should find the study of psychology fascinating and useful.¹⁰

⁸Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 51.

⁹Ibid., 52.

¹⁰Ibid., 54.

Are these not the questions people are asking: What is my purpose in life? How can I have hope? What is beyond the grave? Is the grave all there is? Is there truth that brings meaning and relevance to my life? The Levels of Explanation approach teaches that “we should be wary even of those who idolize their religion, presuming their doctrinal fine points to be absolute truth. Always, we see reality through a dim mirror.”¹¹ This approach holds a tangible skepticism towards anything or anyone that heralds truth and does so absolutely. Yet, again, how does this measure with biblical revelation about the finality of revelation found in the person of Jesus, not to mention the indicatives and imperatives outlined for the believer in Jesus? This approach is contrary to the overall teachings of Jesus, who said, “Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth (John 17:17). Elsewhere, he says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Jesus articulates an absolute truth mentality when speaking about himself and his Word. Followers of Jesus should seek to exemplify the same.

Proponents of the Levels of Explanation approach may quote Pascal who said, “No single truth is ever sufficient, because the world is not simple.”¹² Though categorized as one of several Christian counseling approaches a cogent case could be made that it is hostile to biblical Christianity. In critiquing the Levels of Explanation approach, Powlison states that “the personal factor vis-à-vis God is final cause. Only Christian faith makes sense of the personal factor, because only Christian faith sees *how* actual behavior and mental processes are intrinsically relational and religious.”¹³

Admittedly, the Levels of Explanation approach to counseling advocates that there are sharp lines between various disciplines and each discipline is to be studied “by the unique methods appropriate to it that have been developed by the corresponding

¹¹Ibid., 58.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 100.

discipline.”¹⁴ In addition, the lines that delineate theology, philosophy, biology, and psychology “should not be blurred. To confuse these levels results in a misunderstanding of reality by blending together concepts that are, in fact, very different.”¹⁵

At best, the Levels of Explanation is an inclusivistic approach to counseling, whereby spiritual direction and religious traditions of all sorts are prescribed to the counselee for assistance in behavioral change.¹⁶ At worst, it promulgates a universalistic understanding of religious traditions and the “help” they bring minimizes and trivializes the message of the cross. The Levels of Explanation approach contains a veneer of Christianity.

Integration Approach

The Integration Approach seeks to put psychology, theology, and spirituality on equal footing. Mark R. McMinn, an integrationist, is quick to add that this does not mean that “psychology, theology and spirituality are all equally authoritative or that they are all used at every moment in counseling, but that each is highly valued.”¹⁷ As a result, integrationists seek to foster a flexible or fluid environment whereby they utilize different aspects of psychology, theology, and spirituality that are relevant or more authoritative for the situation at hand. Thus, practically the Integration Approach is constantly evaluating and reassessing what realm of authority (psychology, theology, or spirituality) is best suited for a particular set of circumstances.¹⁸

Though a “thoughtful sort of integration . . . maintains the rightful authority of Christ and Scripture,”¹⁹ and integrationists would state that their approach “needs

¹⁴Ibid., 33.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 76.

¹⁷Greggo and Sisemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 85.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

to begin with a Christian understanding of the human condition,”²⁰ it is quite apparent that this is not foundational to their practice. Stanton Jones, an integrationist counselor, states that he “found value in the work of the discipline of psychology and was also unconvinced that Scripture alone could provide every need for the understanding of persons, their problems and their resolutions.”²¹

Another example of the deficient view that integrationists hold concerning the Bible is seen in a question put forth by an integrationist counselor. Mark McMinn asks, “Is sanctification the goal of Christian counseling?”²² The short answer is no, sanctification is not the goal or objective of Christian counseling. The integrationist approach is highlighted as an interaction and attempt to answer this question when it transpires. Integrationism teaches that if the goal of counseling is sanctification, then there is “an unavoidable conflict” between clinicians, state licensing bodies, and insurance providers.²³ By his own admission, he says, “These mental health goals are not the same as the Christian notion of sanctification.”²⁴ On the other hand, if the goal is not sanctification, “then we remove virtually all spiritual formation from the counseling process, and we are left with little more than mainstream counseling practice with a few spiritual metaphors or Bible verses attached.”²⁵

McMinn’s interaction with this ambivalence regarding the aim of counseling culminates in him saying forthrightly “growing in sanctification is not the goal of counseling.”²⁶ Several points can be extrapolated from this statement. First, there is

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 104.

²²Greggo and Sisemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 87.

²³Ibid., 87-88.

²⁴Ibid., 88.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

an inconsistency in speaking about the authority of Christ and Scripture, when the authority of Christ and Scripture are marginalized. Second, integrationists need to be clear regarding what their authority actually is. Is their authority state licensure and the expectations inherent within, or is their authority the Bible? This is contrary to biblical counseling. The difference lies with whom the counselor is responsible. With regard to the Integration Approach, the responsibility of the counselor may not be to the counselee. From a biblical counseling perspective, the responsibility is to assist the person who is sitting in front of you. If this is not the aim and objective of counseling, is not the aim and objective distorted or violated? How can a counselor give hope if their allegiance is not to the person asking for help?

Last, it is undeniable that integrationists do not see maturity or completeness in Christ as the aim of Christian counseling. “The integrationist also surmises that Scripture does not provide us all that we need in order to understand human beings fully, and that there is a legitimate and strategic role for psychology as a science and as a profession in giving us intellectual and practical tools for understanding and improving the human condition.”²⁷ The glaring problem with the aforementioned statement is that the human condition is one of sinfulness. Integrationists readily acknowledge that “both disciplines [psychology and Christianity] address, in different ways, the nature of human beings, how they develop, what has gone wrong with them and how they can overcome what has gone wrong.”²⁸ Furthermore, “integrationists tend to believe that man’s nature is basically good, though dysfunctional.”²⁹ In reality, the Bible has a more serious diagnosis than mere dysfunction.

The issue with integrationism is that it does not express and represent the Christian faith in the full scope like that of the intent and aim that biblical counseling

²⁷Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 101-2.

²⁸Ibid., 34-35.

²⁹Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 188.

does. The most significant detail is their understanding of the authority of Scripture and its role. However, biblical counselors will be quick to defend integrationists in that they do believe in the authority of Scripture. That is not the problem. The problem is that the scope of relevance of Scripture is on the same level as science.

Powlison notes that “proponents of the integrationist view have used an epistemological argument (the usefulness of science of studying what it is) as if it also implicitly justifies professional psychotherapy (interventions to change what is).”³⁰ This is the thrust of integrationism, “whereby both disciplines [psychology and Christianity] retain their own identity while benefiting from each other’s perspective and communicating the same truth.”³¹ The Christian identity is not to be shared with other so-called identities. Inevitably, the problem is that one identity will be subsumed by the other. The word ‘subsume’ means to consider or include as part of a more comprehensive one. The ambiguity of the integrationist position is alarming and begs the question, Is it the philosophical and methodological conviction that science would subsume Christianity or that Christianity would subsume science?

Thus, when integrationists speak about the scope of relevance of Scripture, they are speaking about various issues to which the Christian faith can positively contribute. Examples of this are “forgiveness,” the “image of God,” and “ultimate answers and starting points for knowledge.”³² Biblical counseling would wholeheartedly agree with this. However, integrationists do not take the positive contributions of the Christian faith far enough. The benefit of the Christian faith is relegated to purely religious topics but “doesn’t give us detailed insight into how people work and how intentional conversations ought to proceed.”³³ How does this measure up to passages

³⁰Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 144.

³¹Bulkley, *Why Christians Can’t Trust Psychology*, 191-92.

³²Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 145.

³³Ibid.

such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:1-21 where Paul and Peter state authoritatively that believers can live a godly life and that the Scriptures assist them in doing so?

Moreover, counseling is lived out in what Powlison calls the “middle ground.”³⁴ For example, counseling speaks into situations and answers questions such as “what’s going on, how you’re doing; what’s happening to you; how you’re reacting; how you treat people; how they treat you; and how what you want, expect, fear, and believe animates every emotion, thought, choice and reaction.”³⁵ Rare is the person who walks into a counselor’s office and asks a question about some obscure facet of a particular psychotherapeutic tenant. Rather, issues such as rebellious children, resolving conflict, depression, anger, bitterness, eating disorders, etc., are some of the problems that surface in counseling. The aim of counseling is to actually give counsel and help people with their problems. The most serious problem of all “What will you do with your sin?” Thankfully, the Scriptures are not only authoritative but are sufficient in showcasing the means by which salvation is a reality, real change is possible, and hope is lasting.

Christian Psychology Approach

Christian psychology is comprised of a commitment to discerning “the psychology implicit in historic Christian writings, including the Bible.”³⁶ Furthermore, Christian Psychologists seek to draw their understanding more from these uniquely Christian categories,” while also valuing what modern psychology has to offer.³⁷ Last, “a true Christian psychology is based ultimately on the knowledge and understanding of the personality of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ.”³⁸

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 146.

