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EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH IN ABERDEEN, MISSISSIPPI TO ENGAGE IN A PERSONAL MINISTRY OF COUNSELING GOD'S WORD

A Project

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH IN ABERDEEN, MISSISSIPPI TO ENGAGE IN A PERSONAL MINISTRY OF COUNSELING GOD'S WORD

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To Rachel

My encourager, my partner, my friend, my love

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PREFACE

A project of this magnitude requires the contributions of many people. First, I want to thank Dr. Stuart Scott for his wisdom and encouragement as he has helped me to understand what the Scriptures teach about Biblical Counseling. Through his instruction I have come to a deeper understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling. He has helped me grasp these truths in theory and in practice.

Second, I am grateful for the support of the members of Community of Grace Baptist Church. I am thankful that they have contributed finances, prayers, encouragement, and active participation to my studies.

Third, the Lord has richly blessed me with an unbelievable family. We have seven incredible children who have encouraged me and held me accountable to persevere in pursuit of this degree and completion of this project. I want to thank my beautiful wife, Rachel. Without her support, encouragement, and tireless efforts as a co-laborer and corresponding helper I would have never completed this work. I cannot express how dear she is to me and how thankful I am for her.

Finally, if there is anything of value in this project or in anything I do all praise and glory goes to Jesus Christ, my Redeemer and Lord. He has called me out of darkness into his marvelous light and graciously given me the gift of abundant and eternal life.

Mark Raybon Thornton

Hamilton, Alabama

December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to equip members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to engage in a personal ministry of counseling God's Word in order to become instruments of change in the lives of others. Three goals were established to guide the project and to evaluate its effectiveness.

Goals

The first goal of the project was to assess each participating member's current level of knowledge of how biblical truth applies to common problems people face and their ability to apply biblical truth to the problems people encounter. This goal was measured by the development and administration of a questionnaire to the participating members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to assess their ability to engage in a personal ministry of counseling the Word of God. This goal was successfully accomplished when at least ten members were enlisted, when participating members signed a covenant committing to participate, and when those members completed the questionnaire.

The second goal of the project was to develop a curriculum to increase each participating member's ability to apply the Word to common problems people face. The book *Instruments in the Redeemers Hand*[1] and the accompanying study served as a foundation for developing a curriculum that instructed believers in the relevance and sufficiency of the Word of God to address the problems people face. The curriculum was

[1]Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002).

designed to help believers build relationships, to speak truth in love, and to apply biblical truth to everyday life. This goal was measured by submitting the proposed curriculum to a respected biblical counselor to assess the curriculum and provide feedback in order to produce an effective strategy to equip members. This goal was successfully accomplished when the program of instruction was compiled, the material was put into a format ready to present, and feedback was received from a biblical counselor certified by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

The third goal of the project was to implement and assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. At the end of each month of the training, interviews were conducted to gauge growth in ability and knowledge. Each month, each participant was required to submit a story log, appropriately protecting counselee confidentiality, which described gospel conversations. At the conclusion of the training, each participant completed a post training survey to help measure the project's effectiveness. The results of the post-training questionnaire were compared to the results of the pre-training questionnaire to determine if there was an increase in knowledge, confidence, and ability by applying a t-test for dependent samples. This goal was successfully accomplished when the participating members demonstrated confidence in post-training interviews and each member conducted at least one conversation applying biblical principles to a person's problem as indicated on their story log. A further benchmark for this goal was a positive, statistically significant change between the pre and post-test questionnaires, as determined by applying a t-test for dependent samples.[2]

Context of the Ministry Project

These goals were accomplished as this project was carried out in Community of Grace Baptist Church in Aberdeen, Mississippi. Community of Grace Baptist Church is a new church born out of a group of believers that began meeting together in January 2012.

[2]Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2008), 189.

The members of this original group were all members of Friendship Baptist Church in Aberdeen, Mississippi. Friendship Baptist Church had voted to remove the author of this project from the position of pastor. The group voted to begin meeting together as Community Baptist Fellowship and asked me to lead them in planting a new church. The fellowship continued to worship together, wrote a constitution, and constituted as Community of Grace Baptist Church in October 2012.

As a result, Community of Grace Baptist Church consists mainly of members who have a longstanding history of involvement in the same church. To understand why it is necessary to develop an intentional strategy to equip the members to apply the principles of biblical counseling in a personal ministry of the word, one must examine the church from which they came.

Prior to the church split, Friendship Baptist Church had several strengths: (1) it had been in its community for over fifty years; (2) the church was debt free and had adequate property for future growth; (3) several members were committed to the church and had demonstrated that commitment through many trials and challenges.

There were also several key areas that were in much need of improvement: (1) the church's community was in transition, but the church was more interested in maintaining the status quo than in adapting to meet the needs of its changing community, (2) the church's programs were driven by tradition and history instead of being structured with the purpose of making disciples of people in the community and in the church, (3) and there was a tremendous need for the people to develop spiritually healthy relationships with one another based on the commands and principles in the New Testament.

The primary reason the pastor was asked to leave was a fundamental disagreement over the role of the pastor. The pastor believed that his primary role was the "equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). The church seemed to believe that his primary role was to do all of the work of the ministry.

Friendship Baptist Church had no intentional discipleship ministry. The church met for worship at 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM on Sundays and for prayer and Bible study on Wednesday evening. The only small group meetings in the church were age graded Sunday School classes that used material published by LifeWay. The Sunday School teachers were not required to receive any formal training. They were enlisted to teach, given a teachers' guide, and given freedom to lead their class without accountability. When the pastor attempted to have teachers' training, it was not well attended. When he proposed mandatory teacher training, the proposal was not favorably received.

People were not trained to admonish one another (Rom 15:14). Members were not trained and encouraged to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2) when they are "overtaken in any trespass" (Gal 6:1). Members were not trained to "teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16), to comfort each other and edify one another (1 Thess 5:11), or to exhort one another daily (Heb 3:13). Conflict was not dealt with according to biblical principles; the authority of the body was not used to exercise discipline on members who were not living according to their covenant vows.

In an effort to establish a healthy biblical model of ministry, Community of Grace Baptist Church has set a high standard for church membership. The constitution stipulates that when an individual joins Community of Grace Baptist Church, that individual and the church body will enter into a unique commitment to one another. Church membership is a mutual relationship, with both the individual and corporate body having specific responsibilities. The church family commits (1) to teach the Word of God; (2) to provide opportunities for growth, nurturing, and service; (3) to provide a framework for building fellowship and godly relationships; (3) to carry out responsibilities of reproving, rebuking, exhorting, caring, and disciplining; (4) and to broaden the believer's concern and perspective on the non-Christian world. Equipping the members to engage in a personal ministry of the Word of God through applying principles of biblical counseling is essential for the church to fulfill her covenant obligations to her members.

When a person joins Community of Grace Baptist Church, that individual commits (1) to develop in personal growth and sanctification, (2) to be faithful in attendance and participation, (3) to support the ministries of the church through giving and service, (4) to seek to preserve the unity of the church, (4) and to maintain a good testimony toward unbelievers.[3] An intentional ministry to equip members to counsel the Word of God is essential to enabling them to keep their covenant obligations.

In addition, corporate discipline is virtually absent in many churches today. At the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), church discipline was considered "one of the distinguishing marks of a true church."[4] While every church in the SBC will loudly trumpet the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, these churches do not always submit to biblical authority. The clear teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-18 is not routinely practiced. The result is that church members often live in open immorality, and the congregation of which they are a member makes no biblical response. "The world's relativism ('nothing is always right or wrong') and sentimentalism ('because I love you, I will let you') have displaced the Bible's moral absolutism and genuine love that cares enough to correct."[5] One of the distinctives of Community of Grace Baptist Church is a commitment to practice loving and gracious church discipline. In order for the church members to graciously and lovingly discipline members, they must be equipped to counsel the Word of God to one another.

Another theological drift happened in the middle of the twentieth century. The Christian community drifted in to the belief that the Bible was helpful but inadequate in addressing the major problems people face. They believed the Bible was relevant but not sufficient when people were facing hard problems. So increasingly churches began

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[3]Community of Grace Baptist Church, *Community of Grace Baptist Church Constitution* (Hamilton, MS: Community of Grace Baptist Church, 2012), 6.

[4]Thomas Ascol, "Returning to the Old Paths," *The Founder's Journal* 19, no. 20 (1995), accessed June 19, 2012, http://www.founders.org/journal/fj19/editorial.html.

[5]Ibid.

referring Christians to secular psychologists to offer them real help.[6] Community of Grace Baptist Church is committed to the belief "that help and hope for man's most profound problems are found in Christ and His Word alone. Churches must bear the responsibility of communicating that hope to hurting individuals by biblically caring for souls."[7] In order to live out this commitment, the members must be equipped to perform a personal ministry of the Word.

Rationale for the Project

The members of Community of Grace Baptist Church have come together from a church environment where the members were not equipped to know how biblical truth applies to common problems people encounter and to perform a personal ministry of the Word. For this reason a project to equip the members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to engage in a personal ministry of counseling God's Word is essential. In order to fulfill the stated ministry philosophy of the church, the pastor must equip the members to become instruments of change in the lives of others (Eph 4:11-16).

A culture of biblical counseling and gracious accountability is essential to Community of Grace Baptist Church in order to promote the spiritual maturity of its members. God's purpose for his children does not end when he calls them to himself in salvation. Likewise, his purpose for his children does not end when he calls them together in a community of faith called the church. God's purpose for those that he calls to himself is that they be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). He calls us to a lifelong process of transformation. Relationships with others within the church are one of the means of grace that God uses to bring about spiritual maturity. He calls us to meet together to encourage one another and to stir up love and good works in one another (Heb 10:24-25). The goal of church life is for us "all to come to the unity of the faith and of

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[6]Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, eds., *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 3-4.

[7]Ibid., 171.

knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). An essential aspect of that is "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). In obedience to God's Word, the church demands members to commit to personal growth and sanctification. The church body commits to nurture and serve each member. This is not just the responsibility of the paid professional staff. "God's plan is through the faithful ministry of every part, the whole body will grow to full maturity in Christ."[8]

A culture of biblical counseling is also essential to establishing and maintaining meaningful membership. Each member has a duty and a responsibility to speak truth in love to every other member. Members have a responsibility to "admonish one another" (Rom 15:14), "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2), "comfort each other and edify one another" (1 Thess 5:11), exhort one another (Heb 3:13, cf. Heb 10:25), "consider one another to stir up good works" (Heb 10:24), and to minister gifts to one another (1 Pet 4:10). The pastor must equip the saints to fulfill these biblical responsibilities to one another. A project that equips as many members as possible to apply the Word of God to real problems that other members are experiencing is foundational to recovering meaningful church membership.

Jesus commands all believers to go and to speak to people who have sinned against them (Matt 18:15). When one member of the church has sinned against another, the Bible commands the offended person to speak to the offender, making known the fault. In order to be obedient to this command, believers must possess skill in rebuking, correcting, and training using the Bible. Equipping members to counsel the Word to one another will enable problems to be handled at the lowest possible level. Confrontation, repentance, and restored relationships can happen without involving the church body. When others need to be involved, then many of the members will be skilled in ministering the Word so that offenders will be more likely to hear the church.

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[8]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, xi.

By grace, all those that have been chosen by God, all who have been effectively called by God, all who have been redeemed by Christ's atoning work, and all who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit will be preserved by God and will persevere in the faith. One of the means that God uses to preserve his saints is the ministry of the Word, both public and private. In the one of the warning passages of Hebrews, believers are called to exhort one another, lest any become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13).

Therefore, a culture of biblical counseling is one of the distinctives that Community of Grace Baptist Church is trying to achieve and maintain. This project sought to help Community of Grace Baptist Church create a culture of biblical counseling by equipping a core group of members to apply biblical truth in love to common problems people encounter.

Moreover, there was a sense of urgency. For the first year of the church, Community of Grace Baptist Church was involved in a diligent study of the doctrine of the church as the polity documents were being written, studied, and approved. After that the church studied the "one another" commands of the New Testament. During that study the congregation was challenged to assist and encourage fellow members as is clearly and repeatedly commanded in the New Testament. This project followed with the intention of equipping them to do so.

It was also important that it be done now, in the second year of the church's life, so that the church would not slip into the pattern of ministry that was modeled in the church of origin and develop unbiblical habits that would be hard to break later. All of the members came from a church where they were not equipped to apply the principles of biblical counseling as instruments of change in the lives of others. As the pastor of the former church, I feel a certain degree of responsibility for the lack of intentional discipleship and for the lack of intentional equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, and I did not want to repeat those mistakes in my current ministry context.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Biblical Counseling. In order to develop a culture of biblical counseling, it is imperative that biblical counseling be properly defined. This project used the definition offered by Bob Kelleman.

> Biblical Counseling is Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed one another ministry that depends upon the Holy Spirit to relate God's Word to suffering and sin by speaking and living God's truth in love to equip people to love God and one another (Matt 22:35-40). It cultivates conformity to Christ and communion with Christ and the Body of Christ leading to a community of one-another disciple makers (Matt 28:18-20).[9]

The primary limitation of this project was the fifteen week duration. The curriculum was adequately covered in that time frame, but the assimilation of the material, the application of truth, and the ministry of equipping ministers to effectively minister the Word to one another needed to endure past the fifteen weeks. The real success of this project will be determined in years to come as members lovingly speak truth to one another to teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness.

The primary delimitation was a focus on process and not specific problems. There are a myriad problems that could have addressed as people were trained and equipped to use their Bibles to help others with their problems. Due to the scope and the goals of the project, the focus was on a process that believers can use to deal with problems instead of addressing the problems specifically. The focus was on building relationships, discovering where change is needed, speaking truth applicable to that change, and applying change to everyday life. Once believers master the process, they can apply it to a broad spectrum of problems.

Research Methodology

The project attempted to equip members of the Community of Grace Baptist Church for a personal ministry of the Word, applying biblical principles to the problems

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[9]Biblical Counseling Coalition Staff, "The BCC Weekend Interview Series: Defining Biblical Counseling," *Biblical Counseling Coalition Blog*, September 10, 2011, accessed January 29, 2013, http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2011/09/10/the-bcc-weekend-interview-series-defining-biblical-counseling/.

people face. Since Community of Grace is very small; and because of the conviction that every Christian is called to come along side others and be "able to admonish one another" (Rom 15:14), to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2), to teach one another (Col 3:16), to comfort and edify one another (1 Thess 5:11), "exhort one another daily" (Heb 3:13), and to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (Heb 10:24); participation in the project was open to anyone who desired to participate. The goal was to have at least ten adult participants.

One week before the beginning of the training, each participant was given a pre-training questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to assess the level of knowledge, confidence, and ability that the members had in engaging in personal ministry of counseling the Word before the training was conducted. The questionnaire was designed to gauge their current involvement in gospel conversations, their willingness to apply God's Word to the problems that people share with them, and their confidence in God's Word to adequately address the problems people face.

The training was conducted over a period of fifteen weeks. At the end of session 4 and session 8, I interviewed the selected several participants by randomly drawing names from among the names of all participants. The selected participants were interviewed in order to assess the effectiveness of the training and to gauge growth in confidence, knowledge, and ability to apply the Bible to problems that people face. In addition, each member was asked to keep a log of gospel conversations that were submitted at the end of weeks 5 and 9 and 13.