³⁶Greggo and Sisemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 110.

³⁷Ibid., 111.

³⁸Ibid.

Undoubtedly, an apparent strength of the Christian Psychology Approach is the initial emphasis on the person of Christ. Christian psychologist Diane Langberg advocates that through our knowledge of Jesus “we have a study of humans as they are meant to be in this world. My understanding of the human beings who enter my office must be informed by my study of the person of the Son of Man.”³⁹ However, Christian psychologists do not go far enough. To be cognizant of the Son of Man is to understand the condemnation and punishment that sin brings; it is to be intimately aware that God is just and holy and his wrath must be exercised against all those who oppose him; it is to understand that Jesus comes and absorbs the wrath of God so that individuals can call upon him, can be freed from the condemnation of the Law, and can find forgiveness and acceptance by God through his Son.

Similar to this, Christian psychology speaks about counselees having a “self-awareness, or truth about oneself.”⁴⁰ Christian psychology teaches that “what is seen and known about the self must be daily brought into submission to the person and work of Christ.”⁴¹ Such a statement encapsulates the thrust of our daily responsibility: to put off the flesh and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says in Colossians 3:10, “Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

However, bearing the characteristic title of “Christian” or “Christ” in the name of an approach does not necessarily entail faithfulness to the person and work of Christ or the authority of Scripture. The next several paragraphs will be a catalogue of weaknesses and deficiencies regarding this approach, while seeking to compare and contrast it to being faithful to the Scriptures.

One salient deficiency prominent throughout the Christian Psychology Approach is the understanding, or misunderstanding, of what it means to be faithful to

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

the person of Christ. This approach is mainly concerned with exemplifying the attributes of Jesus. In fact, Langberg mentions the oxymoronic nature of someone who identifies themselves as a Christian Psychologist, but does not exude the characteristics of Jesus.⁴² Though I agree with her, it is not merely the representation of Christ-like attributes that equates to faithfully reflecting Jesus, it is the embracing of the truth and doctrine of who Jesus is that will manifest such attributes. So, it appears that she assumes a lot with the mere presence of “truth, wisdom, kindness, patience, justice and mercy,”⁴³ and that simply possessing such characteristics is commensurate with being a Christian.

Furthermore, a Christian Psychologist Approach does not immediately turn to the Word of God for counsel. In fact, Langberg writes,

It is sometimes better, once some of the work of therapy has been done, to do more focused work in the area of faith and nurture a healthy relationship with God, grounded in the Scriptures, at a point when the client has known good relationships, has developed clearer thinking and has seen Christianity lived out by others in a way that is true to the character of God. The client is less likely to be resistant at this point and also not as liable to “use” faith in distorted ways as his patterns of thinking have significantly changed.⁴⁴

Still, later, Langberg states that there is not an emphasis on faith (i.e., doctrine) because of the flagrant distortion of a counselee’s misunderstanding of faith. Would this not be all the more reason to ask a counselee to take responsibility for his or her actions? Christian psychologists are reticent to lovingly confront individuals whose behavior is inconsistent with Christianity and to elucidate accurate theology.

Perhaps what is more alarming is the statement that “focusing on more concrete arenas will help stabilize him while forming a strong alliance as he experiences his therapist meeting him where he is, helping him to manage what is overwhelming

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 122.

and giving him a sense of hope for change.”⁴⁵ Theology, truth, and matters of faith are not only trivialized, but are not seen as the vehicle by which change occurs. This is obviously not a mere mental assent, but an embracing of it at a heart-level. Change is seemingly facilitated through the role and function of the therapist. Furthermore, matters of faith and doctrine are not understood to be concrete arenas. And, yet, it is “the gospel story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation” that gives direction to the counselee.⁴⁶

Transformational Approach

The Transformational Approach is essentially “spiritual experience,” as well as maintaining “a primary focus on spiritual transformation—for both the counselor and counselee—while looking for ways to incorporate insights and techniques from each of the five approaches presented in this text: levels of explanation, biblical counseling, Christian psychology, transformational psychology and integration.”⁴⁷

I found the Transformational interaction with the terms of health and pathology to be helpful. Health is understood to be achieved when a person’s life is aligned as closely as possible to God, though the Transformational Approach advocates a more mystical union with Christ than the actual biblical union.⁴⁸ Conversely, “pathology is living apart from the Tree of Life.”⁴⁹ In addition, the Transformational Approach teaches that a “trusting submission to the will of God on a moment-by-moment basis . . . is a picture of healthy functioning.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵Ibid., 122-23.

⁴⁶Ibid., 226.

⁴⁷Ibid., 136.

⁴⁸Ibid., 142.

⁴⁹Ibid., 143.

⁵⁰Ibid., 142-43.

However, the lack of gospel content in the Transformational Approach is a major weakness. This weakness is evidenced in the following statement made by Gary Moon, a Transformational practitioner, regarding an answer to the question “what makes a person change?”⁵¹ Moon says, “I would have to say that the two primary ‘motivators’ are pain—when it leads to a willingness to abandon maladaptive and self-defeating patterns of behavior—and love—when a client truly believes that another (God, the counselor, a significant person) genuinely desires for him or her what is good.”⁵² Nowhere in the explanation of the Transformational Approach is there a call to turn from sin and trust in Christ. Nowhere is there an articulation of how real change occurs, which leaves the counselee without any real hope.

Furthermore, the Transformational Approach is unashamed in stating that there are times when a counselor “will only consider ‘spiritual approaches’ for clients who have given informed consent.”⁵³ Transformational advocates support a counselee at any time to “veto any ‘God talk’ during the counseling process.”⁵⁴ Rather than putting Christ and the Word front-and-center, it seems as if the counselee is in the driver’s seat. Moreover, it is understandable that there are times a Transformational counselor would not incorporate “God talk” as they appear to put the knowledge Jesus offers on equal footing with the pioneers of psychology.⁵⁵ Transformational Psychologists state that “doing psychology within a tradition should be secondary to the primary task of doing psychology anew in the Spirit.”⁵⁶ This is understood to mean that they suspend their

⁵¹Ibid., 144.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 141.

⁵⁴Ibid., 145.

⁵⁵Ibid., 140.

⁵⁶Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 201.

“commitment to historical approaches to doing psychology—secular and Christian.”⁵⁷ Despite the ambiguity of “doing psychology in the Spirit,” there is a false dichotomy here. Doing psychology in the Spirit will be commensurate with a tradition. When using the word “tradition,” I am speaking of a belief or practice that is passed down. For example, Paul is passing on a specific historical tradition in 1 Corinthians 11:2 when he says, “Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.” He does the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Christian counselors should never suspend their commitment to a particular tradition or belief.

One example of this is a technique that Transformational counselors utilize, which is referred to as Phase 1 Exploration. This approach utilizes the “empty chair technique” as a helpful tool in the exploration phase. The counselor is understood to be an intermediary of sorts, whereby the counselee enters into a dialogue with God.⁵⁸ The exercise is intended to be a time when the counselor listens to the counselee to discern what he believes as he “makes an emotional reference to God” or as God “speaks” back to the counselee about the painful memories of the past.⁵⁹

From a biblical counseling approach, this approach is fraught with problems. First, God has already spoken (Heb 1:3): there is no need for us to facilitate a conversation between God and the counselee. And, second, the thought of a counselor serving as an intermediary between God and man is unwise at best and encroaching upon the role and responsibility of the Holy Spirit at worse.

Last, the “transformational psychology model is an attempt to both rediscover and redesign our traditional way of thinking of psychology in relation to Christianity, as well as rethinking the very nature of science itself. The bottom line will be that doing

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Greggo and Sisemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 148.

⁵⁹Ibid., 147.

science and, in this case, psychology is ultimately an act of love.”⁶⁰ Yet, how does this understanding correspond to the message of Bible? Love is defined by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Elsewhere, this is understood to mean the laying down of one’s life. Doing counseling right, as an act of love as Transformational Psychologists advocate, will also mean communicating truth, in particular, speaking about and instructing how “personal transformation in Christ” can take place.⁶¹ Transformational psychology appears to be more contemplative and geared towards an “upper-story spirituality,” whereas the Scriptures are intended to be “a feet-on-the-ground way of life.”⁶²

Conclusion

Given this brief summary of various counseling approaches, it is apparent that certain views espouse a spirit of integrity to the Christian faith, whereas others simply do not. The questions of why, how, and when one should practice psychology or counseling should be measured by the authority of the Scriptures; for to deviate from the Scriptures is to truly, I humbly believe, deviate from God himself. Consequently, it should be the aim of the counselor to work diligently to know the words of eternal life (John 6:68) and seek to bring those words to bear upon each and every counseling situation (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:1-21).

⁶⁰Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 199.

⁶¹Ibid., 241.

⁶²Ibid., 243.

CHAPTER 4

THE METHODOLOGY

The impetus for developing a curriculum to equip and train men and women to counsel comes from the belief that every Christian is capable of counseling at various levels of skill and knowledge. A simple overview of the Scriptures shows that believers in Christ regularly press into one another's lives. No Christian is exempt from this responsibility. What follows is an overview of a curriculum designed to train lay counselors in the local church, specifically Oak Park Baptist Church. The curriculum is twelve weeks of material, highlighting prominent issues at Oak Park. In addition, there are several weeks where foundational truths such as the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scriptures are explained, as well as a week dealing with the attributes of God.

Week 1

Before delving into particular issues with which individuals will deal, it is imperative to establish the foundation on which Christians can and should counsel other Christians. That foundation is the Bible. An unwavering commitment to the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Scriptures is indispensable in counseling. Peter says in 2 Peter 1:19-21,

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In light of that, as well as other passages, it is clear that verbal-plenary inspiration is the correct understanding of the Bible. Verbal-plenary inspiration teaches that God chose the words of the Bible and that every word matters. No parts of the Bible

are not believed, are not liked, are not preached, taught, or obeyed; every part of the Bible is God-breathed revelation (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Why is this important? Jay Adams answers this question very well when he says, “The ministry of the Word in counseling . . . is totally unlike counseling in any other system because of its authoritative base. . . . If the Bible were shot through with human error, and were no more dependable than any other composition—if it were not a God-breathed revelation—this note of authority would give way to opinion.”¹

Furthermore, inerrancy teaches that the original manuscripts do not affirm anything that is contrary to fact and that whatever the Bible addresses it does so truthfully and reliably. A frequent pushback to the aforementioned definition is that there are many things that the Bible does not address. This is often stated as a means to undermine or speak against the sufficiency of the Bible. However, it is a common misunderstanding of inerrancy and sufficiency. Inerrancy does not mean that everything there is to know about any subject is found in the Bible; instead, it teaches that everything one needs to know is found in the Bible. Grudem states this well: “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”²

Establishing the foundation of what the Bible is, and what it is not, is important. The problems with not affirming the doctrine of inerrancy are many. Here are a few:

(1) May we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters? . . . (2) We begin to wonder if we can really trust God in anything He says, . . . (3) . . . We essentially make our own human minds a higher standard of truth than God’s Word itself, . . . [and] (4) . . . We must also say that the Bible is wrong not only in minor details but in some of its doctrines as well.³

¹Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 18-19.

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

³*Ibid.*, 100.

The implications are many, none more serious than a discussion involving what is true, what is not true, and whether one can truly trust God in anything.

Related to the inerrancy of Scripture is the sufficiency of Scripture. Wayne Grudem, in his book *Systematic Theology*, gives a helpful definition of sufficiency: “Scripture [contains] all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”⁴

The apostle Paul speaks to the sufficiency of the Bible in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. A brief explication and application of each passage will suffice. When Paul states that the Scriptures “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” he is not using the term “salvation” in a limiting manner, but is referring to all of the problems from which Jesus intends to redeem his people. Moreover, the Scriptures are critical in helping us grow. With the Spirit of God, the Scriptures impart instruction (teaching), make us aware of problems (reproof), and are profitable for pointing in the direction of positive change (correction). Interestingly enough, each of these categories contain

elements of any halfway decent counseling theory—religious or secular. All counseling theories possess some apprehension of what is wrong with people (a “diagnosis” or version of reproof); what should be right (a goal of healthy of humanness—a version of correction); some process of communicating that understanding; and some theory of what the change process might look like (“teaching” and “training”).⁵

Peter also provides a tremendous word on the sufficiency of Scripture in 2 Peter 1:3-4. Ed Bulkley provides a helpful commentary on this passage. He states,

A necessary presupposition of biblical counseling is that God has indeed provided *every* essential truth the believer needs for a happy, fulfilling life in Christ Jesus. It is the belief that God has not left us lacking in *any* sense. The apostle Peter states it emphatically. . . .

Note the word *everything*. God has provided absolutely *everything* man needs for physical and spiritual life. This is a primary consideration. If Peter is correct,

⁴Ibid., 127.

⁵Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, eds., *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God’s Resources in Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 12.

then God has given us all the information we need to function successfully in this life. *Every* essential truth, *every* essential principle, *every* essential technique for solving human problems has been delivered in God's Word.⁶

The Bible teaches us everything that is necessary to know regarding salvation and how to live a life that pleases Jesus. The Bible is sufficient in its teaching concerning drawing us to Christ, ordering our affections, explaining our identity, revealing the motivations of our heart, changing us into the image of Jesus, teaching us where our hope should lie, explaining good words, and knowing God's will.⁷

In summary, for an individual to counsel faithfully and effectively they need to embrace the doctrines of inerrancy and sufficiency. From this brief explication of these doctrines the following applications are apparent: (1) it should encourage all Christians to know "what God would have us *think* about a particular doctrinal and issue," (2) it reminds Christians that they are to add nothing to Scripture and that they are to consider no other writings "on a level equal to Scripture in authority," (3) God does not require Christians to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work that is not found in Scripture, (4) Christians "should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has revealed told us in Scripture."⁸

The doctrines of the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture beg the question, Why has there not been a more robust biblical approach to counseling for seemingly many years? Heath Lambert, in his book *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams*, gives nine reasons that have contributed to this phenomenon: "People want to understand and help other people, . . . counseling is hard to see, . . . counseling is hard to do, . . . the onslaught of revivalism, . . . the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, . . . the

⁶Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 268.

⁷Scott and Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, 11-13.

⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 130-34.

psychological revolution, . . . [the dynamics of] a changing American economy, . . . the Civil War, . . . [and] World Wars I and II.”⁹

Week 2

Week 2 consisted of walking through various attributes of God and then explaining how an understanding of these attributes relates to and informs the counselor and the counseling process. When describing the attributes of God, one of the tendencies is to think of God as much more patient, kind, good, or loving than we are. And though it is true that God is infinitely more patient, kind, and good than any human being is, it also falls short of the biblical description of God’s attributes and does not quite grasp what the Bible means when it says certain things such as “God is love” (1 John 4:8) or “God is light” (1 John 1:5). R. C. Sproul has an apt and clear explanation of what the Bible means when it says God is patient, kind, good, or loving.

When we describe someone’s attributes, we usually make a distinction between a person and his attributes. For instance, you may say your mother is patient, but you wouldn’t say that your mother is *patience*. And you would say that your mother is more than a mere list of traits. In the same way, God is not just a list of attributes. But God is different from your mother in that it was God’s being that defined attributes in the first place. By gaining a better understanding of God, we can learn more about what true kindness is, what truth, beauty, patience, strength are. In this sense, God *is* his attributes. It’s not that he’s a composite being—three pounds of omniscience and three pounds of omnipresence, and three pounds of self-existence, etc.—added together to give us a concept of God. Rather, God in his essence, in his very being, is holy, and that holiness is immutable. All of God is immutable and all of God is holy. These attributes cannot be heaped up like sand in a sandpile to give us a composite portrait of God.¹⁰

Pages could be written on God’s attributes. For brevity’s sake, I will highlight several attributes and then give the application counterpart to that of counseling.

No other attribute in all of Scripture is repeated three times. Nowhere do the Scriptures state that God is love, love, love or God is patient, patient, patient, though

⁹Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 26-34.

¹⁰R. C. Sproul, *Now, That’s a Good Question!* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), 6-7.

God is love and is patient. The only attribute repeated three times is God's holiness. In Isaiah 6:3, heavenly beings call out to one another and say, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" God's holiness is calling "attention to the profound differences between Him and all [of His] creatures."¹¹ God's holiness speaks of the "apartness" and "otherness" of God.¹² God's holiness also describes that God is transcendentally pure. "He never does what is wrong. God always *acts* in a righteous manner."¹³

The application to counseling is clear. If God is not holy, or is less than holy, why would atonement be necessary? Without a clear understanding of God's holiness, no one will rightly comprehend God's wrath and love. However, the Scriptures teach that God is holy and atonement is necessary, as unholy beings cannot have a relationship with a holy God without a means by which sins are remembered no more (Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34; Heb 9:22). Last, counselors are to press into counselees that holiness is vitally important for them to pursue, as no one will see the Lord without striving for holiness (Heb 12:14).

God is also love and it is his nature to be love (1 John 4:8). God's love is uninfluenced in that there is nothing a person can do to cause God to love him or her. God's love is holy. His love is not a capricious love, but his love is regulated by his character. God's love is also gracious. This truth is seen in Romans 5:8: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus died not in order to make God love sinners, but because God already did love sinners.