During the fourteenth week, a post training questionnaire (Appendix 2) was administered. This assessment was identical to the pre-training questionnaire. By comparing the results of these two instruments, I evaluated the effectiveness of the biblical counseling training class by applying a *t-test* for dependent samples.[10]

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[10]Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 189.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCRIPTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR EQUIPPING EVERY MEMBER TO ENGAGE IN PERSONAL MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The Bible is the sole authority for the faith and the practice of the local church, because "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible calls every member of the body of Christ to grow in holiness in order to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). The process of sanctification is a lifelong process, and the two primary means that the Holy Spirit uses to grow his people in holiness are the Word of God and the people of God.[1] Scripture teaches that every member of the body of Christ has a responsibility to speak biblical truth to other members so that the body of Christ may be built up in love (Eph 4:15-16). When Paul writes his inspired letter to the church in Rome, he writes, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to *admonish* one another" (Rom 15:14, emphasis added). Counseling the Word is not a ministry that is reserved for the professional staff and seminary educated pastors. God calls every member to grow in spiritual maturity and to minister the Word to others.

While there are many passages that could be examined, this chapter will study four passages that teach the necessity of equipping members of the church to apply the principles of biblical counseling in their relationships with one another. A study of these

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[1]Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ:P&R Publishing, 2002), 19.

truths will provide an understanding of God's design for ministering the Word within the church.

The first passage concerning a personal ministry of the Word that will be examined is Psalm 19:1-14. This passage focuses on the sufficiency of the Bible to bring about life change. The truths that this passage teaches substantiate the claim that biblical truth is a sufficient means for the building up of the body and that there is no need for believers to resort to the world or to secular philosophies for the answers to problems that people face.

The second passage that will be studied in this chapter is Galatians 6:1-5. Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives instructions to all believers, not just the clergy, to restore believers that are caught in a trespass. He instructs all believers to bear one another's burdens with gentleness and humility. This command supports the view that all members of the church must be equipped to speak biblical truth in love to other members.

In the third passage, Ephesians 4:11-16 outlines God's plan for ministry in and through the local church. Pastors are to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry so that the church is built up in love. The truth of this passage supports the argument that all members are to be equipped to counsel the Word to other members of the congregation.

Fourth and finally, Hebrews 3:12-15 and Hebrews 10:23-25 will be inspected. These passages are clear calls for believers to persevere in the faith. These passages also make it clear that the Body of Christ has a vital role in the perseverance of each of the members. Each member has a role in the perseverance and preservation of the other members; therefore it is essential that every member be equipped to perform a personal ministry of the Word to others within the body.

An understanding of these passages will help the reader see the absolute necessity of equipping members of the church to love God and to love one another through speaking and ministering God's truth to each other. The Bible is sufficient to

address all issues of sin, suffering, life, and godliness. All born again, Spirit-indwelt people are competent to speak truth into the lives of others; yet, they need to be equipped. It is the role of the pastor-teacher to train the saints for a personal ministry of the Word. It is imperative that this training take place because of the role that believers play in the endurance, perseverance, and preservation of other believers. Individual believers must be equipped for personal ministry of the Word if a local church's ministry is to be conformed to the biblical pattern.

The Bible is Sufficient for Bringing About Life Change: Psalm 19:1-14

The superscription informs the reader that this is a Psalm of David. In this Psalm, David speaks of the Lord's revelation of himself. The Lord has made himself known to people in three ways: through creation (Rom 1:20); through the law written on the hearts of people, their conscience (Rom 2:15); and through the written book of his law. The first two of these ways is general revelation in that it is available to all people in all places at all times. The revelation in creation and conscience is not sufficient to grant salvation, but it is sufficient for condemnation. Because of their suppression of this revelation of truth, all people are without excuse (Rom 1:20). The general revelation does not speak of God's "will, grace, mercy, or love,"[2] but it does "declare his wisdom, power, glory and goodness."[3] What God has created reveals his glory through his orderly design and his goodness as he "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

But God has not only given general revelation. In special revelation God has revealed "himself to particular persons, at definite times and places, enabling those persons to enter into a redemptive relationship with him."[4]

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[2]W. Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1948), 1:123.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 175.

David speaks of general revelation in verses 1-6 and special revelation in verses 7-11. In verses 7-11, David uses six distinctive names of God's manifestation of himself to his people; law, testimony, statues, commandment, fear, and judgments. The Hebrew word that is translated "law" (Ps 19:7) can be used specifically for the first five books of the Bible, or it can be used more generally as any prescription of something that should be done. It can also be translated as teaching or doctrine that is communicated to a student.[5] Spurgeon agrees with most commentators that this term should be taken in its broadest sense when he says that "he means not merely the Law of Moses but the doctrine of God, the whole run and rule of sacred writ."[6]

The Hebrew word that is translated "perfect" (Ps 19:7)[7] can also mean "complete" in the sense of the entire or the whole thing."[8] When David writes that "The Law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps 19:7), he is saying that the Bible is "without flaw or defect, lacking nothing."[9] The Scriptures are perfect "in the sense of being all-sided so as to cover completely all aspects of life."[10] God's revelation presents the "needy sinner everything that his terrible necessities can possibly demand."[11]

Along with the six distinctive names, the psalmist lists six descriptive terms. In addition to being perfect, the Word of God is said to be sure. God's revelation is completely reliable and is worthy of being believed and obeyed. The Bible is right; it presents the straightest path to the achievement of the primary purpose of man to glorify

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[5]James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew Old Testament*, Logos Library System, CD-ROM (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), H9368.

[6]Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David,* accessed October 10, 2013, http// www.spurgeon.org/treasury/ps019.htm.

[7]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 1071.

[8]W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., eds., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 176.

[9]Scroggie, *The Psalms,* 1:125-26.

[10]Herbert C. Leupold. *Exposition of The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 182.

[11]Spurgeon. *The Treasury of David.*

God and delight in his presence.[12] The Word of God is pure and clean; there is nothing about it that is dirty, corrupt, or defiled. Finally, the scripture is true; it is never false and ever trustworthy.[13] These attributes all point to the sufficiency of God's special revelation to help people solve their problems and to live a life that is pleasing to God.

This psalm also lists six effects of the Word of God. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps 19:7). The word that is translated converting has the basic meaning of turning back or returning.[14] The Bible has convicting and converting power to restore people to the "place from which sin has cast"[15] them. The Bible restores and refreshes the inner life the same way that food restores and refreshes the body.[16] After restoration, the Bible gives instruction, "making wise the simple" (Ps 19:7). Following the path that is marked out by the Lord in His Word also rejoices the heart (Ps 19:8). Living a life that is pleasing to the Lord is the key to true happiness and delight. Being restored, being instructed in the right path, and experiencing the joy that comes from following that path enlightens the eyes (Ps 19:8). The Bible makes people discerning. It empowers people to make wise decisions and right choices. Culture will change, but the revealed truth of the Lord never needs to be updated, because the fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever (Ps 19:9).

The benefits of the Word of God are clear. The Bible provides people all that is needed to live a life that is pleasing to God and that brings joy and satisfaction. We do not need to resort to human wisdom, secular philosophy, or worldly speculation, because God has revealed all that we need. Moreover, the Word of God alone transforms the depraved

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[12]Westminster Shorter Catechism Project, *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Tacoma, WA: Bible Presbyterian Church General Synod), 2008, accessed October 12, 2013, http://www. shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc_001.html.

[13]Scroggie, *The Psalms,* 1:126.

[14]Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 996.

[15]Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David.*

[16]Scroggie, *The Psalms,* 1:126.

hearts of sinful people.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). If church members are to speak life into the lives of others, they must be equipped to minister the Word of God both publicly and privately, which is completely sufficient to bring about life change.

All Believers Have a Ministry of Restoration: Galatians 6:1-5

In Galatians, "Paul is engaged in a battle for the gospel."[17] He clearly presents the good news of justification by faith alone in Christ, who bore the curse that the Galatians believers deserved and who freed them from the power of sin through his death and resurrection. He also emphasizes the role and the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Believers are called to live in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), be led by the Spirit (Gal 5:18), and to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). "As Christians we please God only through relying on the Spirit."[18]

In chapter six Paul gives the church practical instructions on what it means to live in the Spirit.[19] Walking in the Spirit leads to individual responsibility and responsibility within the faith community. All believers are called to come alongside of others and help them carry their burdens. In order to fulfill this command, all believers must be equipped to speak biblical truth to one another. While believers will stand alone before God in the judgment and give account for "his own work" (Gal 6:4), during this "present evil age" (Gal 1:4) church members have a responsibility to support one another.

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[17]Thomas R. Schreiner and Clinton E. Arnold, *Galatians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 21.

[18]Ibid., 22.

[19]Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 268.

In this passage, the responsibility that Christians have toward one another comes first in the duty to restore one who is "overtaken in any trespass" (Gal 6:1). When a believer trespasses outside of the prescribed course of living a Spirit directed life,[20] it is the duty of other church members to restore them. Others should come alongside to set right what is broken and help them back on the path of a Spirit led life.

This command is given to those "who are spiritual." Paul is not singling out an elite group of believers within the church. He has made the case in the letter that all of the Galatian believers received the Holy Spirit when they responded to the gospel message with repentance and faith (Gal 3:2). All believers are God's children; since they are his children, he has sent them his Spirit (Gal 4:6); and all of them have the duty to live in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit. Thus every believer fits into the category of those who are spiritual. Bruce says that "one test of spirituality is a readiness to set those who stumble by the wayside on the right road again in a sympathetic and uncensorious spirit."[21] All believers are to be equipped to minister to a sinning Christian brother or sister.

Paul also addresses the attitude of those who are doing this work of restoration. In fact, he has more to say about the actions of those who are spiritual than those who are overtaken by a sin.[22] As believers are equipped to minister the Word to one another, the equipper and the equipped must pay special attention to the proper attitude of the restorer. Restoration should be in a spirit of gentleness (Gal 6:1). The proper spirit has two elements. First, the sinning brother or sister must be treated with dignity and respect. While the words must be firm, because the Christian is sinning, the attitude in which they are spoken must be one of compassion and humility, consistent with the fruit of the Holy

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[20]Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 285.

[21]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 260.

[22]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 274.

Spirit. The difficult words can be spoken in a way that is not discouraging or provoking.[23] The second element is an awareness of the speaker's own fallibility and susceptibility to temptation. The one who is restoring today could very well be the one in need of restoration tomorrow.[24]

Paul then issues another more general command. He commands, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Believers have a variety of needs and burdens that are not necessarily trespasses. Christian brothers and sisters will experience all kinds of weaknesses. There will be suffering, pain, persecutions, sickness, financial difficulty, and relationship problems. "When the burdens of life become simply unbearable for any member of the community, the others, if they are truly spiritual, will lighten his load by sharing his burdens and thus enabling him to stand."[25] This ministry of burden bearing is in fulfillment of the law of Christ which Paul has defined in Galatians 3:14, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

All members of the church have a responsibility to be humbly and gently involved in the lives of all the others. Paul observes, "If anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Gal 6:3). "Pride, aloofness, and conceit do more damage to the community than moral lapses."[26] There is no place in the body for the spiritual elite; "those who feel that they are too good to bear the burdens of others, those who feel themselves to be without sin or weakness, those that are unable to sympathize with the weaknesses of others, and those that cannot be bothered with the concerns and burdens of others."[27] Instead, "each should examine his own work" (Gal

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[23]Schreiner and Arnold, *Galatians*, 363.

[24]Ibid., 358.

[25]Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 287.

[26]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 274.

[27]Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 290.

6:4); because if one has a right appraisal of one's own weakness, one is more likely to treat others with gentleness and humility.

Paul's instructions in this passage make it clear that every member of the body of Christ has a sacred obligation to minister the word to other members of the body. Ministry of the Word is needed when a member is sinning. Ministry of the Word is also necessary in other times of life when the demands of living in this present evil age are just too heavy for any one member to bear alone. Each member needs to be equipped to perform such ministry, and the equipping needs to include words of admonition, comfort, encouragement, and counsel from the Word of God that apply to the specific burden; but more importantly, members need to be equipped to share those words with gentleness and respect.

Pastors are to Equip the Saints for the Work of the Ministry: Ephesians 4:11-16

This passage outlines God's plan for ministry in and through the local church. In order for the church to be built up in love, pastors are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. In order for a church to have a biblical ministry in which all of the saints are vitally involved in the building up of all of the other saints, the individual members must be equipped to minister the Word of God in love to one another.

The letter to the Ephesians is a letter that deals extensively with ecclesiology. Chapter 4 speaks of the relationships that members of the body are to have toward one another. They are to love together in unity and harmony. This unity is necessary because of the way that God distributes spiritual gifts within the body of Christ.[28]

Paul makes it clear in verse 7 that all believers have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to minister within the body of Christ. He says, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4:7). Among those gifts, Christ

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[28]Alex D. Montoya, "Approaching Pastoral Ministry Scripturally," in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry,* ed. John MacArthur, Jr., Richard Mayhue, and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 74.

gives equipping gifts to some in the body. He gifts them to fill the office of pastor-teacher. The word pastor comes from the Greek word translated "shepherd" and in the Bible metaphorically refers to a leader of people. A pastor is one who provides care for the flock under his care which includes encouraging, exhorting, and comforting believers and administering the activities of the local church.[29] The pastor is gifted by Christ to shepherd the people of God. As a shepherd he should feed, lead and care for people.

The teacher is gifted by the Holy Spirit to provide authoritative instruction in God's revelation of truth. Teaching includes training in factual matters, skills and moral decision making.[30] The teacher instructs by word and by example as he equips people to live their lives in a way that is pleasing to God.

The pastor and the teacher have equipping gifts in their gift mix. The leaders are to equip the saints (Eph 4:12). Every member of the church is a saint that has been set apart from the world and set apart to God.[31] The saints are to be equipped; they are to be prepared and made adequate for the work of the ministry.[32] God has given a model of ministry whereby the pastor-teachers equip those entrusted into their care. The pastor-teachers are to instruct the other members of the church in the Word of God so that they can exercise their own spiritual gifts to serve one another. The pastor does not possess all of the gifts necessary for building up the body and he does not possess all of the gifts that are necessary for the proper functioning of the body of Christ,[33] but he does have the special ministry of making God's people qualified to serve the Lord by serving one

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[29]Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 544.

[30]Ibid., 545.

[31]D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 198.

[32]Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, edited by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 303.