An understanding of God's love will prompt Christians to imitate it by loving God and loving people (Matt 22:37-38). The Scriptures are clear that if a person loves God, they will obey God's commandments (1 John 5:3). Another application of God's

¹¹R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 51.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

love is that being loved by God does not exempt Christians from hardships or trials. Counselees should not confuse difficult circumstances with God not loving them. Whenever a person doubts the love of God, they should direct their eyes to Calvary where the Son of God willingly, sacrificially gave his life for sinners. And just as Jesus was not immune from poverty, disgrace, persecution, suffering, reviling, and, ultimately, death, Christians should not call into question God's love when they are brought under difficulties.

Week 3

A natural segue from God's attributes is the daunting and disheartening reality of the nature of man. Week 3 consisted of a brief description of the purpose of life and then a more comprehensive treatment of the sinfulness of man. The apostle Paul says, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him" (2 Cor 5:9). Elsewhere, Paul writes, "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col 1:18). Preeminence means authority, supremacy, or superiority.

Jesus is preeminent in all things, and a person shows this by doing the following: reflecting on the gospel of Jesus Christ everyday; looking to God for direction in all of life (Ps 119:160); living under the dominance of God's will as revealed in the Bible (Col 1:9-12); pleasing Jesus in every aspect (2 Cor 5:9); exemplifying a brotherly, earnest love (1 Pet 1:22); loving God's Word and desiring to read, understand, and obey it (Jas 1:22-25); having honorable conduct and abstaining from the passions of the flesh that wage war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11-12); and eliminating anything that does not please God (Col 3:5-9).

The Scriptures unequivocally teach that man is sinful. All persons have an inherited guilt—every person is counted guilty because of Adam's sin (Rom 5:12). All persons are inherently corrupted—every person has a sinful nature because of Adam's sin (Pss 51:5; 58:3; Eph 2:3). The Bible describes sin in many different ways. Sin is a

“relational breach,” as sin has separated mankind from God.¹⁴ Sin “is a social matter because shalom [peace] has been vandalized.”¹⁵ Sin “is a covenantal rebellion against God and his authority.”¹⁶ Sin “is a legal transgression that results in guilt and that necessitates punishment.”¹⁷ The punishment is death.

Sin is also described as “missing the mark,” which “refers to the innumerable ways in which we fall short of what God intends for us.”¹⁸ Sin means “to trespass . . . God’s law.”¹⁹ Additionally, sin is defined as “disobedience,” signifying the “evil intent, whereby someone chooses to disobey God.”²⁰ Last, sin is understood to be “ungodliness” and unrighteousness, which “refers to sinners’ active character of rebellion whereby they act as if there were no God and/or as if they were . . . the highest authority in their life.”²¹

Counselors need to have a biblical understanding of sin as well as understand how some people sinfully respond to sin. Sinfully responding to sin can appear in a litany of ways from minimizing, legitimizing, or rationalizing sin, to even blaming their sin on someone else (victimization or disease). Edward Welch states,

Our sinful hearts express themselves in behavior via hundreds of factors, biology being one. A person whose sinful heart acts out in murder may have been influenced by unjust treatment, by parents who allowed him to vent his rage on siblings, and by Satan’s incessant suggestions to kill. But none of these influences remove his personal responsibility for his intentions or actions. The ultimate cause of sin is always the sinful heart.²²

¹⁴Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 149.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 150.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 151.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Edward T. Welch, *Blame It on the Brain: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 144.

Some practical approaches a counselor can give in counseling would entail running from sin (1 Thess 4); taking radical steps not to sin (Matt 18); clinging to Jesus who is the only one more powerful than sin and the only one who offers true relief from the guilt and power of sin which should evoke a deep-seated humility and gratitude for the salvation that Jesus brings.

In understanding the various ways the Bible describes sin, counselors need to be mindful that counseling is multifaceted. Sometimes counseling comes in the form of a sermon. Sometimes counseling is formal, while at other times it is informal. Counseling can occur in a small group or one-on-one. In addition, counselors need to understand with whom they are dealing. The apostle Paul describes several approaches to sinners in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. He writes, “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

“Admonishing the idle” refers to putting sense into someone’s head.²³ Specifically this instruction is to someone who is unruly (i.e., someone who is shirking their responsibilities). Helping the weak refers to individuals who are fragile in their faith and more susceptible to sin and temptation than a stronger, more mature believer. At times, the appropriate counseling approach will be to come alongside the weaker sheep, establish a close relationship with them, and provide them with doctrinal instruction and encouragement. Encouraging the fainthearted is describing someone who offers comfort and support to someone who is fainthearted, which literally means “small-souled.”²⁴

Week 4

Given the Scriptures’ comprehensive explication of man as a sinner, it is clear that God must intervene on behalf of man to provide salvation. This salvation is provided in the person and work of Jesus. From the early days of Jesus’ ministry, he stated what a

²³MacDonald, Kellemen, and Viars, *Christ-Centered, Biblical Counseling*, 145.

²⁴Ibid.

person must do: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2). In order to be saved a person must turn from their sins and trust in the King who is ushering in the kingdom.

One such encounter in the Scriptures where this is plainly seen is Jesus’ interaction with Nicodemus.

What Nicodemus needs, and what you and I need, is not religion but life. The point of referring to new birth is that birth brings a new life into the world. In one sense, of course, Nicodemus is alive. He is breathing, thinking, feeling, acting. He is a human created in God’s image. But evidently, Jesus thinks he’s dead. There is no spiritual life in Nicodemus. Spiritually, he is unborn. He needs life, not more religious activities or more religious zeal. He has plenty of that.²⁵

The salvation or new birth that Jesus tells Nicodemus he needs (and every person for that matter) speaks to several “soul-transforming, life-changing and eternity occurrences” that takes place in the heart of man. People who are born again (John 3) have Jesus as their new Lord, are transformed at the deepest level, and now have a new life. Their new birth gives them a new identity, which means they are no longer defined by their own identity (1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 4:22-25). Born again persons have a new mind that desires the things of God and aspires to be holy (1 Pet 1:16; 1 John 4:7). Born again persons are now part of God’s household and enjoy fellowship with other Christians (Eph 2:19). And born again persons enjoy a freedom that is found in Jesus (Gal 5:1) and they no longer tolerate, manage, excuse, or accept sin, but rather desire to put it to death and pursue righteousness (Col 3:1-17).

The salvation that is granted to us in Jesus (Phil 1:27) has many different aspects that are important for the counselor to be skillful in, not only understanding, but also communicating clearly to the counselee. Justification and sanctification are two such aspects that need to be rightly understood and explained. Justification is a legal standing that is a once-and-for-all declaration of “not guilty” that is entirely God’s work; it is

²⁵John Piper, *Finally Alive: What Happens When We Are Born Again* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2009), 28.

perfect in this life and the same for all Christians.²⁶ Sanctification, however, is an internal condition that is continuous throughout life and is a synergistic process.²⁷ Sanctification is not perfect in this life and is greater in some than it is in others.²⁸

The goal of counseling is change. Change is a word that is commensurate with the doctrine of sanctification as change is part of the DNA of a Christian (1 John 4:9). Understanding some truths about change is helpful. Change does not come easy and can be very difficult at times (Jer 13:23, 22:21). Change is a cooperative act (Phil 2:12-13; 1 Thess 5:23). Change is patterned after Jesus (Heb 12:2; 1 Pet 2:21). Change has already been earned (1 Cor 1:30). And, last, change is necessary (Heb 12:14).

Week 5

This change first and foremost takes place in the heart. A biblical understanding of the heart reveals that the heart is the place where worship takes place. The heart is the place where thoughts, beliefs, desires, emotions, motives, and choices take place. Behavior comes from the heart. This is seen in Matthew 12:33-37 where Jesus says,

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Jesus states that the heart is the initiator and the body is the instrument used in expressing the values in the heart. A person's heart is to yield to the kingship of Jesus in every way, meaning that a person is to be under the controlling influence of God at all times. However, there are functional gods that take up residence in a person's heart and

²⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 723.

²⁷Man cooperates with God as one sees in Phil 2:12-13.

²⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 754-56.

are diametrically opposed to the living God. Here are some questions that reveal the truth of where a person's heart is:

What do you love? Hate? . . . What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for?
What desires do you serve and obey? . . . What do you seek, aim for, and pursue?
What are your goals and expectations? . . . Where do you bank your hopes? . . .
What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about? . . .
Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security? . . . In what do
you place your trust?²⁹

Understanding the nature of a person's heart will be vital as a counselor seeks to help a person experience and realize change. Several additional statements regarding the dynamics of why a person does what he or she does needs to be stated. First, a person's relational environment should not be ignored; a counselor needs to understand how a person's environment influences them, as well as look for patterns. Second, understanding a person's environment should help a counselor demonstrate compassion. Third, asking good questions will help a counselor come to a deeper and more informed understanding of the counselee's heart. Fourth, a person's social environment is not determinative (i.e., it does not make a person sin). Last, a person should not be allowed to use their social environment as an excuse for sinful behavior, but should realize that they are morally culpable for their actions.