[33]Montoya, "Approaching Pastoral Ministry Scripturally," 75.

another.[34] "The Church is designed to be a working community where each individual member is faithfully serving the Lord by ministering to the rest."[35]

"Thus, every believer must do the work of the ministry."[36] The building up of the church in love requires the work of every individual member. The word that is translated "ministry" is a word which conveys the idea of activity. Gifted individuals are given to the church for the purpose of preparing all of the saints for service. Each believer is to be prepared to become involved in ministry to all of the others.[37]

Ministry can be used to describe service in general, but Paul also frequently uses the word to refer specifically to the ministry of the Word (2 Cor 3:6-8).[38] The context supports the idea that Paul is referring, at least in part, to the ministry of the Word in this verse. The goal of the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry is spiritual maturity. Maturity has several hallmarks. The first hallmark of maturity is "the unity of the faith" (Eph 4:13). Faith when preceded by the definite article refers to the entire body of Christian truth and doctrine. [39] That can only come from truth that is revealed in the Bible. The second hallmark of maturity is knowledge of Christ which can only come from faithful study of God's Word. Third is to be "a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). In order to reflect his perfections and walk in the world as he walked, believers must live their lives in obedience to the Scriptures. Sound doctrine is the fourth characteristic of maturity. Only those who have a thorough knowledge of the Bible and are anchored in God's truth can overcome being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the

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[34]O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 303.

[35]Ibid., 76.

[36]Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 549.

[37]Ibid., 550-51.

[38]O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 303.

[39]John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 156.

trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph 4:14). The final characteristic of maturity that Paul lists is "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). God's Word is truth (John 17:17). In order to speak truth, the saints must know truth. They must be taught truth by their pastors and teachers.[40] They must be equipped to speak truth in love to others both in public and in private (Acts 20:20).

While ministry means many things, the context of Ephesians 4 certainly means that all believers should be equipped to perform a personal ministry of the Word. Speaking God's truth to those who are troubled, encouraging those who are growing faint, admonishing those that are straying, and warning those that are in danger is not just the responsibility of the officers of the church. The officers fulfill their ministry when they equip others to serve their Lord by speaking biblical truth to one another.

The Body of Christ Plays a Vital Role in the Perseverance of Each of the Members: Hebrews 3:12-15 and 10:23-25

The warning passages in Hebrews call believers to persevere in the faith. The Bible teaches "that all who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again."[41] True believers are held by "the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed at the last time" (1 Pet 1:5). Perseverance requires divine initiative and human responsibility. In Hebrews, the writer warns believers against falling away and teaches that the body of Christ has a vital role in the perseverance of its members. The two tools that are most essential to the perseverance of believers are the Word of God and the church. If individual members are to fulfill their responsibilities to one another they must be equipped to have a personal ministry of the Word.

The Bible says in Hebrews 3:12-15,

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[40]MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 156-60.

[41]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 788.

> Beware, brethren, lest there be any of you of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "today," lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

The author of Hebrews gives this warning drawing from the example of Israel in the wilderness. The Psalmist draws from this same example to warn his generation not to fall into the same unfortunate quandary of the generation that perished in the wilderness. In Hebrews, the writer calls on his own generation, giving Christian commentary to the quotation, warning Christians to avoid the dangers of an evil and unbelieving heart.[42] For the Hebrew believers departing from the living God, after having put their hand to the plow (Luke 9:62), would be comparable to the action of the Israelites when they turned back toward Egypt in their hearts.[43]

The danger is real. The time is now. The author of Hebrews takes the first word of the Psalm, "today" and moves it from the time of the Psalmist into his own day and applies it to every day until Jesus returns. Every day is a new "today" where God calls on his people to respond to him in faith and to demonstrate their faith though obedience.[44] God speaks day after day through the Scriptures, and the church is "faced with the same alternative of faith and obedience or unbelief and disobedience that confronted Israel."[45]

The writer of Hebrews issues the warning, "Beware" (Heb 3:12), and then he gives practical instruction to prevent their departure from the living God. Believers are called to "exhort one another daily" (Heb 3:13). They are all called to come along side to help one another. The members of the church are called to engage in a ministry of mutual encouragement. In order to escape being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, Christians need exhortation, encouragement, admonition, and loving reproof from other believers.

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[42]Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews,* New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 64.

[43]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 100.

[44]Hagner, *Hebrews*, 65.

[45]William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 87.

"The avoidance of apostasy demands not simply individual vigilance but the constant care of each member of the community for one another."[46] This is a persistent need. Members are called to daily exhortation. There is never a time in this life where the "today" of this passage will not apply. Faithfulness is required until the end of the age; the primary means that God uses to hold onto his people is the community of faith ministering the Scripture.[47]

The writer of Hebrews teaches the same truth in chapter 10:23-25. The writer calls believers to mutual exhortation. If believers isolate themselves from fellow believers, they are more likely to give way to subtle temptations. "But in coming together for mutual encouragement the devotion of all would be kept warm and their common hope would be in less danger of flickering and dying."[48] So the command

> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching. (Heb 10:23-25)

The members of the faith community are called to consider one another. When Jesus called his disciples to consider the ravens (Luke 12:24) and the lilies (Luke 12:27), he was calling on them to look carefully at them, to study them, so that they might learn something from them. God calls members of the church to consider one another. It is necessary that Christians study one another so that they might learn how they can stir up one another to love and active goodness. Believers should have a relationship with one another; they should be well acquainted with one another so that they might know how the Word of God might apply to their lives. They have a responsibility to stir up love and good works in one another.

Consideration of one another is accomplished by meeting together. When

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[46]Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 87.

[47]Hagner, *Hebrews*, 65.

[48]Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 100.

believers meet together they do not just assemble to fellowship and worship together. They meet together to encourage one another, because it is critical that they all hold fast. The author has already taught that they are only members of the household of Christ if they hold fast (Heb 3:6) and that they have become partakers of Christ only "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (Heb 3:14). It is clear that mutual encouragement within the community of faith is one means that God uses to enable its members to hold fast to their confession of faith. Holding fast happens best in an environment where Christians are actively encouraging and exhorting one another.[49]

Based on these passages, it is imperative that leaders of the church equip all members of the church to minister the Word to one another. It is urgent; the time is now. This exhortation should increase in fervency and frequency as they see "the Day" (Heb 10:25) approaching. As "the Day" draws near, there will be greater persecution, greater stressors, greater difficulties, and greater satanic opposition. The mutual encouragement should be frequent and fervent. Members must be equipped to conduct a personal ministry of the Word.

Conclusion

"Biblical counseling is the Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed 'one another' ministry that depends upon the Holy Spirit to relate God's Word to suffering and sin by speaking and living God's truth in love."[50] God calls his people to be actively involved in the lives of others. The passages examined in this chapter reveal God's design for fruitful ministry within the church. Everything we need for life and godliness through knowledge of Christ has been revealed in the Bible; and God uses believers, ministering the Word to one another in

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[49]Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 257.

[50]Biblical Counseling Coalition Staff, "The BCC Weekend Interview Series: Defining Biblical Counseling," *Biblical Counseling Coalition Blog*, September 10, 2011, accessed January 29, 2013, http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2011/09/10/the-bcc-weekend-interview-series-defining-biblical-counseling/.

love, as one of the primary means in the sanctification and preservation of His children. The ministry of the Word is not just the responsibility of the pastors and teachers of the church, it is the responsibility of all believers. The primary role of the pastors and teachers is to equip the saints to fulfill these responsibilities to one another.

In recent years, the church has mostly failed in this responsibility. Not only have pastors failed to equip members for a personal ministry of the Word, but also many have failed to incorporate a personal ministry of the Word, alongside their own public ministry of the Word in preaching. Many pastors now refer struggling church members to professional counselors who use an approach that attempts to integrate biblical principles with secular psychology. The next chapter will address this failing and will present a call for church leaders to embrace their biblical responsibility to equip church members for a personal ministry of the Word.

CHAPTER 3

AN EXAMINATION OF THE DECLINE AND REEMERGENCE OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

The Bible makes it clear that counseling is an integral part of the ministry of a local church. Over the years, people began to see counseling as something they received from a professional psychologist or psychiatrist and not something they received from their pastor and certainly not from other church members.[1] This chapter will briefly trace the shift away from seeing biblical counseling as a function of pastoral care; it will explore the recovery of Christ-centered, biblically based counseling as a ministry of the church in the biblical counseling movement, and it will end in a call to pastors not only to practice biblical counseling but also to equip their members to practice it as well. There is an intrinsic connection between theology that is revealed in the Bible and solutions to the problems people face. Too many churches have divorced theology from counseling, outsourcing counseling to "trained professionals" who either use strictly secular models or attempt to integrate secular models with Christian theology. In order to conform to the biblical mandate of local church ministry, pastors must practice biblical counseling and equip the saints to perform a personal ministry of the Word applying biblical counseling principles.

The Shift from Counseling as Pastoral Care to Referral to Outside Counselors

In the early days of the United States, churches saw the connection between their theology and counseling. They did not call it counseling, they called the "cure of

[1]John F. MacArthur and Wayne A. Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: A Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994), xv.

souls."[2] Brooks Holifield traces the decline of the cure of souls in his book, *A History of Pastoral Care in America.* His subtitle, *From Salvation to Self-Realization*, appropriately describes the shift. He asserts, "A long look at the private conversations of pastors and their parishioners reveals the movement from an ideal of other worldly salvations to an implicit ethic of self-realization in American Protestantism."[3] In reviewing those changing conversations, Holifield tells a story of a "transformation in theology, psychology, and society."[4] The story ends when clergy agreed to transform the care of souls into a branch of medicine.[5] The divorce between theology and counseling was complete.

There were several forces at work that led to the abdication of pastors from the business of counseling their members. The first was revivalism. The revivalists focused on drawing a crowd, calling for a decision, and instantaneous change measured in a public profession of faith. Counseling usually happens one on one; the focus is more on ongoing discipleship, and change comes slowly over time. The emphasis on revivalism resulted in a decline in interest in counseling.[6]

Simultaneously, the scientific method of observation and experimentation was applied to the study of human behavior and psychology became a respected scientific discipline. As the practice of psychology evolved, it led to psychotherapy or a "talking cure" and for a call for a class of secular pastoral workers; this call was instrumental in removing counseling from the context of pastoral ministry and placing it in a secular one.[7]

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[2]E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abington, 1983), 15.

[3]Ibid., 11.

[4]Ibid., 13.

[5]Ibid., 206.

[6]Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 28-30.

[7]Ibid., 31-32.

Those calling for a divorce of theology and counseling had allies in pastors of local churches. Pastors preferred to focus on the public proclamation of the Word in the revivalist tradition and felt they did not have time to devote to one-on-one ministry of the Word to their people. Others failed to see how the Bible addressed common problems their people were facing, they felt ignorant of how to help, so they referred them to outside "professionals."[8]

In counseling, these professionals who claim the term "Christian counselors" will likely possess one of four views of the relationship between theology and psychology. These four views are Levels of Explanation, Integration, Christian Psychology and Transformational Psychology. These views are presented in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*[9] and a companion book, *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*.[10] These four views are explained in the first work; in the second, the approaches are applied to a fictional counselee named Jake. The counselee is a person with many tragedies in his past, with patterns of habitual sin, with emotional and relational difficulties, and with medical problems from Traumatic Brain Injury. The book shows how consultants with extensive expertise in each of the four views describe how they would advise a counselor to provide help and hope for the counselee.

The Levels-of-Explanation View

The first view that a person might encounter if their pastor refers them to a professional for counseling is the Levels-of-Explanation view. This view is based upon the presupposition that there are different levels of reality. These are physical, chemical, biological, psychological, social, and theological. All of these levels are important and

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[8]Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams*, 22.

[9]Eric L. Johnson, ed., *Psychology and Counseling: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010). The book presents five views, the fifth of which is Biblical Counseling which will be discussed separately.

[10]Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sizemore, eds., *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012). The fifth view addressed is Biblical Counseling.

should be studied by the unique methods developed by the experts in each discipline. There should be clear lines of demarcation between the various levels of reality and those boundaries should not be transgressed. Christianity and psychology are different levels of explanation of reality, and they should be studied separately according to their own rules.[11]

The Levels-of-Explanation view speaks of a book of God's works in addition to the Bible.[12] The problem with this concept is that the book of God's works, or general revelation is sufficient only for condemnation and not salvation (Rom 1:18-20). General revelation is not about psychology but about God revealing truth to man about Himself through creation and conscience. The Levels-of-Explanation view also places high value on the experiences and observations of people. These are not a reliable source of authority. People should not take their observations to the Bible to try to find validation for them; instead they must let the Bible speak and then seek to understand their experiences and observations based upon what the Bible says as it is properly interpreted in context.

The Levels-of-Explanation therapy is dependent upon assessments that are time consuming and costly. When this counselor tries to help the counselee, success will largely be influenced by the client's willingness to participate in assessments and his ability to pay for them. Thoughtful and effective treatment interventions are dependent upon appropriate assessments of his different levels of adjustment.

The Levels-of-Explanation practitioner that contributes the treatment plan in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches* is Thomas G. Plante. He acknowledges that the counselee has a wide array of problems. Instead of finding help and hope in Christ, Plante believes that "psychology and related fields have much to offer him to

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[11]Johnson, *Psychology and Christianity*, 33.

[12]Thomas G. Plante, "A Levels-of Explanation Approach." In *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, eds.Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy Sisemore (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 50.

address these troubles."[13] He states the goal as helping the counselee "manage his many issues and live a healthy, productive, and satisfying life."[14] A counselor using the Levels-of-Explanation approach cannot offer real enduring help for a person, because they are aiming for the wrong objective. The goal should be to lead the individual to live a life that is pleasing to God so that he might glorify God and delight in his presence.

They also wrongly define the problem. In the writer's assessment of the fictional counselee, he never mentions personal sin. He speaks of his head injury and his polysubstance abuse. He speculates that there are personality issues that impact his psychological functioning. His social functioning could be impaired by his stressful "growing-up years" and military service. Considering the client's spiritual layer, he focuses on his ambivalence toward his religious tradition. His primary spiritual problem is understood to be that he is "feeling distant from his faith tradition, beliefs, and relationship to God."[15] Nowhere does Plante identify that the person is making sinful choices based on sinful desires and affections. Nowhere does the writer acknowledge that these sinful choices result in alienation from God. It results in shame, guilt, and fear. Sin also has adverse consequences. The person's most basic need is to be saved from sin. He needs grace to forgive him from past sins and grace to enable him to avoid having sinful desires leading to sinful behaviors in the future. The solution is Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross. The counselor using the Levels-of-Explanation approach cannot offer the counselee true and lasting change because he does not properly define the problem.

Plante seems to limit the value of the counselee's spiritual layer to "religious coping." He seems to present religion as simply a means of dealing with stress instead of emphasizing the truth that a person can have a vital relationship with the Creator and

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[13]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 61.

[14]Ibid., 64.

[15]Ibid., 64-70.

sustainer of the universe and be enabled by his grace to live in accordance with his laws. This will eliminate adverse consequences that accompany violation of divine law. God's law was given for the good of the creatures, informing them what they must believe and how they can live a life that is pleasing to God in order that they might accomplish the purpose for which they were created. By God's grace and because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, sinful people can be forgiven for past sins and can be empowered to have victory over sin in the present and in the future. Religion, if defined as a vital relationship with the Creator, does more than just enable the adherent to deal with stress. It equips and empowers the believer to live life more abundantly (John 10:10).