Week 6

The sixth week of the curriculum dealt with the doctrines of confession and repentance. The clearest passage describing biblical repentance is that of 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. Paul's words reveal the seriousness of exemplifying a worldly remorse or sorrow over against a godly remorse or sorrow. A worldly sorrow brings regret that leads to death, whereas a godly sorrow does not bring regret and leads to salvation. Paul Barnett, in his *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* commentary, writes, "The structure of Paul's verse is: For the grief that is according to God works repentance [that] leads to salvation,

²⁹David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 132-40.

[which] is without regret. But the grief that is of the world works death.”³⁰ Thus, there is a truth inferred here that is important for the discussion at hand, which is the “grief that is of the world works [unrepentance, which leads to] death [and is *with* regret].”³¹

Two words in this passage (one stated and the other inferred) are crucial in understanding what brings death and, in contrast, what brings life. The two words are “without regret” and “regret.” The first phrase “without regret” is the Greek word *ametamelēton*, and the second inferred word is *metamelomai*.³²

What is the significance of the two? One sees the difference in Matthew’s gospel where he writes, “Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.” (Matt 27:3). In the New American Standard translation it reads, “Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.” The actual Greek word for “changed his mind” and “he felt remorse” is *metamelomai*, which as discussed means “to express regret, sorrow, remorse.”³³ This type of sorrow, as evidenced in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, is not a sorrow that leads to salvation, but rather to death.

Judas regretted his actions “not necessarily because they were wrong as sins against a holy God,” but because of their consequences.³⁴ What did Judas lack? He lacked a godly sorrow that brings regrets that leads to salvation. His remorse was not commensurate with a remorse that God says is a prerequisite to salvation. And what was the end result of his remorse? He ended his life. “He was sorry for his sin, but instead of

³⁰Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 376.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 376-77.

³³Jay E. Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Zondervan, 1986), 142-43.

³⁴Ibid., 143.

taking his sorrow to God, he despaired. He turned inward, not Godward, and his remorse became self-condemnation.”³⁵

In addition, one sees elsewhere a remorse that does not lead to salvation in Acts 8. Luke says that the people of Samaria commended Simon the magician as having the power of God. Philip begins to preach the gospel and men and women believed and were baptized, evidently including Simon the magician. At first glance, it would appear Simon demonstrated a biblical sorrow or grief that works repentance that leads to salvation. However, several verses later Luke reports an incident that reveals the true nature of Simon’s sorrow.

Peter and John are sent by the apostles to visit Samaria and pray that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit. As they are laying hands on the men and women, the Spirit of God drops and Simon witnesses this miracle that comes through Peter and John and immediately says, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:19). Was this a harmless and innocent request? Hardly. Peter responds with a scathing rebuke. Why? Concerning worldly and godly remorse that leads to death and life, it is evident that Simon’s faith was counterfeit. Simon did not exude a sorrow that leads to salvation. If he had, Peter would not have felt the need to deliver such an excoriating series of rebukes.

Matthew 3:7-8 is another example of sorrow bringing regret. John the Baptist sees the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism and admonishes them saying, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” From a plain reading of the text, it is clear there is a fruit that is not in keeping with repentance. John possessed a supernatural ability to discern the motives of the Pharisees and Sadducees. What he saw was not a change of heart and so he rebukes

³⁵Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, Reformed Expository Commentary, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 50.

them and calls them to exemplify biblical repentance, which will produce fruit. Again, this is the same truth the apostle Paul hammers home to the Corinthians.

Thomas Watson, in his book *The Doctrine of Repentance*, makes several observations that are beneficial to the counselor in understanding what biblical repentance looks like. First, there needs to be an observation of sin. “Without a sense of sin there is no humiliation; that without humiliation there can be no repentance; and that without repentance there can be no escape from the wrath of God.”³⁶ Second, there needs to be sorrow and remorse for sin (Ps 38:18; Isa 55:7). Third, there needs to be confession of sin (Ps 32:5; Jas 5:16). Confession is voluntary, specific, sincere, and made with a resolution not to act sinfully again. Fourth, there needs to be shamefulness of sin. Fifth, there needs to be a palpable hatred of sin (Ezek 36:31). And, last, there needs to be a turning away from sin (Hos 6:1; Acts 26:20).³⁷

Moreover, the Scriptures also teach us that repentance is focused upon God (Ps 51; 1 Thess 1:9) and that real change comes forth (Acts 9:21). Real, authentic change is necessary (Jonah 3:7-9; Matt 4:17; 2 Cor 7:10), and many times the efforts to change will involve radical measures (Matt 18:8-9). These radical measures involve killing or mortifying sin (Col 3:5).

Week 7

The next part of the curriculum focused on biblical roles in marriage. Every marriage settles into some type of social and organizational arrangement with both husband and wife playing specific roles to uphold. As a result, there is no such thing as role-less marriages. To that end, it is crucial that counselors understand what the Bible teaches concerning the role of a husband and wife in the marital relationship.

³⁶Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 18.

³⁷*Ibid.*

John Piper, in his book *Momentary Marriage*, explains this in terms of core roles and core responses. His definitions and explanations are succinct and very clear. As a result, in large part his words served as the content for this portion of the curriculum. A core role is an essential function that God has given husbands or wives to fulfill in a marriage relationship, while a core response is the primary response that God requires from men and women in order to enable and encourage their spouses to fulfill their core roles.³⁸

According to the Bible, a husband's core role is to be a servant leader. The example is clearly seen in the person and work of Jesus as Paul describes in Ephesians 5:23. Jesus gave up his throne and His life for the church. In the same way, husbands should willingly and sacrificially serve their wives. A husband's core response is to praise and honor his wife. Praise and honor are the masculine counterparts to submission and it is what encourages a wife to fulfill her calling as a helper-homemaker.³⁹

A wife's core role is to be a helpmate. The core response of a wife to her husband is submission. Submission is empowering the husband to be the leader that God has called him to be. As the word submission many times has a negative connotation and is regularly misunderstood, it is imperative for the counselor to understand what submission is and what submission is not. Submission is not agreeing with everything your husband does or says (i.e., "putting the will of the husband before the will of Christ").⁴⁰

Submission does mean exemplifying an inclination to follow a husband's authority. Moreover, submission is comprehensive in that it is dependent upon God's character, not the husband's. Submission communicates "an attitude that says, 'I delight

³⁸John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 84-89.

³⁹Ibid., 100-101.

⁴⁰Ibid., 100.

for you to take the initiative in our family.”⁴¹ Submission is a posture that embraces the role of helpmate and exudes a joyful heart when the husband assumes responsibility.

The core role and response of the husband and wife is articulated well by Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said the following concerning a husband,

As the head, it is he who is responsible for his wife, for their marriage, and for their home. On him falls the care and protection of the family; he represents it to the outside world; he is its mainstay and comfort; he is the master of the house, who exhorts, punishes, helps, and comforts and stands for it before God. It is a good thing, for it is a divine ordinance when the wife honors the husband for his office’s sake, and when the husband properly performs the duties of his office.⁴²

And regarding the role and responsibility of a wife, he says,

God establishes a rule of life by which you can live together in wedlock: “wives be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives” (Col 3:18, 19). With your marriage you are founding a home. That needs a rule of life, and this rule of life is so important that God establishes it himself, because without it everything would be out of joint. You may order your home as you like, except in one thing: the wife is to be subject to her husband and the husband is to love his wife.⁴³

Week 8

One of the critical aspects of any relationship, in particular marriage, is communication and conflict resolution. “Conflict happens when you are at odds with another person over what you think, want, or do.”⁴⁴ Counselors should be anticipatory of encouraging counselees that conflict is always an opportunity to put gospel truths and principles into practice.

The counterpart to conflict is seeking to make peace. Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson define peacemaking as “applying the gospel and God’s principles for problem

⁴¹Ibid., 101.

⁴²Ibid., 82.

⁴³Ibid., 94.

⁴⁴Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson, *Resolving Everyday Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011),

solving to everyday life.”⁴⁵ Sande and Johnson, in their book *Resolving Everyday Conflict*, give a helpful step-by-step process concerning how to work out peacemaking. They posit this process with four questions coupled with four answers, which they call the Four Gs: “How can I focus on God in this situation? G1: Glorify God. How can I own my part of this conflict? G2: Get the log out of your eye. How can I help others own their contribution to this conflict? G3: Gently restore. How can I give forgiveness and help reach a reasonable solution? G4: Go and be reconciled.”⁴⁶ Stuart Scott says the following regarding good communication:

Good communication from God’s perspective is sending a message that is true, holy, purposeful, clear, and timely. The recipient in love, humility and with care should listen to what is being said, trying to understand where the communicator is coming from without reacting—clarifying with questions if needed. Upon receiving the message, the recipient should then ponder before answering and continue using these biblical principles.⁴⁷

One passage that provides the framework for biblical communication is Ephesians 4:25-32. Paul writes,

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Scott distills this passage down to four principles to guide believers in their communication with one another. “(1) Be honest (Eph 4:25), (2) Keep current (Eph 4:26-

⁴⁵Ibid., 13.