The fundamental flaw with the Levels-of-Explanation approach as presented by Plante is the equalization of various religious traditions. According to his view, religion is merely a coping mechanism; therefore, he sees no inherent value of Christianity over and above other religious traditions. He presents thirteen tools that might help a person realize "a variety of physical and mental health benefits"[16] from spiritual engagement and the use of religious coping and contemplative practices. In listing those tools he makes no distinction between the religious "models" of Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King Jr., or even one's family or friends. When he speaks of meditation, he makes no distinction between "Christian approaches" and "approaches from Eastern traditions such as mindfulness meditation or yoga."[17] He suggests the serenity prayer, which is an important part of twelve-step programs, but makes no mention of how Jesus teaches us to pray (Matt 6:9-15, Luke 11:1-4). He speaks of forgiveness only as a "foil to anger, hostility, and bitterness"[18] instead of an important aspect of a person's relationship with God.

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[16]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 73.

[17]Ibid., 74.

[18]Ibid., 77.

Plante seems to embrace that all religious traditions are equal and therefore are equally effective. He presents a cafeteria approach to religious coping: picking what you like and what works for you, and then leaving the rest for others.

The Levels-of-Explanation approach will be inadequate to providing a counselee real help and hope. It has the wrong aim. It wrongly defines the problem. It has an improper view of religion and an unreliable standard of truth.

The Integration View

The second view a person may encounter if their pastor refers them to a professional for counseling is the Integration view. The integrationist believes that believers can draw upon the Bible as God's answers to the ultimate questions of life but that the Bible does not provide all that we need in order to fully understand human problems.[19] This view advocates integrating scripture and psychology, because the Bible does not provide everything that we might "want" to know about humans and human nature. The Integration view does not define science as a discipline which requires observed repetition of events under controlled conditions. The integrationist speaks of studying "on average" why certain things occur.[20] The practitioners of integrationist counseling attempt to integrate secular psychology with biblical principles to help people deal with life issues.

Mark McMinn is the integrationist that attempts to help the fictional counselee. In the beginning of his chapter, McMinn moves from integrating Christianity and psychology by adding a third category. He speaks of psychology, theology and spirituality.[21] He seems to divide Christianity into theology and spirituality, thereby

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[19]Stanton L. Jones, "An Integration View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views,* ed. Eric L. Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic2010). 101.

[20]Ibid., 109.

[21]Mark R. McMinn, "An Integration Approach" in *Counseling and Christianity*: *Five* Approaches, ed. Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sizemore, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), , 84.

elevating a person's personal experience to an equal standard of truth to a systematic understanding of God's revelation in the Bible.

McMinn's first question, as he considers the fictional case presented in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches* is "For whom is the counselor working?" Is the counselor working for the college that the fictional client attends, protecting it from his irresponsible and potentially destructive behavior? Or is the counselor simply working for the individual in helping him deal with his problems? This question would not need to be asked if the counseling were done through the ministry of a local church. If the local church were the authority for the counseling, then the counselor would be advancing the interest of both the individual and the church. When one member of the body of Christ suffers, all members suffer. What is good for one member of the body is good for the entire body. If counseling is done as a ministry of the church, then there is no conflict of interest and confidentiality concerns are addressed by the Scripture (Matt 18:15-17).

McMinn's next question, about therapeutic goals, is asked because of a concern of the licensed counselor's accountability to state licensing bodies and insurance providers. He cannot say that the goal is sanctification because of this accountability. Again, if counseling were done under the authority of a local church the goal of the person's growth in godliness and ability to live a life pleasing to the Lord would be the only acceptable goal.

McMinn lists ten initial impressions that he sees to be important to consider in counseling the fictional client. The individual's view of God is number three.[22] This should be the primary consideration, because a proper understanding of God is essential to right living. The client's view of God is foundational to counseling, because it is impossible to get anything else right without a right understanding of the Creator.

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[22]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 83.

Last on the list of things the integrationist will consider is hope. The client's view of God should be the first consideration; hope should be the next. A proper view of God will result in hope, because God was not content to allow His people to remain in their sinful condition, so He sent His Son to redeem His people from their sins. He provides grace to forgive them from past sins and grace to be transformed. There is help and hope in Christ. McMinn asserts that the counselee will only find true hope as he "grows in self-awareness;"[23] however, the Bible teaches that true hope is only in Jesus Christ.

McMinn's treatment of the individual centers on Recursive Schema Activation (RSA). According to McMinn, a schema is a person's way of understanding and making sense of life. A person develops their schema over time as they identify what works for them. Problems occur when circumstances change so that the schema no longer functions the way it once did. "The goal of schema-oriented counseling, then, is to identify and activate schemas over and over until the client can begin to construct a new way of understanding life. This relies on a sinful person attempting to do what God has already done by revealing the way of understanding life in the Bible. As a result, McMinn does not provide teaching, instruction, and direction in RSA. When the client questions the character and nature of God, the counselor, "rather than engaging in theological conversation" should "simply place Jake's schema in front of him so he can see how it operates in his life."[24]

The Christian Psychology View

When referred to a professional for counseling, the third view that a person may encounter is Christian Psychology. The Christian psychologist envisions establishing a uniquely Christian empirical psychology that evolves into an "intellectual competitor to

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[23]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 88.

[24]Ibid.,104.

the secular psychologies (whether naturalistic, humanistic, or postmodern) with their usually unacknowledged metaphysical assumptions about human nature."[25]

Diane Langberg is the Christian psychologist that attempts to help the counselee in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*. In her chapter she acknowledges the need for the counselor to be a person that is "deeply rooted both in God and his Word."[26] She believes that "a true Christian Psychology is based ultimately on the knowledge and understanding of the personality of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ." It is also based on a knowledge of self "brought into the submission to the person and work of Jesus Christ"[27]

Having said that, Langberg presents a three phase treatment plan for the counselee, Jake. The first phase is safety and stabilization; the second is trauma processing; the third is "a connection with his world and his future." This future is based on a "more solid foundation and hope for a more godly and productive life."[28]

Her introductory remarks give priority to God and his Word, but her treatment plan relegates them to last priority. Her first phase of treatment is safety and stabilization; upon having intrusive thoughts from the past, the client must be taught to "ground" himself in the present. Next she advocates medication to help with his insomnia and depression. Then she suggests that the counselee be taught positive coping mechanisms. She says that he must learn to self-soothe and manage his feelings in the first phase.

Jake's faith and relationship to God, according to Langberg, may not be a useful topic in phase one. She advocates focused work in the area of faith only after the client has known good relationships and developed clearer thinking. She discounts the

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[25]Robert C. Roberts and P.J. Watson, "A Christian Psychology View" in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views,* ed. Eric L. Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic2010), 165.

[26]Diane Langberg, "A Christian Psychology Approach," in *Counseling and Christianity*: *Five* Approaches, ed. Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sizemore, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 111.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 129.

fact that good relationships are dependent upon a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. She further discounts the truth that clear thinking can only come after the mind has been renewed by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In phase 2, Langberg seeks to focus on Jake's grief and trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). After focusing on his growing up years, processing his traumatic experiences, and coming to accept his limitations from brain injury, she can introduce "a more explicitly Christian component."[29] While she speaks of "gently and repeatedly" exposing the client to the truth of the Word of God, she never speaks of confrontation with the Gospel. She seems to assume that Jake is a believer even though there is no evidence that he is. She presents assurances to the counselee that can only truly be offered to one who is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. While Jake states that the whole "'Jesus thing' felt fake, phony, and dull,"[30] she would tell him that he "is a man created in the image of God, loved by his eternal Father who wants to grow him into the likeness of God's Son. He has eternal value and he has been gifted by God for good work."

Finally in phase 3, Langberg believes that a more direct approach to God's Word can be used. She believes that only after the counselee has faced his life and his choices and decreased the governing impact of the various traumas will he be free to wrestle with the truths of God's Word and the application of those truths to his heart.[31] The proper view is that God's Word is essential to evaluating his life, his choices, and their consequences. A direct approach to God's Word should be the first step and not the last.

While Langberg does advocate involvement in a solid local church, her approach is inadequate to provide hope and lasting help for the client. As she describes in

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[29]Langberg, "A Christian Psychology Approach," 125.

[30]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 51.

[31]Langberg, "A Christian Psychology Approach," 127.

her chapter, she does not use the Bible as a starting point; she first presents secular methods from modern psychology. She never describes confronting the person with his need to repent and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The Transformational Psychology View

The final view that a person might encounter if referred to a professional for counseling is the Transformational Psychology view. The goal of the Transformational view of the relationship between Christianity and psychology argues for a spiritual formation approach. They desire to "open a new horizon into the doing of science in general and psychology in particular" through "the spiritual-emotional transformation of the psychologist as the foundation for understanding and preserving the process, methodology, and the product of doing psychology in the Spirit."[32]

The proponent of this view that provides counsel to the client in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches* is Gary W. Moon. The Transformation Psychology Approach is a subjective approach where each generation of counselor is encouraged to let reality and faith shape their work and then integrate findings with existing truths and traditions.[33] It seems that this approach has no objective standard of truth but each generation is encouraged to determine reality based upon experience and pragmatism. Moon even spends considerable space within his chapter showing how he differs from traditional transformationalists.[34]

Like other contributors, Moon speaks of his primary focus on a client's relationship with God, but that priority is not reflected in the practice he describes. He says, "I am assuming that Jake is a non-ceasing spiritual being who will likely benefit

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[32]John H. Coe and Todd W. Hall, "A Transformational Psychology View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views,* ed. Eric L. Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 200.

[33]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 30.

[34]Gary W. Moon, "A Transformational Approach" in *Counseling and Christianity*: *Five* Approaches, ed. Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sizemore, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 135-41.

greatly from aligning himself with the Creator of the universe in an ongoing and transforming friendship. However, it is likely that such a discussion will not be the primary focal point of the initial evaluation process."[35] The individual's relationship with God should instead be foundational to the initial evaluation. The counselor should discern if the primary issue is one of justification or of sanctification.

Moon also prefers the terminology presented in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-IV-TR) over biblical terminology in assessing maladaptive social, vocational, and emotional functioning. His priority is assessing his health and pathology from that perspective rather than a biblical one.[36]

Moon proposes a three phased treatment for Jake. In phase 1, exploration, the counselor works to establish an ongoing relationship with the person. Moon acknowledges that spiritual factors are important but the focus of spiritual factors is not on the counselee, but it is on the counselor's relationship with God in order to become a better conduit of grace for Jake.[37]. While this is important, it is also important for Jake's counseling to begin by establishing his relationship with God and an assurance that there is help and hope available to him in Christ Jesus.

In this phase Moon presents an "empty chair technique" where the client can put God in an empty chair and have conversations with him. This suggestion borders on idolatry, trying to reduce God to a form that He transcends. "God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). God is Spirit and the way he has mandated that Christians speak to him is through prayer. In this technique the writer says that the counselor will need to avoid putting words in God's mouth.[38]

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[35]Moon, "A Transformational Approach," 142.

[36]Ibid., 143.

[37]Ibid., 146.

[38]Ibid., 148.

Phase 2 is understanding. In this phase the counselor seeks to examine how past and current patterns of thought, behavior, and relationships are working. These patterns are then to be compared with patterns found in the scripture and in the life of Jesus. It is in this phase that a person using the transformation model will explore themes from "spiritual" theology if the client is willing.[39] The gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in the finished work of Christ is noticeably absent from the themes the writer suggests. And when there are maladaptive patterns that do not conform to God's commands, there is no mention of teaching truth, rebuking sin, providing correction, and training in righteous to show how God demands the counselee to think, behave, and relate.

In this phase, Moon hopes the counselor will facilitate the counselee's "view of Jesus as the most intelligent being who ever walked the planet and to experience Jesus' invitation to live life a whole different way."[40] Jake should be led to see Jesus as much more than just intelligent. He should be led to see Jesus as his personal Savior and Lord.

In phase 3, change strategies, Moon finally says, "I would seek to work more intentionally to provide Jake with a scripturally accurate view of God and himself."[41] This intentionality should have come first and not last. Most of the strategies for change focus on spiritual experience rather than an accurate understanding of God's character and actions through His self-revelation in His Word.

The Transformational Approach as presented by Moon would be inadequate to provide true and lasting help for Jake. The Transformational Approach emphasizes a subjective experience with God over the God-intended way that we are to know him and experience his presence through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through His Word, and through the ministry of the local church.

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[39]Greggo and Sizemore, *Counseling and Christianity*, 148-9.

[40]Ibid., 149.

[41]Ibid., 150.

Conclusion

All of the counselors would come under the category of "Christian counselor." In their articles in these books, these Christian counselors do not emphasize the Gospel and the life changing grace that is available through Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross. Without the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is no hope for any counselee. These counselors do not apply the indicatives and the imperatives of the gospel to the fictional counselee's manifold problems. Perhaps this failing is not due to their personal convictions but their adherence to the requirements of their licensing bodies.

None of these counselors stress the strategic involvement of the church in an individual's counseling and follow-up care. The local church is the means through which Christ has chosen to work, and church involvement is essential to growing in sanctification. Counseling under the auspices of the local church also frees the counselor from the involvement of the state and other licensing bodies. It also frees the counselor from the demands of insurance providers since the care is funded by the gracious gifts of God's people.

Because of these weaknesses, it is imperative that pastors realize that they are competent to counsel and that they must counsel and they must counsel biblically. There is an intrinsic connection between theology and counseling and the local church is where counseling should take place.

The Recovery of the Link between Theology and Counseling In the Biblical Counseling Movement

The biblical counseling movement has attempted to recover the intrinsic link between Christian theology and counseling. In 1970 Jay Adams published *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling.*[42] In Adams's world, counseling had come to be dominated by either a Freudian view that people's problems are a result of

[42]Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

some conflict deep within them or a Rogerian model that found the solution to all problems deep within the individual. The Christian counselors of the day had tried an integrationist approach, trying to marry an evangelical protestant understanding of the scriptures with the scientific and applied aspects of psychology. Adams saw counseling training systems, publishing houses, and agencies to be enemies and not allies, "because they were prejudiced against the beliefs and purposes of the conservative Protestant churches."[43] Also, professionals stand to make much money. Very little money is made when counseling is done through the ministry of a local church.

Further, Adams felt that these models relieved people of responsibility for their sinful behavior and had as their goals only peace of mind and socially acceptable behavior and not "progressive sanctification."[44] He believed that counseling services needed to be provided by the local church and not professional offices and hospitals.[45] Adams believed that people's problems are basically moral and that they did not need someone to offer them validation for their sinful behavior but to confront them with the Word of God to bring about life change. He held that "man's greatest need is forgiveness," and that the forgiving grace of Jesus Christ was essential to solving problems and that as thankful recipients of such grace, "human beings should look like Jesus Christ."[46] Adams understood that the Bible's objective authority mandated a style of counseling that was direct and directive, so he rejected the detached non-direct approach of the Rogerians in an attempt to elicit healing forces within the individual. What people need is not something that is within them but an external Savior that brings conversion from the evil within.[47]

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[43]David Arthur Powlison, "Competent to Counsel? A Conservative Protestant Anti-Psychiatry Movement" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996), 14.

[44]Ibid., 13.

[45]Ibid., 15.

[46]Ibid., 13-14.

[47]Powlison, "Competent to Counsel?" 16-17.

Adams saw the intrinsic connection between theology and counseling, and he called the church back to a conviction that private and personal ministry of the Word in counseling was just as much an integral part of the ministry of a local church as the public proclamation of the Word in preaching.[48] Adams launched a movement to restore counseling as an endeavor that was "centered on Christ, based on his Word, and located in a local church."[49]

Competent to Counsel launched a movement. Two key developments in the nineteen seventies were the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC) and the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). The vision for the CCEF was to be both the "Harvard and the Moody of Biblical Counseling."[50] As the "Harvard," it would provide "intellectual leadership and scholarly education,"[51] and "train a small number of graduate students to become pastoral counselors with specialized scholarly and practical skills."[52] As the "Moody" (alluding to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago), "CCEF would train numerous pastors, missionaries, other practitioners, and laypeople to get the job done with struggling people."[53] In 1997, the CCEF began to publish *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* which focused not just on counseling but all aspects of pastoral ministry.[54] NANC was developed to set standards for training programs, to provide certification of counselors, to certify pastoral counseling centers, to "develop constructive relationships with other schools and agencies involved in training

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[48]Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 36.

[49]Ibid., 23.

[50]Powlison, "Competent to Counsel?" 153.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., 154.

[54]Ibid., 164-65.

counselors," to promote biblical counseling research, to provide fellowship among biblical counselors, and to protect from lawsuits.[55]

Many local churches have also established biblical counseling ministries that focus on the needs of the congregation and that reach out to their community.[56] Some seminaries are also offering programs that reflect "a commitment to use biblical truth to explain peoples' needs and to offer them help."[57]

The biblical counseling movement has recovered the connection between counseling and theology. Thousands of ministers have been trained to use the Bible in counseling. Biblical counselors have helped thousands of individuals and families. Churches are now equipped to counsel rather than refer people to counselors outside of the church. A network of biblical counselors now exists in the United States and throughout the world[58] and the church "declares with greater confidence, 'Thus says the Lord.'"[59]

The biblical counseling movement has made advancements in recovering the organic connection between theology and counseling; pastors have been equipped to counsel. These pastors must continue to advance the movement by equipping the members of their churches to speak the Word and apply it to the problems people face.

Pastors Have a Biblical Responsibility to Equip the Saints to Speak Biblical Truth to Others

In order to have a more biblical ministry, pastors must not only embrace the fundamental connection between theology and counseling, but they must also see that

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[55]Powlison, "Competent to Counsel?" 160-61.

[56]John MacArthur et al., *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 25.

[57]Ibid., 25-26.

[58]John F. Bettler, "CCEF: The Beginning," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 11, no. 3 (1988): 51.

[59]Ibid.

they have a sacred responsibility to equip others to speak God's truth in love. They must equip others in order to minister according to the biblical model, in order to equip members to speak truth in informal conversations, and in order to ensure the purity of the church through biblical church discipline.

First, pastors and teachers must equip others if they desire to have a biblical ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." Therefore when a pastor fails to equip his congregation, he fails. He fails because he substitutes the blueprint that Jesus has given for the church for a plan of his own. He fails because he cannot come into contact with as many people as all of the members of the congregation can. He fails because he takes the work that has been given to the entire congregation upon himself. He fails because he neglects the tasks that he is uniquely called to do, the public preaching of the Word, to do what every believer is called to do. He fails because the sheep are not properly cared for, because their shepherd is trying to do so much and they are not set free to do what they are called and gifted to do within the church. And most profoundly, he fails because he disobeys the command of Jesus who gave him to the church to equip the church.[60] According to the biblical model of ministry, the pastor-teacher instructs, edifies, and inspires the congregation to assume a ministry of edification.[61]

Second, pastors and teachers must equip members in order to redeem informal daily conversation. Public ministry of the Word through preaching and teaching in the local church is critical and crucial, but that is not the only function of the pastor-teacher. The pastors and teachers of the church must equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). Specifically, people need to be equipped to counsel one another. "The Lord's

[60]Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 341.

[61]Ibid., 344.

people are called to help each other grow up. We are called to know and be known by each other. We are called to counsel each other and be change agents in each other's lives."[62] Public ministry of the Word is important, but interpersonal ministry of the Word is also important. The interpersonal ministry of the Word is the mission of every believer.

Many people will not seek out a counselor or even a pastor when they are having problems. "For some people counseling is viewed in the same way as going to the doctor;"[63] it is viewed as the final step toward getting help for a problem after all other possible solutions have been exhausted. "There are people who avoid going to the doctor until there is something seriously wrong. There can be a sense of failure attached to it—a line of thinking that says, 'Something is wrong with you.'"[64] Formal counseling is often viewed the same way. Although many people do not pursue formal counseling, they receive counseling everyday as they interact in relationships."[65] They receive counsel every day, and they counsel in the normal course of living in relationships. Counseling occurs in every day conversations; people talk about parenting, marriage, getting along with others, finances, and a myriad of other problems. Everyone is a counselor. A person may not seek out the pastor or another biblical counselor when they are having problems, but they typically will talk to a friend. As a result, it is imperative that believers be equipped to engage in a personal ministry of God's Word. When a friend discusses issues in his or her life, the believer needs to be equipped to apply God's Word. Believers give advice in the course of daily conversation; it is imperative that the counsel of a believer be based on the principles of God's Word. Every believer is a counselor, so every believer

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[62]David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2005), 99.

[63]Eliza Jane Huie, "3 Frequently Asked Questions about Getting Biblical Counseling," June 5, 2013, accessed April 29, 2015, http://biblicalcounselingcoaltion.org/blogs/2013/06/05/3-frequently-asked-questions-about-getting-biblical-counseling/.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

needs to be equipped by their pastor to engage in a personal ministry of the Word. This is part of the responsibility of shepherding a church.

Equipping others to engage in a personal ministry of the Word is also essential if the church is to be obedient to the commands of Jesus in Matthew 18:15 where he says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone." Jesus puts the responsibility of confronting sin on any believer that is sinned against. Sin is deceptive and sin blinds the offender. Paul Tripp points out that sin blinds, and the first person that sin blinds is the sinner himself.[66] That is why the church is so essential. People can see the sin in other people before they can see it in themselves, and Jesus gives a mandate for one believer to counsel another when he or she sees sin in another believer's life. It is essential that the believer be equipped to counsel what must be put off and what must be put on for the sinning believer to turn from sin and live in a way that is pleasing to God. "If he hears you, you have gained your brother" (Matt 18:15).

"But if he will not hear, take one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt 18:16). As Jay Adams points out, these one or two others should not be elders because of the role they will play in the next phase.[67] It is imperative that these one or two other church members have been equipped to speak biblical truth in love. If the offender fails to hear them, the church is told; the offender has the opportunity to hear the entire church. This implies that the whole church will speak words of encouragement, rebuke, admonition, and counseling.[68] The church members need to be equipped to speak biblical truth in love to the other members of the church. A church that has equipped members to speak the truth in love to one another will

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[66]Paul Tripp, "Blind to Our Blindness," September 17, 2013, accessed August 17, 2015, http://www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/blind-to-our-blindness.

[67]Jay E. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline: A Right and Privilege of Every Church Member* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 61.

[68]Ibid., 74-75.

likely solve problems at the lowest level possible and will only rarely have to remove an offender from the midst (1 Cor 5:13).

In order to organize the church and conduct ministry as Jesus commands, in order to ensure that people can conduct interpersonal ministry of the word in the context of relationships, and in order to equip the church to maintain purity through biblical church discipline, pastors must equip the members of the church to engage in a personal ministry of the Word. The biblical counseling movement is equipping pastors; pastors must equip the saints.

Conclusion

For decades, churches in America divorced theology from counseling. Counseling was seen as the role of trained professionals. Pastors referred people to seek soul care from professional counselors. Many of the professionals that claimed to be Christian embraced largely secular methodology sprinkled with religious terminology and Bible verses. The biblical counseling movement has done a great work in recovering the connection between theology and counseling and returning counseling to the local church. Pastors who have been equipped in biblical counseling need to make it a priority to equip the saints entrusted to their care to speak biblical truth in love.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

One of the challenges faced by Community of Grace Baptist Church was the need to equip the members of the church to speak truth to one another and to others with whom they come into contact. The members needed to be equipped to speak to others from a biblical perspective. Previously, when they encountered someone who was struggling with common problems, their tendency was to share words of conventional wisdom, to counsel from personal experience, or to just offer prayer. They might even encourage the person to see a pastor or to see a Christian counselor if the situation was complex.

In addition, members of the church knew that I am bi-vocational and they were reluctant to "bother" me when they were experiencing problems. As a result, problems were allowed to grow and were not dealt with biblically. Members offered conventional wisdom, pop-psychology, and advice from television or radio or friends; but instead of getting better, the problem grew worse. By the time they contacted a pastor or other helping professional, the problem had grown and was more complex than if they had sought counsel earlier.

I recognized that people have a tendency to spurn formal counseling, yet they readily speak to friends and family members about life issues. As a result, I recognized the need to equip the members to share biblical counsel in everyday conversations. I began by designing this project to instruct members in the foundational principles of biblical counseling. I conducted training to instruct the members to speak truth to one another and to apply biblical truth to the common problems people face. I instructed

members to evaluate ways in which peoples' thoughts, attitudes, and actions do not conform to the principles of God's Word. Finally, I equipped members to encourage people to put off sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions and put on those that would be pleasing to God.

This chapter describes the methodology used to execute this project. The scope and implementation of the project will be discussed in detail. The participant selection process, the pre-training instrumentation, the evaluation concurrent to the training, the post-training evaluation, the schedule of the training, and the curriculum are presented and explained. At the conclusion of the training, the participants completed an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the training.

Only professing believers who had entered into a covenant relationship with other members of Community of Grace Baptist Church participated in the training. The Community of Grace Baptist Church covenant requires members to speak truth in love to one another and to allow others to speak truth into their lives. I designed this project to equip members to fulfill their covenant obligations.

Participant Selection and Pre-Testing

At the time of the project, Community of Grace had no age-graded Sunday School. The church met for Bible study led by the pastor, the author of this project, at 9:30 on Sunday mornings. The church then met for worship at 11:00 AM. There was no evening service. The church also met for prayer and Bible Study on Wednesday evenings at 6:30. Community of Grace had no programs or weekday activities. The church had 29 adult members and the goal was to have at least 10 participate. I made a decision to conduct the sessions on Sundays at 9:30 AM, so the maximum number of members could participate. I also determined that members and guests who were not participating in the research for the project would still gain benefit from the instruction; the sessions would perform the function of Bible study for all attendees. Participation was open to all

members of Community of Grace Baptist Church. I presented the purpose, goals, and rationale. I provided each member an opportunity to sign a covenant to participate (see appendix 1). Those signing the covenant agreed to complete a pre-training questionnaire, to attend thirteen training sessions, to do the home work required by the training, to provide feedback to me, and to complete a post-training questionnaire. Fifteen members, ranging in age from seventeen to eighty-one, signed the covenant. Five were male and ten were female.

One week prior to the beginning of training, the 15 participants completed a pre-training questionnaire (see appendix 2). The questionnaire was produced from a synthesis of biblical counseling literature and was designed to determine the degree of confidence that the participants had in the sufficiency of the Bible. Did they have greater confidence in biblical content or were they more confident in psychology and scientific or clinical methods? The questionnaire also measured the degree of confidence that each participant had in speaking to people about their problems. Additionally the questionnaire measured each participant's knowledge of the biblical principles behind the common problems people face. The Pre-test results are at appendix 3. The participants generally agreed that the Bible is sufficient for addressing the problems people face. However, when problems were specifically named, they were more likely to agree with the sufficiency of Scripture to address behaviors traditionally believed to be sinful (adultery and homosexuality) than those that are typically believed to be mental disorders (mania, schizophrenia, dissociative disorder, bi-polar disorder). They expressed a high degree of confidence in trained professionals and a low degree of confidence in their own competence to help others.

The Training Curriculum

The framework for the study was *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*[1] by Paul David Tripp. Tripp's material was adapted for use in the study and material from other sources was added as needed to help equip the participants to engage in a personal ministry of the Word.

I submitted the curriculum to Chaplain (Colonel) Henry Beaulieu who is a certified biblical counselor through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). He served as a biblical counselor for eleven years under the supervision of Lou Priolo and has accumulated over three thousand hours of counseling experience. Additionally, Chaplain Beaulieu has helped train and supervise counseling trainees seeking National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC, now ACBC) certification. He also wrote and taught counseling curriculum through the training center at Eastwood Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, Alabama. In developing the curriculum, I had followed the order of Tripp in *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.* Tripp addresses a believer's identity in Christ at the end of his book. Chaplain Beaulieu suggested that this important topic be addressed earlier in the sessions because a proper understanding of a believer's identity in Christ is foundational to true and lasting change. Responding to his suggestion, I moved the discussion of a believer's identity in Christ from session13 to session 3.

Session 1, March 22, 2014, "The Transforming Word"

The first session discussed the nature of scripture. God has spoken, and he has spoken with a purpose that will certainly be accomplished (Isa 53:10-13). I presented three major themes of scripture. The first theme I discussed was the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty is not just about power; it is about a plan. The Bible is clear about

[1]Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002).

God's plan; he is calling people to himself, transforming them into his likeness, and preparing them for eternity with himself. The theme of God's sovereignty should give believers great comfort. God is in complete control. He is working in holiness and love. All of his ways are right and true, and his decisions are best. He will not stop working until his plan has been fulfilled; and he has called all of his children to himself, transformed them into his image, and brought them all to their place in the Father's house. Life is in the hands of the Heavenly Father who is in control of everything.[2]

The second theme I discussed was God's amazing grace. God is not only sovereign, but he is also abounding in grace. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned God promised a Redeemer (Gen 3:15). God promised to send an Anointed One to deliver a fatal wound to Satan, but in so doing, the Christ would suffer death himself.[3] God's response to the willful rebellion of his creatures was grace. His grace forgives; his grace adopts sinners and welcomes them into his family, giving them all the rights and privileges of true sons and daughters. God's grace enables his people to love things, to think things, to desire things, and to do things that they cannot do in their own strength. Grace radically transforms every aspect of life: attitudes, affections and actions.[4]

The third theme that I discussed is the chief end of man, the glory of God. The Bible is God's story (Rom 11:36). God made people for his glory. The root of the human problem is that people seek to live for their own glory, but God redeems sinful people to himself for his own glory.[5] "God will restore his lordship over his rebellious creation by means of the mercy he shows through his Son."[6] The redeemed will eternally display

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[2]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 29-31.

[3]John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 93.

[4]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 31-33.

[5]Ibid., 34-35.

[6]Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans,* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985) 191-92.

God's glory.

I defined biblical counseling as counseling that reflects the message of the whole Bible. Using a topical approach to the Bible, a counselor might consult a concordance searching for words like mania, attention deficit disorder, anorexia, or bipolar. The counselor would not find these words. As a result, the counselor might conclude that the Bible does not address the problems people face in today's complex society. Biblical counseling requires one to use the Bible in the way that it was intended to be used; biblical counseling means much more than merely quoting verses. The major themes and eternal principles are applied to the problems people face. I challenged the participants to believe that God changes people as his Word is applied to their lives by other people.

Session 2, March 30, 2014,
"Do We Really Need Help?"