⁴⁶Ibid., 43.

⁴⁷Stuart Scott, “Marriage and Family Counseling,” Lecture, Biblical Principles of Loving Communication and Resolution, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, January 15, 2013.

27), (3) Attack the problem not the person (Eph 4:29-30), and (4) Act, don't react (Eph 4:31-32).”⁴⁸

Week 9

Problems concerning communication and conflict resolution abound in the life of the church. However, another issue plaguing the life of many Christ followers is the issue of pornography. To be adequately equipped as a lay counselor is to certainly be equipped and informed regarding the deceptiveness of pornography and how to combat this pervasive sin with the truth of God's Word. For that reason, it was important and imperative that this curriculum address the issue. Heath Lambert, in his book *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace*, gives perhaps what is the best biblical treatment of the issue of pornography. He gives nine gospel graces that need to be used in a person's fight against pornography. These gospel graces are sorrow, accountability, radical measures, confession, your spouse or singleness, humility, gratitude, and a dynamic relationship with Jesus.⁴⁹

Week 10

Week 10 dealt with the all too common issue of anger. In Ephesians 4:26, the apostle Paul writes, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.” Though righteous anger is something that is commanded in the text, oftentimes a person's anger is sinful. Thus, as anger is a regular part of the landscape within marriage, it is imperative that counselors understand what anger is and how to appropriately equip and train counselees to respond to anger in a biblical fashion.

The “sources” for anger are many. Here are some reasons why people choose to express anger: not feeling accepted, failure to have their way, experiencing

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 15.

mistreatment, past neglect or abuse, defense mechanism, lack of emotional maturity, being anxious or out of control or simply keeping company with angry people.

In James 4:1-10, one receives a glimpse as to why anger occurs. James asks the question, “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask” (Jas 4:1-2). James uses strong language for conflict that comes from the language of warfare. This language can also be used as powerful imagery for the destructiveness of relationships where violent attitudes are. Furthermore, their lack of mercy is evidenced not only in hostility towards one another (though true), but is also evidence of their conflict with God.

James identifies the source of their cravings, which produce conflict, as a wisdom problem. In going back to chapter 3, one sees that a harvest of righteousness is sown as individuals submit to God’s wisdom (i.e., pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere) over against the world’s wisdom (i.e., demonic, unspiritual, and from below). Anger happens as a person’s sinful desires rule over him or her, over against God’s wisdom and truth.

As previously mentioned, anger is a massively deceptive emotion that is displayed when a person does not receive what he or she wants. The Scriptures give several truths about anger. First, anger seduces. Anger seduces in two ways: (1) there is a feeling that something important to you is being threatened and (2) there is a feeling that you are losing control over that thing. Second, anger blinds. Anger serves as a cover-up for other important things that need to be addressed and only reveals a small portion of one’s heart. Third, anger controls. Anger controls the way one thinks, acts, and speaks. Anger can become a god in a person’s life. Fourth, anger deceives. “Anger serves as a

camouflage” that “hides underlying realities” and issues.⁵⁰ Anger is never quite what it seems. Anger feels powerful, but it weakens one. Anger feels honest, but it is full of lies. Anger promises change, but it leaves one stuck. Anger seems simple, but it is complex and confusing.⁵¹

Given the reality that anger is widespread, it is paramount that counselors be equipped to give counselees practical steps on how to fight anger and walk in obedience to Jesus. Here are several: first, one must repent of the evil desires that produce angry behavior and receive God’s forgiving, enabling grace. “No thorough and lasting progress will be made apart from an extensive invasion of the ungodly root system.”⁵² Second, one must own responsibility for angry behavior and identify it as evil before God and man. Third, one must confess and renounce angry behavior before God and others. Once angry words and actions are seen for what they are, confess and renounce them as evil (Prov 28:13; Acts 24:16). Fourth, one must believe anew in Christ and his gospel promises to angry people (1 Pet 2:18-25). Fifth, one must commit to taking active, concrete steps to replace angry behavior with Christ-like words and actions (self-control: Prov 16:32, 25:28, 29:11; Gal 5:23; and godly speech: Prov 10:19-21, 31-32, 12:18, 15:1; Eph 4:25-32).⁵³

Sixth, one must establish and carry out a workable temptation plan, which should involve the following: Avoid unnecessary occasions that tempt a person to show anger. Remove oneself as quickly as possible from explosive situations. In the midst of the temptation, ask Christ for strength and recite memorized key verses or biblical truths. Enlist mature believers to pray, counsel, hold accountable, and be available

⁵⁰Winston T. Smith, “Anger in Marriage,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 36-45.

⁵¹David Powlison, “The Heart of Sinful Anger,” sermon video, *Vimeo*, accessed June 6, 2014, <http://vimeo.com/48618963>.

⁵²Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 88.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 91.

during and after crises. Keep a log or journal of personal anger incidents. Seventh, continue to prayerfully study Scripture, and Scripture-based resources, on relevant topics.⁵⁴

Week 11

In Mark 11:25, Jesus says, “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” In Colossians 3:13 Paul writes, “Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Forgiveness is a monumental issue in the landscape of counseling. As men and women are inherently sinful and will continue to struggle with sin this side of heaven and, as conflict is inevitable, it is necessary to have a robust understanding of what biblical forgiveness is and what it is not.

One definition of forgiveness is “a commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him although this commitment does not eliminate all consequences.”⁵⁵ One passage where one can see the gracious nature of God’s forgiveness displayed and the expectation that forgiveness be dispensed if an individual has received forgiveness is in Matthew 18:21-35, the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

Timothy Lane, in an article titled “Pursuing and Granting Forgiveness,” submits six truths concerning forgiveness. First, forgiveness cancels a debt. The practice of canceling a debt serves as a metaphor for practicing forgiveness. Second, “forgiveness makes a threefold promise: ‘I will not bring up this offense again or use it against you, . . . I will not gossip or malign you because of this offense, . . . [and] I will not dwell

⁵⁴Ibid., 93.

⁵⁵Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Questions for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 51.

on this offense.”⁵⁶ Third, “failure to forgive turns victims into victimizers.”⁵⁷ Fourth, “failure to forgive has an eternal cost.”⁵⁸ Fifth, “forgiveness is both an event and a process.”⁵⁹ Sixth, “forgiveness is not forgetting” (e.g., Jer 31:34).⁶⁰ When God states that he will not remember our sins, he is not speaking about the concept of memory, but the reality of a covenant. Due to the new covenant ratified in Jesus, God makes us a promise not to treat us as our sins deserve.⁶¹

Last, believers need to reflect upon the forgiveness that has been granted to them in Jesus and evaluate and answer questions such as, “Are you a quick forgiver?”⁶² In addition, a believer needs to understand the conditional nature of forgiveness, that God grants us forgiveness as we repent of our sins and believe upon Jesus. Thus, for forgiveness to be truly granted and realized between believers, there needs to be an acknowledgment of an offense and a subsequent asking for forgiveness (Col 3:12-13).

Some additional questions believers should reflect upon include, Are there people whom I need to forgive? Are there sins that I have committed against someone else? Do I need to confess and seek forgiveness from someone? Additionally, all believers need to get to a point where they can sincerely say, “I was wrong. . . . I sinned against you. . . . Will you forgive me?”⁶³ Or they need to readily say, “Yes, I forgive you!”⁶⁴

⁵⁶Timothy S. Lane, “Pursuing and Granting Forgiveness,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 53.

⁵⁷Ibid., 54.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 57.

⁶²Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 111.

⁶³Lane, “Pursuing and Granting Forgiveness,” 59.

⁶⁴Ibid.

To say these words with biblical clarity, honesty, and sincerity is a wonderful sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in your life. It is evidence that you are a partaker of the wonderful forgiveness that is yours because Jesus came and absorbed the cost of your sins in your place. Forgiving others and asking for forgiveness is never easy. But by God's grace it is possible. When we seek and grant forgiveness with others, we freely express the love of Christ in powerful ways!⁶⁵

Week 12

The last portion of the curriculum deals with the tool of homework. Why is homework included in a curriculum intended to develop lay counselors in the local church? Three reasons will suffice. First, the Scriptures readily teach believers to be proactive rather than reactive (1 Pet 4:7). If a person is prepared and ready, almost anticipating the test, the struggle, or the temptation, then the event may turn into a growing experience, rather than a sin to be later confessed.

Second, one of the aims of counseling is that people would become self-feeders. This phrase "self-feeders" speaks to the expectation that Christian men and women get to the point that they can feed themselves; they can read, study and understand the Bible for themselves. Hence, they understand how to grow and change and are not utterly or wholly dependent upon someone else. Third, one of the aims of counseling is the expectation that people engage with God's Word outside of a counseling session or regular service at a local church. The Word of God is what sanctifies a person (John 17:17). Therefore, there is an expectation for counselees to regularly spend time reading, studying, meditating, memorizing, and applying God's Word throughout their day, as the Scriptures say to both hear and do God's Word (James 1:22-26).

⁶⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter evaluates the implemented project and analyzes the project's overall effectiveness. The project was called "The Implementation of a Lay Counseling Program at Oak Park Baptist Church, Jeffersonville, Indiana." The reason for this project came from the ministry context of Oak Park. Oak Park is a traditional Southern Baptist church. Over the last several decades, many transitions in the senior pastor position have led to a fairly dominant lay leadership. Though this was not entirely unhelpful, some elements certainly served to be more of a hindrance than a help.

Very little intensive, robust pastoral care had been taking place at Oak Park Baptist Church. In addition, an intentional culture of discipleship and mentoring was lacking, if not altogether absent. Moreover, the previous senior pastor's leadership style was not commensurate with the leadership style I sought to implement, which consisted of leading and loving assertively. At the time of my transition to Oak Park (December 2009), the membership was unhealthy. A myriad of sinful issues had not been dealt with and, from my vantage point, it did not appear that there was any intention to do so in the near or distant future.

From an understanding of the Scriptures, in particular texts such as Acts 20:17-38, Ephesians 4:11-13, and Colossians 1:28-29, I understand the role and responsibility of a pastor as something more than a person who delivers a prepared message on whatever day of the week that particular congregation gathers to worship Jesus. The responsibility outlined in the Scriptures is that men, set apart by the Holy Spirit of God, are charged with shepherding the flock of God for the purpose of raising up more men and women

for the work of ministry to strive to present every individual mature or complete in Jesus. Therefore, a pastor is called and expected to be involved in the lives of people.

In living out this responsibility, it was evident that many issues were present in the membership of Oak Park. Additionally, as pastoral care was beginning to take place more regularly, it was evident that there would need to be more individuals helping to facilitate pastoral care; one pastor could not do it alone. Likewise, many of the individuals at Oak Park were ignorant of basic biblical teaching of how to come alongside other individuals in the membership to instruct them in how they can grow, change, and have hope amid discouraging and sinful circumstances.

Last, individuals were more inclined to refer people away from Oak Park rather than come alongside them and labor towards maturity in Jesus. Essentially, what was taking place was a functional disbelief in the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Those reasons—little pastoral care, biblical illiteracy, and a functional disbelief in the sufficiency of the Scriptures—served as a catalyst in designing a curriculum to help people become equipped in the Scriptures to help other members grow, change, and have hope.

Furthermore, the stated purpose of this project was to implement a lay counseling program to equip believers to competently and confidently counsel other believers from the Scriptures. To determine the success of this project, it is important to understand the project's methodology, specifically the three stated goals, as well as how each goal is considered accomplished or successful.

As mentioned, the methodology of this project had three goals. The first goal was to evaluate how 10 to 12 couples use the Scriptures to counsel other believers at Oak Park Baptist Church. This goal was to be measured through a questionnaire administered before the curriculum was taught in order to discern an individual's competency in knowing and employing the Scriptures to counsel other individuals or couples. This goal would be considered successful if 10 couples completed the questionnaire. This goal was accomplished as 13 couples completed the questionnaire before the curriculum was taught.

The second goal was to develop a twelve-week counseling curriculum to educate and equip these 10 to 12 couples to competently and confidently counsel other believers. Goal number two was measured and accomplished by submitting a rubric to the elders of Oak Park Baptist Church, whereby they evaluated the effectiveness of the curriculum. This goal would be considered successful if the elders of Oak Park Baptist Church believed the curriculum was sound, effective, and clear. The rubric submitted to the elders (see appendix 2) contained the following questions:

1. The material presented was biblically faithful.
2. The material presented was clear and coherent.
3. The material presented was beneficial to the people who attended.
4. The material was presented in an engaging and relevant manner.
5. The material presented fulfilled the goals as outlined.
6. The pastor-teacher's knowledge and competent handling of the material was evident.
7. The pastor-teacher did a more than adequate job in explaining and applying certain truths of the Bible to counseling situations.

This goal is considered accomplished as the elders submitted the following answers to the questions:

1. All of the elders *strongly agreed* that the material was biblical faithful.
2. Two elders *strongly agreed* and one *agreed* that the material presented was clear and coherent.
3. One elder *strongly agreed* and two of the elders *agreed somewhat* that the material was beneficial to the people who attended.
4. One elder *strongly agreed*, one *agreed*, and one *agreed somewhat* that the material was presented in an engaging and relevant manner.
5. Two elders *strongly agreed* and one *agreed* that the material presented fulfilled the goals as outlined.
6. One elder *strongly agreed*, one *agreed*, and one *agreed somewhat* that the pastor-teacher's knowledge and competent handling of the material was evident.

7. Two elders *strongly agreed* and one *agreed* that the pastor-teacher did a more than adequate job in explaining and applying certain truths of the Bible to counseling situations.

One of the elders gave this comment:

I think this type of training would be best followed up by opportunities to counsel for each of the attendees, or an ongoing training curriculum. I feel that much of what was taught and discussed is probably now forgotten by many of the attendees, and at this point they may not be any more competent to counsel than prior to the training. The training itself was very good, just concerned that it hasn't been used or become a focus for the attendees.

The third goal of the project was to implement a twelve-week counseling program to educate and equip 10 to 12 couples to counsel from the Scriptures. This goal was measured by administering the same questionnaire to the participants after the curriculum had been implemented to ascertain whether or not there had been any knowledge increase regarding an individual's competence and confidence in the Scriptures for the purpose of counseling other individuals and couples. This goal would be considered successful if the *t*-test showed a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaire. The research results for each participant are shown in table A1 in appendix 3. This goal is considered successful due to a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaire.

The merit of a thorough evaluation is determining strengths and weaknesses. This project had several strengths. One strength was the exposure to truth that each participant received over the course of the twelve-week curriculum. The subjects and issues covered were the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Scriptures; the attributes of God; the purpose of life; the sinfulness of man; the doctrine of salvation; sanctification; the nature of the heart; the doctrine of repentance; roles and responsibilities in marriage; the issue of divorce; biblical communication and conflict resolution; the issue of pornography, anger, and forgiveness; and, last, the tool of homework.

Each subject or issue was introduced and examined in a biblical framework. As the Bible is the authority on all matters of faith and practice, the Bible was the

primary resource for discussing and elucidating the aforementioned issues and doctrines. Therefore, there was more than twelve hours of exposure to God's Word as it related to these issues and doctrines.

Another strength was how the material was presented, as well as the duration of time it took. Each session would start with a lecture on a particular topic. After 30 to 40 minutes of lecture, there would be a time of transition into a discussion of how to apply this material in everyday circumstances. Consequently, each participant was not merely hearing the details of what the Bible teaches regarding the doctrine of repentance, for example, but also learning how to press these truths into a counseling situation. The rationale for this approach was attributed to the fact that, though most intellectually understood and agreed with most everything that was presented, there still remained a disconnect in how to practically apply certain truths in counseling scenarios. In addition, the sessions were approximately one hour in length. Typically, at about the hour mark most participants were ready to conclude the session as they sat and listened to 30 to 40 minutes of lecture, and then engaged in discussion concerning the application of the presented truths, as well as read a concluding gospel promise or truth.

At the beginning of each session, I gave each participant supplemental reading that would aid him or her in delving deeper into a particular issue or doctrine. Thus, at the conclusion of each session, each individual had many resources on the topic at hand that they could refer to later for a more exhaustive treatment of the topic. The duration of the presentation served as both a strength and a weakness. One weakness of the curriculum was the time frame set aside to address the various topics. The doctrine of sanctification is a deep and vastly important subject that is difficult to treat comprehensively within one hour. As a result, I left many truths and details unstated. The hope and expectation is that individuals will press into these truths by reading the supplemental material provided, as well as experience an increased desire for understanding and applying God's truth.

Upon receiving the feedback from the elders, as well as analyzing the pre-project and post-project questionnaire, there were several identified weaknesses. One such weakness was the verbiage of a couple of the questions. Several individuals would make comments off to the side indicating that the question was difficult to understand or was ambiguous. Though I removed the ambiguity of some of the questions after presenting certain portions of the material, there could have been more clarity in some of the wording.