The second session focused on the doctrine of man and the need of people for God to speak to them. The Bible reveals the human need for revelation from God in three events. Creation is the first evidence of mankind's need for God's revelation (Gen 1:26-31). Adam and Eve were perfect people living in a perfect environment. They were created in the image of God and had the capacity for "self-consciousness, speech, and moral discernment."[7] Yet, they could not adequately understand life and their environment on their own. They needed God to speak to them; they needed God's revelation. They needed God to explain to them their identity, their purpose, and how they were to interact with their surroundings. They needed help even before they fell into sin. Humans need revelation from God to understand life. God created humans to receive his truth. He gave Adam and Eve abilities that he gave to no other creatures. God speaks everything else into existence, but he does not speak to his other creations. He created

[7]Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 81.

humans with the ability to hear, to understand, and to apply God's words to their lives. Humans need help because they were created be dependent upon the creator.

The world's first counseling session occurs between God and the humans he created and is described in Genesis 1:28. Adam and Eve needed God's revelation to understand life. They would not have known how to interact with each other or with the other things God had created apart from God's revelation. They would not have known what to eat. God provided the revelation they needed.[8]

The fall is the second evidence of mankind's need for God's revelation (Gen 3:1:7). The participants discovered that God was not the only counselor in the garden. Another counselor offered a different interpretation of the facts. Satan's first question, "Has God indeed said . . . " (Gen 3:1) was designed to cause the woman to doubt the holiness and aptness of God's word.[9] Satan accused God of not telling the truth. He offered a path to wisdom that did not require listening to and obeying God. He told the woman that she could indeed understand life apart from God's revelation. Satan offered her self-sufficiency. The man and the woman listened to Satan. They and all of their descendants fell into a condition of sin and misery. As a result, many voices continue to tell humans that they can exist independently of their creator, that they can define truth for themselves, and that they can find satisfaction somewhere other than a relationship with their creator.[10]

The fall has also affected humankind's ability to discern. The fall has given every human person a foolish and deceitful heart (Jer 17:9). The voices of the world appeal to the deepest desire of sinful human hearts. As a result, people need other people who love them enough to tell them that they cannot live independent of their creator. People need the words of God to understand life. People need the Bible which reveals the

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[8]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 39-41.

[9]Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 88.

[10]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 41.

reliable words of the Creator. His word is the only thing that can penetrate the confusion of our human foolishness and the world's philosophies. Only God's word can make people truly wise. Real knowledge comes from knowing God. People need help because of their sinful condition.[11]

Salvation is the final evidence of mankind's need of God's revelation. The key passage discussed in this session was Hebrews 3:12-13. The writer of Hebrews warns believers of the danger of departing from the living God. Departing from God is a process which begins with evil desires. Evil desires lead to a heart which believes that something other than God can provide satisfaction. The result is hardness. A believer can depart from God, because sin is deceitful. The deceitfulness of sin is a reason why Christians need the ministry of other believers. All believers still have indwelling sin. When Jesus died on the cross, he saved his people from the penalty of sin; the biblical term for this is justification. Sanctification follows justification. God's people are sanctified as Jesus saves them from the power of sin. Throughout the process of sanctification, sin remains. While sin remains people must never forget how deceitful sin is. Sin blinds the sinner to his own sin. Typically, sinners have no problem seeing sin in other people, but seeing their own sin is tremendously difficult. Jesus captures this truth in Matthew 7:1-5. A person can see the dust in their neighbor's eye but is completely oblivious to the plank hanging out of his own eye. Each believer still has sin remaining, and each will have areas of spiritual blindness. Moreover, sinners are even blind to their spiritual blindness. They are deceived. I explained that community is essential to the Christian life because of the deceitfulness of sin and the danger of departing from God. A believer needs others in order to properly see self. One who tries to live the Christian life alone will believe one's own lies; a sinner will be self-deceived. Every believer needs daily exhortation, and God also calls every believer to be an exhorter.[12]

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[11]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 46-48.

[12]Ibid., 50.

Every day all believers need to see themselves as a person in desperate need of help. Each needs to ask God to send helpers and to give the humility to receive the help God provides through them. The session concluded with the challenge to each participant to seek two attitudes: the humility to receive help and the love and courage to be honest with others.

Session 3, April 6, 2014, "The Believer's Identity in Christ"

The third session focused on the change that occurs when a person comes to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith. A person who is born again is indwelt by the person of the Holy Spirit and is given power over sin (Rom 6:15-18); that person is adopted into the family of God and becomes a child of God (1 John 3:1-3). The Bible describes that person as being "in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6-7). Being in Christ radically transforms a believer; therefore, real life change is possible.

The remainder of the session was an exposition of 2 Peter 1:2-9. This passage makes it clear that a person may be a follower of Christ, a child of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and yet still be unproductive. Some believers do not produce the expected fruit, because they are missing essential character traits such as virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Believers who do not produce good fruit have forgotten who they are (2 Pet 1:9). They have lost sight of their identity in Christ. Others may know who they are in Christ but they fail to practice the imperatives that stem from their identity in Christ. They do not realize all of the resources that they have as children of God. Believers who have forgotten, or who have never been taught, of the adequate resources they have in Christ, fail to live with hope and courage. They identify themselves by their problems, and when their problems grow worse, they add new layers of problems. This leads to feelings of defeat, hopelessness, and

discouragement. Too many believers have a sense of identity that is defined by their problems instead of being defined by their identity in Christ.[13]

This passage gives hope by assuring the believer that God has given everything that is needed for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). God has given everything that his children need to be partakers of his divine nature and to escape corruption (2 Pet 1:4). Since God's people are partakers of his divine nature, they can be ruled by Christ Jesus rather than by their desires for the things of this world.[14] If their hearts are ruled by the desire for things of this world that appeal to their flesh, they will participate in the corruption of this world; and they will not produce good fruit for the kingdom. God, however, changes their hearts; God allows them to partake of his divine nature, enabling them to love what he loves and desire what he desires, so that they can produce good fruit.[15]

As a result, the children of God can live godly lives. (2 Peter 1:5-8). They can live like children of God being conformed to the image of Christ. They can produce good fruit for the kingdom. I concluded the session by encouraging the participants to define themselves by their identity in Christ rather than defining themselves by their problems. I exhorted the participants to also help other believers grasp the reality of their identity in Christ. I encouraged them to evangelize those who are not in Christ.

Session 4, April 13, 2014, "The Heart of the Matter"

The fourth session focused on motivation. The session began with an explanation of the metaphor that Jesus uses in Luke 6:43-46. Jesus compares a human to a tree. The human heart is like the roots of the tree; the words and actions of the person are like the fruit. What a person has "in his inner nature. . . determines what fruit his life

[13]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 261-62.

[14]John MacArthur, F. Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 30.

[15]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 264.

will yield."[16] Jesus makes this comparison to teach people to take responsibility for the words they say and the things that they do. A person cannot blame other people or circumstances for their ugly words or wrong behavior. The words and actions come from the heart. A counselor must address heart issues in order to bring about lasting change. Lasting change cannot be achieved by external pressure, by offering a reward, or by giving painful consequences to misbehavior. I encouraged participants to address heart issues as they engage in a personal ministry of the Word. I showed them how changing behavior without changing the heart would result in hypocritical people who merely focus on outward performance. The result would be outwardly religious people like the Pharisees who Jesus rebukes in Matthew 23:25-26.

The participants then examined Ezekiel 14:1-5. In this passage the elders of Israel had come to the prophet to inquire of God. God saw idols in their hearts. An idol of the heart is anything that rules a person other than God.[17] The human heart can be ruled by something other than God when the person loves, worships, or serves the wrong thing. The idol that controls the heart also determines how the individual will respond to other people and circumstances. As a result, the key to lasting change is to lead the individual to submit to the Holy Spirit, allowing him to recapture the heart in order to love, worship, and serve God alone.[18]

I reinforced that principle by studying Matthew 6:19-40. Through this passage, the participants learned that every person seeks treasure.[19] They will either seek treasure from earthly things or from heavenly things. Jesus told his listeners, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:23). Each person's treasure controls

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[16]Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 148.

[17]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 66.

[18]Ibid., 71.

[19]Ibid., 72.

their heart. Finally, that which controls the heart will also control the behavior, because "no one can serve two masters" (Matt 6:24).

I concluded the session with an exhortation to use the Word of God. The Word of God "is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and sprit, and of joints and marrow, and is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12-13). The Word cuts through all layers of deceit and exposes the heart. The Bible reveals motives and then judges those motives.[20] Therefore, the Bible must be the primary tool in life change. Only scripture can analyze and expose necessary changes in the heart. The only way change can endure is if change takes place in the heart.

Session 5, April 20, 2014, "Why is My Life Filled with Conflict?"

The fifth session was an exposition of James 4:1-10. In this passage James answers the question, "Where do wars and fights come from among you" (Jas 4:1)? James teaches that the war within the heart of a person is the root of conflicts with other people. The first battle is a battle for the control of the heart. If the desire for pleasure rules the heart, instead of a desire to submit to God and be pleasing to him, the result will be a war with others. James asserts that spiritual adultery is the root of all human conflict. People have wrong desires; they desire the created thing more than they desire the creator, and they lash out at anyone who stands in their way of fulfilling their desires.[21]

James gives the cure. The cure is God's jealous grace (James 4:5-6). God is jealous and he loves his people too much to make room for other lovers. He will oppose their proud and selfish living, because he loves them. God will not settle for anything less than total victory. God wins the battle by giving grace, and "Grace enables us to say no to

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[20]John F. MacArthur, *Hebrews, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 105.

[21]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 79-80.

powerful desires. Grace enables us to turn away from creation and turn to the creator."[22] Grace enables people to surrender their kingdoms to his. God's grace forgives, but it also empowers. God's jealous grace pursues his people, draws them to himself, and holds onto them. His grace changes them to be more like him.

James then issues a series of imperatives. I challenged the participants to obey these commands and also challenged them to speak this truth to others. James commands the following: submit to God, resist the devil, draw near to God, cleanse your hands, purify your hearts, lament, mourn, and weep (Jas 4:7-9). He concludes with the command to "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up" (Jas 4:10).

Session 6, April 27, 2014, "The Wonderful Counselor"

In the sixth session I challenged the participants to be ambassadors of Jesus, the wonderful counselor (Isa 9:6). Jesus made the presence and the glory of God visible by becoming a man. Jesus reveals the God whom humans cannot see.[23]

John tells believers that Jesus' glory consist of grace and truth (John 1:14). Grace is revealed in Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection. God loved the world, so he sent his Son into the world (John 3:16). His Son faced the full range of temptations in a fallen world, and he perfectly fulfilled the law on behalf of his people (Heb 4:15). He satisfied God's demand for righteousness by living a life free of sin. He satisfied God's demand for justice by dying on the cross, paying the debt for sin. He was buried and he arose from the dead, proving his life was sinless and proving his sacrifice for sin was accepted, purchasing life for all who believe.

I told the participants that grace is the message they must present in order to help people with their problems. God's grace not only forgives people for the past, but it also transforms them. Grace enables people to do what they previously had been unable

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[22]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 84.

[23]Ibid., 97.

to do. “His grace results in reconciliation, restoration, and peace.”[24] Grace impacts all relationships. Grace empowers parents to patient and persevering love. Grace empowers forgiveness in marriage. Grace can empower people to be set free from addiction, depression, and anxiety. Grace gives hope and freedom.[25] Christian living cannot be reduced to a series of steps, or a series of principles, or a program. Christian living is based upon a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who makes God known to people, rescues them from the penalty of sin, sets them free from the power of sin, and brings them to God.

Jesus also brings truth. The life of Jesus demonstrates how God intends for people to think and to act. His life and teaching confronts human foolishness with true wisdom. He shows that the way people should live is in opposition to the yearnings of their nature.[26]

Jesus incarnated the grace and truth of God. Likewise, Christians are called to incarnate the glory of Jesus (John 17:20-23) by being ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:14-6:20). I explained that the work of an ambassador is to speak the message of the king, using the methods prescribed by the king, in accordance with the character of the king.[27] Believers are to appeal to the heart by imploring people to “be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).

I concluded the session by introducing the model that would be the outline for the rest of the sessions. Tripp presents four ways to function as instruments of change as an ambassador in the life of another person. These four ways are love, know, speak, and do. I cautioned the participants not to view this as another program for the church but as a lifestyle to which the King of kings has called his ambassadors.

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[24]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 99.

[25]Ibid., 100.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., 107.

Session 7, May 4, 2014, "Love: Building Relationships"

The seventh session focused on building helping relationships within the church. I presented the two ways that God uses relationships to bring about life change. First, he changes people by calling them into a loving relationship with himself. Second, he uses interpersonal relationships among his people to bring more lasting change in them.[28]

I presented two aspects of a helping relationship in this session. I challenged the participants to build helping relationships by entering the world of their friends. I also challenged the participants to build helping relationships by incarnating the love of Jesus. I presented a process for building redemptive relationships. The process is to listen, to ask good questions, and to provide feedback. Feedback is needed to assure the person that they have been heard and understood. I also informed the class that hearing and understanding are not the end of the process. They need to assure their friend that they will walk with them through the struggle and assure them that Christ offers hope and help.[29]

Horizontal trust, vertical hope, and commitment to a process are essential elements of a helping relationship. Horizontal trust is the trust one person has for another person.[30] A person must earn the confidence of a friend if they are to effectively speak truth into the friend's life. Second, there must be vertical hope.[31] Vertical hope is the hope a person has in God. The friend must ultimately look to God for help and not the counselor. Finally, there must be commitment to a process.[32] A believer must commit to walk with the friend over time. Ultimately the key to helping relationships is to incarnate

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[28]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 123.

[29]Ibid, 125-30.

[30]Ibid., 131

[31]Ibid., 132.

[32]Ibid.

the love of Christ.[33] Paul calls each believer to have the Word of God so deeply rooted in their lives that they are wise, thankful, and able to teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16).

Session 8, May 11, 2014,
"Love - Continued"

The eighth session focused on two additional aspects of a helping relationship. The two aspects discussed in this session were (1) identify with suffering and (2) have an agenda toward life change.

I presented a theology of suffering. The participants learned how God is sovereign over all things, even suffering. They explored the biblical teaching that God allows suffering, because he has a good and gracious purpose to accomplish through suffering.

I also presented a theology of helping. People can help each other, because they all experience similar temptations and trials. The Bible teaches there is no temptation except that which is common unto all people (1 Cor 10:13). Believers all have common experiences, common temptations, common struggles, and common sins. In his grace, God presents himself as the God of all comfort. He comforts his children in their suffering by assuring them of his love and his purpose in suffering. One of those good and gracious purposes is that the believer can then comfort others that are experiencing similar circumstances (2 Cor 1:3-7).

God calls each believer to share what has been received. When a person shares experience, it is not some theoretical axiom but a tangible reality that has been lived out in real life. The sufferer has learned the reality of God's presence through suffering and the truth of his promises.[34] He can share that reality with others.

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[33]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 133-39.

[34]Ibid., 155-58.

Finally, I presented Tripp's principle of accepting with agenda.[35] Christians must accept others as sinful, but Christians must not be content for people to remain in sin. Grace changes people (Titus 2:11-12). Jesus told the woman caught in the act of adultery, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Jesus does not condemn her, "but that does not mean that he condones her sin; he tells her to sin no more."[36] He was calling her to radical and lasting change. Jesus accepts people, but that is not the end; he changes them. The helping believer must be like Jesus. The helping believer must be accepting. "It is wrong to approach a sinning brother or sister with a judgmental condemning spirit."[37] Each believer must grant the same grace and love that has been received from the Lord. However, each believer must also want others to understand that God's grace is always leading to change. Grace does not leave people the way that they are. Each believer must offer love which is humble, patient, gentle, forbearing, and forgiving; but a believer must never communicate that it is okay for people to stay the way they are.[38] God commands all believers to grow in Christ-likeness until physical death or until Jesus returns (Titus 2:11-12).

Session 9, May 18, 2014, "Getting to Know People"

The ninth session focused on developing more intimate relationships with Christian brothers and sisters. Personal ministry of the word is speaking truth from Christ to the struggles of the heart that have been uncovered by a committed and loving friend.[39]

I encouraged the learners to follow the example of Jesus in Hebrews 4:14-16. This passage describes Jesus as a sympathetic high priest. The word sympathize means

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[35]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 158-59.

[36]Leon Morris, *John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 785.

[37]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 158.

[38]Ibid., 159.

[39]Ibid., 165.

more than feeling compassion or pity for someone. Sympathy means to be moved by that which has moved someone else. Christ's sympathy was so strong that he took the problems of his people upon himself. Sympathy also means to understand what a person is going through and to desire to help.[40]

Christ is the perfect model for personal ministry. Christians need to understand people and to sympathize with them, thus allowing them to serve Jesus by serving his people. But unlike Christ, his people are not all-knowing. They need to develop the art of asking good questions. Every person is wonderfully unique and although there are many things that are common to all people, no two people have exactly the same experience. While there are familiar elements, each person has a myriad of details that makes the experience dramatically different for each one. In order to really know a person, it is important to ask good questions.

I presented some principles of asking good questions. Good questions lead people to define terms. Good questions cannot be answered yes or no. Some good questions are general, causing the person to think deeply. Others are specific demanding a succinct response. Good questions are probing and progressive.[41]

Session 10, May 25, 2014, "Discovering Where Change is Needed"

The tenth session focused on teaching the participants to organize the data they receive and to determine specific areas that require biblical change. There is a four step process. First, the helping person must understand the pressures, opportunities, responsibilities, and temptations faced by their friend. Second, the helping person must understand the friend's reactions to the circumstances of life. Third, a helping person must understand the thoughts that led to the reaction. Fourth, the helping person must understand motives.

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[40]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 166-67.

[41]Ibid., 174-80.

In order to examine wrong thinking, the class studied Numbers 11. The people of Israel had a distorted view of their past. They looked back at Egypt longingly (Num 11:5) even though they had been enslaved. They also had a distorted view of the present. They saw manna as a terrible trial (Num 11:6) instead of seeing it as an amazing display of God's sovereignty, of his provision, and of his faithfulness. That was the situation; the text then shifts to Moses' response. Moses is displeased (Num 11:10) and complains to God. His complaint reveals that he has a distorted view of himself. He has somehow become convinced that it was his responsibility to carry these people, when in reality God had simply called him to shepherd them. God called Moses to point the people to God's glory revealed to them in a cloud. Also, Moses had a distorted view of God. Moses doubted God's goodness and capability to provide for the people God had entrusted into his care (Num 11:21-22). Finally, the people had a distorted view of the future. They only saw two options. They believed they could either return to Egypt or die in the wilderness. The reader knows there is a third option; they could follow God to the Promised Land. These were presented as examples of wrong thinking that can lead to sinful actions.

The final step in organizing the information is to examine the motives. A person's actions and reactions are governed by that which is controlling the heart. People's words, actions, and responses originate from their wants, their desires, and their goals. To effectively help a person, the helper must understand what motivates the person's actions.[42]

Session 11, June 1, 2014,
"Speaking Truth in Love"

The eleventh session was an exposition of Leviticus 19:15-18, Matthew 7:1-7 and Romans 8:1-17. I used the passage in Leviticus to demonstrate the biblical teaching that rebuking a sinning brother or sister is an expression of love.[43] The passage clearly

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[42]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 194.

[43]Ibid, 202.

presents rebuke as the opposite of hate (Lev 19:17). This passage also reveals what Jesus would later say is the second greatest commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18, Matt 22:39). Loving rebuke is a fulfillment of the second greatest command.

The students were also assured that loving rebuke is also a fulfillment of the greatest commandment.[44] Jesus identified the first and greatest commandment as, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37). Loving rebuke fulfills this commandment. God's people confront one another because they love God and they want to obey him.

I then turned to Matthew 7:1-7. The one delivering the rebuke must have the proper motive of helping the sinning believer see clearly in order to correct unbiblical thinking. God often uses rebukes to bring about repentance.[45]

The final and most important motive in rebuke is to apply the Gospel.[46] To demonstrate this truth, I turned to Romans 8:1-17. This passage teaches what God has done in Christ Jesus to redeem his people to himself. God has removed all condemnation (Rom 8:1-4). He has come in the person of the Holy Spirit so that his people are no longer slaves to sin. They can think, choose, desire, act, and speak in ways that are pleasing to God (Rom 8:5-11). Finally, the Gospel encourages believers to godly living. Christians have an obligation to put off sin and to put on righteousness. They have an obligation not to walk in the flesh but to walk in the Spirit. The proper response to the comfort of the Gospel is to follow Christ in obedience (Rom 8:12-17).[47]

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[44]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 201.

[45]Ibid., 211-13.

[46]Ibid., 213.

[47]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 215-17.

Session 12, June 8, 2014, "How to Confront Biblically"

In the twelfth session, I outlined a four step process for biblical confrontations. The process is insight, confession, commitment, and then change.[48]

In the insight phase of the process of confrontation, the person should examine the event. In order to provide help, the counselor must discern what happened, what the person was feeling when it happened, and how they responded to what happened. Then the person should be led to consider the reasons for that response and the results of that response.[49]

The second phase is confession. Insight into the event should logically lead to confession and repentance. When a person honestly examines self in the light of Scripture, sin is revealed that needs to be confessed. Heart attitudes and outward actions that need to be confessed and forsaken are brought to light.

The third step is commitment. Confession revealed what the person needed to put off in order to be pleasing to God. Commitment speaks of replacement attributes, attitudes, or actions (Eph 4:22-24). The helping person can lead their friend to consider how their thinking must change. The helper should help the person discover what unbiblical desires are controlling the heart. The helper can lead the person to understand how God is calling them to love and serve others, what restitution should be made, and what habits should be incorporated into daily routine.[50]

The final step is change. The person now has the responsibility to incorporate these commitments into daily life. Change is the goal of loving confrontation.

The session included an example of confrontation from the Bible. In 2 Samuel 12:1-14, Nathan confronted David. David had committed a flagrant sin, yet he was blind

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[48]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 223-31.

[49]Ibid., 225-26.

[50]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 230-31.

to his sinfulness.[51] Nathan told a story that contained elements with which David would be familiar. The story was short and pertinent, and it led to conversation. The goal of the story was to expose the heart. When that goal was achieved and David's anger was greatly aroused against the man (2 Sam 12:5), Nathan made specific application, "You are the man" (2 Sam 12:7). This confrontation led to confession and repentance. David took full responsibility for his sin, and he recognized that ultimately he had sinned against the Lord. Then Nathan assured David that God forgives repentant sinners, but he also assured him that there would be temporal consequences for his sin (2 Sam 12:13-14).[52]

Session 13, June 15, 2014, "The Four Steps of Doing"

The final session outlined the four step process for making change a reality. The steps are make a plan, establish responsibilities, be reminded of who you are in Christ, and institute accountability.

The person must first make a plan for change. The person must understand what the Bible says about the information gathered. The person must determine what changes must be made and must determine biblical methods for making that change. The individual must take the themes, principles, and commands of scripture and build them into a specific plan for change.[53]

Second, responsibility must be defined. People must understand their God-given responsibility for their problems. They cannot control how another person acts. They cannot control their circumstances. They can, however, control how they respond. They are not responsible for what they cannot control.[54] Ultimately each believer is

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[51]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 233.

[52]Ibid., 233-35.

[53]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 245-51.

[54]Ibid., 251-55.

responsible to believe God and to demonstrate faith through obedience. Each believer is responsible to "as much as possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." (Rom 12:18). They cannot force someone to repent and believe, but they can act in kindness toward that person. They are also not responsible for vengeance. That is God's responsibility (Rom 12:19).

Third, I revisited what was taught in session three, "The Believer's Identity in Christ." Second Peter 1:3-9 was again presented to affirm that all believers have been given the Holy Spirit to empower them to godliness. They were also reminded that they must be diligent in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit.

Fourth, loving accountability must be established. Accountability helps a struggling believer do what is right over time. Gracious accountability provides structure, guidance, assistance, encouragement, and admonition.[55]

At the conclusion of the thirteenth training session, I administered a post-training questionnaire to the participants. This questionnaire was identical to the questionnaire administered prior to the beginning of the training (see appendix 2). This questionnaire was intended to measure the effectiveness of the training. The results are at appendix 4. I compared the results of the post-training with the results of the pre-training survey and determined that there was a statistically significant change by applying a t-test for dependent samples ($t_{(33)} = 3.02$, $p < 0.05$). I also noted that participants had increased in their confidence of the Scriptures to address common problems people face. Participants also increased in their confidence in their ability to help people address their problems from a biblical perspective. In personal interviews, I found that the curriculum was also helpful in helping people understand how the Bible applies to common problems.

[55]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 270-71.

Conclusion

In response to the need to equip the members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to speak biblical truth to one another, I adapted a curriculum from Paul David Tripp's book *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. I presented this curriculum to fifteen members of the church. Prior to this training, members tended to share words of conventional wisdom, the counsel from personal experience, or to just offer prayer. Subsequent to this training, from story logs and personal interviews I discerned that these members realize that they are commanded to speak truth to others and that they are indwelt by the Spirit of God to empower them to speak truth to others. I also determined that the participants have grown in their confidence to speak truth to others and in their ability to love, know, speak, and do. This project has been a worthwhile endeavor, and my desire is that all members fulfill the one another commands of the New Testament as a result of this training session and future sessions that utilize this curriculum.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

People experience problems both before and after their conversion. Many people will not seek formal counseling when they are experiencing problems, but they will speak to their friends and family members. In order to experience lasting change, it is imperative that the counsel they receive is biblical.

The leadership of Community of Grace Baptist Church desired to equip the members to engage in a personal ministry of the Word of God, so that biblical principles can be applied in every day conversations. The leadership desired to create a culture of gracious accountability within the church, so that the members can fulfill the commands in the New Testament concerning how believers are to relate to one another. As a result, this project was undertaken to develop a curriculum to train members to engage in a personal ministry of counseling God's Word. The project was designed to help them to grow in competence and in confidence of applying the principles of scripture to common problems people face. The evaluations and observations of that effort are the focus of this chapter.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The project was recommended by the elders of Community of Grace Baptist Church. As the church was being planted, the leaders had several priorities that necessitated a culture of biblical counseling among the membership. The Bible mandates that the leaders equip the members for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-16) and also mandates that the members perform ministry to one another. The New Testament contains over thirty-five commands of how members are to minister to one another; among these

are commands to admonish one another (Rom 15:14), exhort one another (Heb 3:13), comfort one another, and edify one another (1 Thess 5:11). In order to fulfill the New Testament purposes of a church, the pastor must equip members to engage in a personal ministry of counseling others using the Bible.

The purpose of the project was to equip members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to engage in a personal ministry of counseling God's Word in order to become instruments of change in the lives of others. The purpose of the project was fulfilled as fifteen members were equipped to perform biblical counseling within their relationships.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal of the project was to assess each participating member's knowledge and application of biblical truth. The goal was to evaluate the current level of knowledge of how biblical truth applies to common problems people face. Further, this goal was to appraise their ability to apply biblical truth to the problems encountered by people. Identical pre-training and post-training surveys (appendix 2) were designed using primarily a six-point *Likert* scale. These were administered to the participants to determine the effectiveness of the project. This goal was successfully accomplished when fifteen members were enlisted, when they signed a covenant to participate (appendix 1), and when they completed the pre-training questionnaire. The pre-training survey demonstrated the need for growth in competence and for growth in confidence in biblical counseling.

The second goal of the project was to develop a curriculum to increase each participating member's ability to apply the Bible to problems people face. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*[1] by Paul Tripp served as a foundation for the curriculum. The instructor designed the curriculum to instruct participants to build relationships, to speak

[1]Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002).

truth in love, and to apply biblical truth to everyday life. The instructor further designed the curriculum with the intent to instruct believers in the relevancy and the sufficiency of the Bible to address the problems people experience. The instructor submitted the curriculum to Chaplain (Colonel) Henry Beaulieu who is a certified biblical counselor through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). He served as a biblical counselor for eleven years under the supervision of Lou Priolo and has accumulated over three thousand hours of counseling experience. Additionally, Chaplain Beaulieu has helped train and supervise counseling trainees seeking National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC, now ACBC) certification. He also wrote and taught counseling curriculum through the training center at Eastwood Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Chaplain Beaulieu provided feedback and the author integrated his suggestions into the material to enhance the effectiveness of the curriculum. The presenter successfully accomplished this goal when he compiled the program of instruction, formatted it for presentation, received feedback, and integrated suggestions into the program of instruction.

The third goal of the project was to implement and assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. The pastor presented the curriculum to members of Community of Grace Baptist Church over a period of fifteen weeks. He conducted interviews with various participants at the conclusion of each month of training. Participants submitted story logs of gospel conversations where they pointed people to Jesus as the answer to problems. At the conclusion of the training, the participants completed a post-training survey. The researcher compared the results of the post-training with the results of the pre-training survey. He determined that there was a statistically significant change by applying a t-test for dependent samples ($t_{(33)} = 3.02$, $p < 0.05$).

Strengths of the Project

There were several strengths to the project. The greatest strength was the

emphasis on the sufficiency of biblical content to address the problems that people face. The emergence of Christian psychology has deceived many church members and leaders. Professionals who call themselves Christian psychologists operate clinics, and even Christian radio stations regularly propagate their message. These professionals share advice that creates an illusion of being biblical, because they quote scripture; however, their counsel is based upon extra-biblical theories and upon therapies that are actually hostile to the Christian worldview.[2] Many church members believe that counseling is best done by trained professionals; therefore, they do not feel competent to help their friends when they are experiencing problems. The pastor designed this project to help the members of Community of Grace to recognize the sufficiency of biblical content to address the problems people face. Students of the Bible who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are competent to speak truth to their friends and provide real help.

The second strength of the project was the emphasis on the responsibility that church members have toward one another. Community of Grace is a new church, and the leaders desire that the church will indeed be a community of grace. The Bible is clear about the responsibility that members have to one another. The project reinforced the biblical teaching that not only is every member to be equipped, but every member is responsible to speak truth in love to other members (Eph 4:11-16). The participants were challenged to be an instrument of change in the lives of others.