Another weakness was the spiritual immaturity or biblical illiteracy of some of the individuals. Though I initially saw this as an encouragement (and still do in many ways), as one of my goals was to foster a more robust confidence and competence in the Scriptures, it did serve as a challenge in establishing a firm foundation from which to teach. The sufficiency of the Bible is an indispensable truth that an individual must subscribe to if there is to be any confidence and competence in using the Scriptures to counsel; this proved to be more of a challenge than originally anticipated.

Last, the lack of time set aside for individuals to personally interact with the material, as well as to come alongside another individual in the church, proved to be a weakness. For example, it would have been impactful, revealing, and educational for each individual to take the truths they received in the class and work on an area of sanctification in their own life. Each individual could then seek to share these truths and lessons learned with someone else, resulting in ownership of the material taught, as well as other individuals who had not participated in the class being exposed to God's truth.

In addition to the strengths and weaknesses mentioned, there are several theological reflections that would make the project more comprehensive. One reflection deals with the nature and propensity of the heart, specifically the discussion surrounding nature and nurture. The Bible is clear that rebellious behavior, words, and thoughts come from the heart (Matt 15:10-20), but the Bible also acknowledges there is a need to be sober-minded and watchful (1 Pet 5:8). One sins because one is a sinner, but certainly

there are situations and factors that provide an occasion where an individual is more prone to sin. The people of Oak Park Baptist Church would have been better served with a more complete, robust treatment of the nature of the heart.

Certain counseling approaches may have Christian elements or principles, but there is one approach that is indeed thoroughly biblical. Biblical counseling puts forth a vigorous commitment to the sufficiency of Scriptures that causes it to stand out among other counseling approaches. Certain counseling methods are foundationally at odds with the Bible. The Bible tells us that God created man and that man's deepest, most serious need is to be forgiven of his sin, which comes through repenting and believing upon Jesus in the message of the gospel. Any method that diminishes this truth or downplays the reality of sin and the costly sacrifice and solution that Jesus established will be at odds with biblical counseling. However, Oak Park would have been served well with a gentle yet thorough comparison of various approaches, highlighting weaknesses or deficiencies through the lens of the Scriptures.

As for personal reflections concerning the project, first, it is helpful to view the training of men and women to be more competent and confident in using the Scriptures to counsel other individuals and couples in the church in the same way that I view my role as a preacher. I do not enumerate all of the issues currently going on at Oak Park, nor do I seek to pack into one sermon all of the truths that everyone needs to hear (including myself). Rather, a long-term view of the church is needed. Embracing a long-term view of the road of discipleship with the people of Oak Park will undoubtedly infuse my commitment to pastor them with patience and kindness.

In a sense, Jesus spoke to this long-term view of ministry in John 16:12 when he said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." The rationale in referencing Jesus' words is to make the simple point that Jesus knew that the disciples could not handle all of the divine revelation at once, but rather over the course of time they would grasp deeper realities and understand his nature and work

more intimately. In the same way, a secondary application of this text teaches that a long-term view of the church (i.e., helping to training men and women) will help individuals understand that biblical change happens over the course of time.

Second, providing a follow-up class where individuals could put into practice the truths and principles presented would have been beneficial. This would have provided an opportunity to model how counseling is done, as well as encourage and challenge individuals to appropriate the material presented. Providing a forum where the individuals had to interact and engage with the material and apply it in some way personally and with others in the body, rather than merely receiving it, would have generated more ownership of the material, as well as facilitated more competence and confidence in their use of the Scriptures.

In conclusion, this project served to encourage my spiritual well-being, as well as the spiritual well-being of several individuals at Oak Park Baptist Church. The fact that there was, indeed, a positive statistical difference from the implemented curriculum served to bolster my confidence and understanding that there is a need for the material presented. My intention is to build upon the foundation of biblical counseling truths and principles that was established. Last, it is with hope and prayer that the work of Jesus Christ in the gospel, as outlined in the Scriptures, will seek to bolster the confidence and competence of Christians to effectively counsel other Christians for the glory of Jesus.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Pre-Project and Post-Project Biblical Counseling
Questionnaire to be Completed by
Church Members

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge of the sufficiency of Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Nathan Millican for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and then you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal “code” word _____

Date: _____

Please answer the questions using the following scale:

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Somewhat

AS = Agree Somewhat

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

1. Do you believe the Scriptures are inerrant, meaning there are no errors in the Bible?

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

2. Do you believe the Scriptures are sufficient, meaning the Bible contains everything we need to know in order to be saved and trust and obey God?

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

3. The Bible has all we need to draw us to Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

4. The Bible has all we need to help us order our affections.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

5. The Bible has all we need to reveal the motivations of our hearts.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

6. The Bible has all we need to find our hope in eternity.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

7. The Scriptures were given so that we might have hope.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

8. Scripture is relevant to the things that concern, preoccupy, and trouble mankind.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

9. Counseling is an integral and necessary aspect of ministry and of church life.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

10. The aim of biblical counseling is the glory of God, which is seen as we help counselees know and love God.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

11. Every believer is commanded to counsel.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

12. When we confront people, we confront them with the person and work of Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

13. The heart is where lifestyle choices begin.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

14. The heart is where sin comes from, not the body.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

15. What happens in the body can affect us spiritually.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

16. God will not allow us to be tempted through our bodily weaknesses beyond what we are able to handle.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

17. Sin is a human condition, not merely behavior.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

18. Change requires more than just accurate information, even divinely inspired biblical information.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

19. Issues of counseling, concerning spiritual issues, should be left to the professionals, not pastors and certainly not lay people.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

20. I believe the Bible teaches that all believers should be equipped to counsel other believers.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

21. I believe I am competent to counsel other believers in minor spiritual issues.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

22. If a brother or sister in Christ confided in me that they have a pornography problem, I would feel competent in walking with them and giving them hope.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

23. If a brother or sister in Christ mentioned that they were seriously thinking about divorce for reasons of compatibility, I would feel competent in counseling them.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

24. If a brother or sister in Christ shared with me that they were have some serious marital problems related to “leaving and cleaving,” I would feel competent in counseling them.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

25. If a brother or sister in Christ shared with me that they were having serious communication problems, I would feel competent to counsel them.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

26. I feel competent in helping people understand biblically how they can daily change.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

27. One of a pastor's jobs is to equip the people in the church "for the work of the ministry."

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

28. Becoming a Word-centered person will prepare me to help counsel people dealing with spiritual issues.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

29. To be an effective counselor necessarily means you need to know the Word.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

30. Counseling involves the private ministry of the Word.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

31. Most members of Oak Park Baptist Church have a self-awareness of their problems and know how to biblically deal with their problems.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

APPENDIX 2

RUBRIC FOR THE ELDERS AT OAK PARK BAPTIST CHURCH

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge of the sufficiency of Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Nathan Millican for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and then you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal “code” word _____

Date: _____

Please answer the questions using the following scale:

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Somewhat

AS = Agree Somewhat

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

1. The material presented was biblically faithful.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

2. The material presented was clear and coherent.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

3. The material presented was beneficial to the people who attended.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

4. The material was presented in an engaging and relevant manner.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

5. The material presented fulfilled the goals as outlined.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

6. The pastor-teacher's knowledge and competent handling of the material was evident.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

7. The pastor-teacher did a more than adequate job in explaining and applying certain truths of the Bible to counseling situations.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

If there are any comments or feedback you would like to share, please do so below.

APPENDIX 3

PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Table A1. Comparison of pre-project and post-project scores

Participant #	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Difference
Participant 1	158	163	5
Participant 2	161	175	14
Participant 3	168	166	-2
Participant 4	158	155	-3
Participant 5	139	162	23
Participant 6	157	179	22
Participant 7	169	162	-7
Participant 8	176	175	-1
Participant 9	151	168	17
Participant 10	151	156	5
Participant 11	174	170	-4
Participant 12	128	173	45
Participant 13	144	155	11
Participant 14	167	162	-5
Participant 15	162	152	-10
Participant 16	155	169	14
Participant 17	139	152	13
Participant 18	147	161	14
Participant 19	165	169	4
Participant 20	178	174	-4
Participant 21	161	173	12
Participant 22	164	173	9
Participant 23	155	173	18
Participant 24	156	178	22
Participant 25	163	177	14
Participant 26	168	173	5
Averages	159	167	8

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LAY COUNSELING PROGRAM AT OAK PARK BAPTIST CHURCH, JEFFERSONVILLE, INDIANA

Nathan John Millican, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Faculty Supervisor: Stuart Scott

This project involves evaluating an individual's competency and confidence in using the Scriptures, developing a curriculum to help foster more confidence in using the Scriptures, and exposing the person to the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures regarding several everyday occurrences that take place in the lives of people in the church.

Scriptures place upon every Christian the expectation to come alongside other Christians and help them mature in Jesus (Matt 28:18-20; Col 1:28). Thus, this project seeks to educate, equip, and instill confidence in an individual regarding the power and authority of God's Word in actually helping bring about real and lasting change to people's problems.

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