The third strength of the project was the emphasis on the spiritual basis of the problems that people face. Contemporary society believes that people are not really responsible for their problems. People are seen as victims of their heredity, victims of their environment, victims of other people, and even victims of their own bodies. This project focused on the human heart. Problems have a spiritual foundation, and people are responsible for their sinful responses to circumstances that are beyond their control. The

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[2]John MacArthur, Jr., and Wayne Mack, *Rediscovering Biblical Counseling: A Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling* (Dallas: Word, 1994), 4.

curriculum taught the participants the personal responsibility for sin. Sin is not caused by Satan, the enticements of the world, nor the sinfulness of other people. Sin comes from the heart. People are responsible for their heart, but the Holy Spirit can change the heart. The means that the Holy Spirit uses to change the heart are the Word of God; the believer himself, cooperating with the Holy Spirit; and other believers ministering the Word.

The fourth strength of the project was the focus on participants building confidence in assimilating biblical content in everyday conversations. People may not seek formal counsel when they are experiencing problems, but they will speak to friends or family members. The curriculum focused on the need of participants to speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the need of participants to point people to biblical principles for the solution to their problems.

Weaknesses of the Project

While the overall project was effective, there were some weaknesses. The first weakness is that the project did not emphasize specific counsel that can be applied to specific problems. I focused on the process of biblical counseling: building relationships, discovering where change is needed, speaking the truth relating to the needed change, and applying needed change to everyday life. Only a minimal amount of time was spent applying specific biblical principles to specific problems. I did not lead the participants to see how biblical content specifically applies to common problems. I have planned ensuing courses to apply these principles to specific problems.

The second, and most significant weakness, was a lack of emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing about life change. I focused on a process that emphasized the role of the counselor and the counselee and only yielded token attention to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit working through the counselor and the counselee was assumed rather than explicitly stated and explained.

What I Would Do Differently

After reflecting on the project, I observed five changes that could have made the project more effective. First, I would have scheduled longer class times. The classes were scheduled for one hour. After taking prayer requests, praying, and making announcements there was only forty-five minutes for instruction. This proved inadequate and did not provide opportunity for discussion and illustrations. Longer class periods could have facilitated addressing the weakness. I could have given illustrations of the points made during the session applying the principles to specific problems. Longer sessions could have also provided for more discussions and could also have provided for a period of questions and answers. The church should have scheduled two hour sessions.

Second, I would have scheduled the sessions when there was not an event immediately following the instruction. The sessions were conducted during the Bible study hour and were immediately followed by morning worship. This caused dialogue and discussion to be squelched. Opportunities for discussion, dialogue, and learning could have been enhanced had the sessions been the only event on the calendar for the day.

Third, I would have arranged the classroom differently. The sessions were held in the worship center. As a result, the participants were in pews and the instructor used a lectern and a white board in the front of the room. The setting gave the impression that the sessions were to be primarily lecture format. The classroom should have been arranged with the participants sitting around tables to facilitate discussion and dialogue.

Fourth, I would place more emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in life change. This weakness was addressed above. When I present this curriculum again, I will emphasize the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit by means of his Word and his people to sanctify his people.[3] I will explicitly examine his work in both the speaker and the listener.

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[3]Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 20-25.

Fifth, I would institute more accountability for the homework. The covenant to participate (Appendix 1) stated that the participants would keep a log of gospel conversations and provide feedback to the instructor. This was not strictly enforced, and some of the participants did not complete the homework. The lack of homework made the evaluation of the project more difficult and robbed the instructor of information needed to improve the curriculum.

Theological Reflections

"Biblical counseling is the Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed 'one another' ministry that depends upon the Holy Spirit to relate God's Word to suffering and sin by speaking and living God's truth in love."[4] First, this project has reinforced my confidence that everything we need for life and for godliness through knowledge of Christ has been revealed in the Bible. I have been reminded of the profitability and sufficiency of Scripture to equip the people of God for the work of speaking counsel to one another. Much information is available to Christians today through the internet and other media which even capriciously propose answers to life's questions; however, the truth of God revealed in the Bible is eternal, unchanging, and completely adequate.

Second, this project has reinforced my conviction that the primary role of the pastors of the church is the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). The bi-vocational pastor of Community of Grace and the other elders are inadequate to the task of speaking truth to everyone in need of truth. The ministry of the church multiplies exponentially and the ministry of the church conforms to the biblical model of ministry when every member is equipped to speak biblical truth and apply it to everyday life situations.

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[4]Biblical Counseling Coalition Staff, "The BCC Weekend Interview Series: Defining Biblical Counseling," *Biblical Counseling Coalition Blog*, September 10, 2011, accessed January 29, 2013, http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2011/09/10/the-bcc-weekend-interview-series-defining-biblical-counseling/.

Third, this project has reinforced my conviction that each church member has a sacred responsibility to be actively involved in the lives of the other members. The Bible calls each believer to be a vital part of the body of Christ. The Bible calls members to be interdependent. God calls his people to earnestly engage with others. Intimate involvement in a local church is essential to being a faithful, growing disciple of Christ. For sanctification, each believer needs the ministry of other believers in his or her life. Further, each believer contributes to the sanctification of others. The New Testament is saturated with commands for believers to minister to one another. Believers ministering the Word to one another in the power of the Holy Spirit is the primary means God uses in the sanctification and preservation of His children.

Personal Reflections

As the preaching and teaching elder at Community of Grace Baptist Church, my primary responsibility is expository preaching. In deciding to pursue further education and equipping for ministry, I sought a degree in Biblical Counseling rather than Expository Preaching because I believed that was the area in which I most needed to grow. I have found that a concentrated study in biblical counseling has made me a better expository preacher by helping me to focus on the practical application of the text to the problems people are facing. This course of study and this project have also further equipped me to engage in a private ministry of the word in addition to my public ministry.

This project has also been an exercise in perseverance for me. While I was pursuing this degree, I was forcefully terminated from the pastoral position in which I was serving. A group of believers came out of that church and began meeting together. They called me to assist them in planting a new church. As I pursued this degree we became a mission church, wrote a constitution and bylaws, and constituted as a church. I also had to become bi-vocational in order to support my family. The Lord has been

gracious to me and provided perseverance and endurance. He has granted me grace to balance many competing requirements. His faithfulness to me through this process has increased my faith.

This project has further served as a means to increase my love for the Lord Jesus. I have seen his faithfulness to me as he has drawn me to himself and equipped me to do what is vastly beyond my own capabilities. I have also grown in my love for Jesus as I have seen his love for his church. As I have studied biblical counseling, I have seen his commitment to sanctify and cleanse his bride "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph 5:26). I am thankful for his love for me and his commitment for my holiness.

This project has also served to make me a better husband and father. I have seen anew my responsibility to love my wife as Jesus loved his church. I have seen anew my responsibility to apply biblical truth to my own marriage and to my own parenting. I have learned to counsel my children biblically rather than instruct them in worldly wisdom.

Additionally, this project has helped me redefine my role as a pastor. Prior to this, I saw my primary role as a preacher. As a result of this project, I see my primary role as an equipper. I have a sacred responsibility to equip "the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). I need to be more intentional in equipping rather than merely hoping that my people are equipped solely by my public preaching and teaching.

Finally, this project has increased my appreciation and understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in life change. I should work to attain skills; I should study methodology and procedures; and I should work to become a more effective minister of the Word; however, ultimately effectiveness and fruitfulness is the work of the Holy Spirit. Life change happens as the believer cooperates with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

A comparison of the objective data collected in the pre-training and post-training surveys indicate that the participants grew in their confidence and ability to engage in a personal ministry of the Word of God. The feedback from the training was positive. The participants have provided anecdotal evidence of engaging their friends and family members with biblical principles instead of conventional wisdom or personal experience. Participants have expressed a desire to continue to be equipped to speak "the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) in order that Community of Grace Baptist Church will be a church where "every part does its share" (Eph 4:16), which "causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Eph 4:16). While this project focused on a process of biblical counseling, ensuing sessions will focus on specific application of biblical truth to specific problems people face. The curriculum of this project will be preserved and will be used to introduce new members to the principles of biblical counseling; This curriculum will be a prerequisite to the future classes.

While I do feel a sense of relief at the completion of this project, I also have a feeling of expectation and anticipation as I look forward to the future ramifications of having equipped members to engage in a personal ministry of the Word of God. I pray that God would produce eternal fruit from this effort. I pray that Community of Grace Baptist Church will continue to be edified "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

APPENDIX 1

COVENANT TO PARTICIPATE

Covenant to Participate In a Doctoral Project

Name of the Project: Equipping Members of Community of Grace Baptist Church in Aberdeen, Mississippi to Engage in a Personal Ministry of Counseling God's Word

Purpose of the Project: The purpose of the project will be to equip members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to engage in a personal ministry of counseling God's Word in order to become instruments of change in the lives of others.

I, _____, covenant to participate in a doctoral project conducted by Mark Thornton. I understand my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at anytime.

I understand that my participation in the project will require:

1. Completing a pre-training questionnaire relating to my understanding of the principles of biblical counseling.

2. Attending as many of the fifteen sessions as possible, beginning on March 16 and concluding on June 22, 2014. (Training will not be conducted on May 4, 2014). I understand the dates are subject to change.

3. Doing any home work required by the training. At a minimum I will keep a log of gospel conversations that I have with others. This log will protect confidentiality by including only the topic discussed and the biblical counsel that was given. I will submit my log on April 13, May 18, and June 13.

4. Providing feedback to the instructor as to the effectiveness of the training.

5. Completing a post-training questionnaire.

_____

Signature

APPENDIX 2

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine your understanding of the principles of biblical counseling. This research is being conducted by Mark Thornton for the purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of this class as a part of a doctoral project. In this research you will be asked to complete a questionnaire relating to your understanding of biblical counseling. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and your name will neither be reported nor identified with your responses. Participation is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

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

Demographic Information:

Age:_____

Gender: _____

Number of years you have been a Christian:_____

1. Which statement best describes the relationship between Christian faith and psychology?[1]

___ The Bible is relevant but insufficient for counseling.

___ The Bible is completely sufficient for counseling.

___ The Bible is completely irrelevant to counseling.

[1]Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, eds., *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 5.

2. Using scientific methods, psychologists are capable of addressing more issues and dealing more profoundly with those issues than the biblical authors do.[2]

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

3. All problems in life - emotional, mental, relational, and behavioral - have a spiritual foundation.[3]

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

4. The Bible is inadequate for counseling because it lacks the level of precision, specificity, and comprehensiveness regarding psychological and soul-care topics that one finds in good contemporary psychological textbooks and journal articles.[4]

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

5. Biblical content is sufficient to address relationship conflicts.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

6. Biblical content is sufficient to address financial pressures.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

7. Biblical content is sufficient to address depression.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Biblical content is sufficient to address responses to physical health crises or illness.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

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[2]Scott and Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, 9.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 122.

9. Biblical content is sufficient to address anxiety.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Biblical content is sufficient to address parenting questions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

11. Biblical content is sufficient to address loneliness.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

12. Biblical content is sufficient to address mania.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

13. Biblical content is sufficient to address schizophrenia.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

14. Biblical content is sufficient to address attention deficit disorder.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

15. Biblical content is sufficient to address surviving sexual abuse.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

16. Biblical content is sufficient to address obsessive compulsive disorder.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

17. Biblical content is sufficient to address post partum depression.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

18. Biblical content is sufficient to address anorexia.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

19. Biblical content is sufficient to address bipolar disorder.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

20. Biblical content is sufficient to address dissociative (multiple personality) disorder.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

21. Biblical content is sufficient to address homosexuality.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

22. Biblical content is sufficient to address addictions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

23. Biblical content is sufficient to address adultery.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

24. The Bible is the ultimate source of knowledge of the human condition, but it is not an all sufficient guide for the discipline of counseling.[5]

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

[5]Stan Jones and Richard Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 27.

25. The Bible presents God's redemptive plan for his people, but it is not an all sufficient guide for the discipline of counseling.[6]

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

26. How often do people talk to about problems they are facing?

Never	Seldom	Monthly	Weekly	Daily

27. God's Word commands believers to counsel other Christians.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

28. When someone has a problem, they should seek help from a licensed professional.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

29. I am knowledgeable of the issues related to biblical counseling.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

30. I have a desire to help people address life issues from a biblical perspective.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

31. I feel competent to help people address life issues from a biblical perspective.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

32. I believe that most of the problems people are face are primarily spiritual issues.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

[6]Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 27.

33. I believe that people have little control over most of the problems they face.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

34. I believe the two primary instruments that God uses to change people are His Word and His people.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX 3

PRE-TEST RESULT

Question	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	a	b
1								14
2	9	4			1			
3					5	9		
4	11	3						
5					3	11		
6				1	3	10		
7					6	8		
8				1	2	11		
9					6	8		
10					3	11		
11				1	4	10		
12				2	6	4		
13			1	3	4	5		
14				3	4	5		
15					5	9		
16				1	6	5		
17				2	5	6		
18				2	3	7		
19					3	9		
20				5	4	4		
21					1	13		
22					5	8		
23					1	12		
Total 5-23				21	74	156		
24	7	6						
25	8	5						
26	Seldom -4	Monthly-2	Weekly -6	Daily-1				
27					3	11		
28	1	3	6	3	1			
29		1	2	8	2			
30				1	6	6		
31		1	7	1	3			
32				3	6	4		
33	2	4	2	4	2			
34					3	11		

APPENDIX 4

POST-TEST RESULT

Question	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	a	b
1								14
2	14							
3					2	12		
4	14							
5						14		
6						14		
7					3	11		
8						14		
9					3	11		
10						14		
11						14		
12				2	4	8		
13				4	3	7		
14				3	4	7		
15						14		
16					4	10		
17				2	3	9		
18				2	2	10		
19				3	4	7		
20				3	3	8		
21						14		
22						14		
23						14		
TOTAL 5-23				19	33	214		
24	14							
25	14							
26	Seldom-4	Monthly-2	Weekly-6	Daily-2				
27						14		
28	6	6	1	1				
29				5	5	4		
30					4	10		
31				6	6	2		
32					3	11		
33	11	3						
34						14		

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH IN ABERDEEN, MISSISSIPPI, TO ENGAGE IN A PERSONAL MINISTRY OF COUNSELING GOD'S WORD

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
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This project sought to equip members of Community of Grace Baptist Church to engage in a personal ministry of counseling others using the Bible. Chapter 1 describes the need for the project and examines context and details of the project.

Chapter 2 establishes a biblical basis for the project by examining four passages that teach the necessity of equipping members of the church to apply the principles of biblical counseling in their relationships with one another. A study of these truths provides an understanding of God's design for ministering the Word within the church.

Chapter 3 examines the contemporary practice of divorcing theology from counseling. The chapter examines how the biblical counseling movement has sought to recover the connection between counseling and theology and then argues that in addition to conducting biblical counseling themselves, pastors need to equip others in the church to counsel God's Word.

Chapter 4 explains the implementation of the project. The research instrument, schedule of the training, and the curriculum are stated and explained.

Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the impact of the project on those trained. The strengths and weaknesses of the project are discussed.

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