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EQUIPPING HOME-GROUP LEADERS FOR BIBLICAL
COUNSELING AT EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH,
MOUNT VERNON, WASHINGTON

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PREFACE

I wish to thank Dr. Stuart Scott for his guidance throughout this project. His experience and passion for biblical counseling have been encouraging in all phases of my ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church. I am also indebted to the leadership of EBC for their willingness to embrace the tenets of biblical counseling and for the freedom they have given me to complete this work. The future impact of EBC in the community of Mount Vernon, Washington, appears brighter because of their leadership and commitment to the written Word of God.

Also, I want to express my appreciation for the fellowship and encouragement of many fellow students at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary through in-class interaction and project discussions. I always looked forward to my time at Southern. The instructors at Southern, along with the connections made with other biblical counselors through involvement at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana, have played a major role in my personal growth and ability to communicate the essence of a counseling ministry based solidly upon Scripture.

Finally, I am indebted to Betsy Fredrick for her guidance and willingness to answer all questions in connection with producing this manuscript. Without the encouragement provided by all of the above individuals, as well as that of my wife, Laurie, and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, this project would not have taken place. May the impetus of this project bring God glory through a biblical counseling ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Herb Geeslin

Mount Vernon, Washington

December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the home-group leaders of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, Washington, with a functional understanding of biblical counseling and its dynamics within the church body with a view to implementing those dynamics among home-groups.

Goals

Four specific goals served to evaluate the effectiveness of this project in achieving its overall purpose. The first goal was to insure that the home-group leaders understand the nature of the believer's progressive sanctification and the role that biblical counseling can play in that process. For the past decade, the congregation of Emmanuel Baptist Church (EBC) has received some instruction concerning the importance of personal discipleship in connection with the believer's maturation in Christ, but there has been no instruction with respect to the nature and application of biblical counseling as it can relate to that process. Yet, given the context of the interpersonal relationships that exists within its small groups, biblical counseling can greatly assist a quest for spiritual growth and maturity among the members.

A second goal associated with the purpose of this project was that home-group leaders would embrace a commitment to the sufficiency of Christ and His Word in terms of dealing with personal problems encountered in the believer's life. Since sinful thoughts, actions, and attitudes continue to plague believers following their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, an acute awareness of innate sinfulness is imperative for

Christians. Yet, although many Christians accept the sufficiency of Christ's work in connection with their justification, they often lack personal confidence in the resources provided by God to His people for their progressive sanctification, namely His own Spirit, His Word, prayer, and the church body. Consequently, many members of EBC quickly turn to secular sources in search of help and guidance with respect to the life problems that they encounter.

A third goal associated with this project was to provide home-group leaders with knowledge that would result in their increased ability to discern and connect biblical principles to the various struggles and challenges in their lives. At the same time, home-group leaders needed to cultivate a willingness to share their methodology, as well as acquired insights, with others. Inasmuch as EBC home-groups typically consist of ten to twelve people, each home-group leader has the potential to contribute substantially toward the acceptance and implementation of biblical counseling principles among our church body.

A fourth goal of this project was connected to my own spiritual growth and effectiveness as a pastor. It was my desire to increase my ability to promote biblical counseling within EBC by developing a classroom curriculum that teaches the basic underlying tenets and philosophies associated with the subject. There are many inaccurate notions about biblical counseling among our church members, and I hoped to be able to provide clear, understandable insight into the whole subject. In addition, I have sought to initiate and provide oversight to an ongoing biblical counseling ministry within EBC, including both the informal and formal aspects of that ministry. At the conclusion of this project, I wanted to have a core group of people committed to move with me in this direction.

Ministry Context

Emmanuel Baptist Church is located approximately sixty miles north of Seattle in Mount Vernon, Washington. Mount Vernon is the county seat of Skagit County, a

county which has experienced a population growth of 20-25 percent between 2000 and 2010.¹ Skagit County's current population is approximately 117,000-119,000 people.²

The name "Skagit" is derived from an Indian tribe that once inhabited much of the area. White settlers first came to this region as homesteaders in the mid-1850s, but they had a great deal of difficulty in sustaining agricultural pursuits.³ However, by the 1870s, farming had become commercially successful in the Skagit Islands of the northern Puget Sound, as well as in the flat mainland areas of the county. The most successful commercial crops at that time were oats, barley, and hay.⁴ Logging, along with the commercial fishing of salmon and cod, also became a mainstay in the area's economic growth. Since most of the county was covered in forests of Douglas Fir and Western Red Cedar, logging quickly became the dominant industry in the county, and it was accompanied by other complementary enterprises, such as sawmills and shipping.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, the main economic pursuits of Skagit County remained focused on agriculture and the extraction of local natural resources. Dairy farming, logging, lumber production, fishing, and farming constituted the bulk of the county's economic base. In the 1950s, both Shell and Texaco built oil refineries in the county, making Skagit County the center of Washington's petroleum industry. The economic downturn of the late 1970s and early 1980s impacted the local

¹US Census Bureau, "Washington-2010 Census Results: Percent Change in Population by County 2000 to 2010," accessed May 20, 2011, http://2010.census.gov/news/pdf/cb11cn45_wa_perchange_2010map.pdf.

²Ibid.

³Revelyn M. Froyalde, "Skagit County Profile," in *Washington State Yearbook* (Sammamish, WA: Electronic Handbook, 2010), 5.

⁴Ibid.

lumber and wood products industries particularly hard. Nonetheless, Skagit County is “historically regarded as one of fastest growing areas in the state.”⁵

Recent statistics verify the continuation of this growth.⁶ Mount Vernon is the largest town within the county, with a current population of about 30,000 people.⁷ The Skagit River separates Mount Vernon from Burlington, Washington, but, for all practical purposes, the two towns are joined together. Burlington’s population is approximately 10,000 people.⁸ Nearby Sedro-Woolley adds another 12,000 people within driving distance of EBC.⁹ Furthermore, EBC draws people from several smaller towns, such as Clear Lake and Conway, as well as from numerous unincorporated housing developments, including Big Lake and Nookachamp Hills.

Although agriculture employs only about 6 percent of the county’s population,¹⁰ the numerous farms scattered throughout the Skagit Valley give the area surrounding Mount Vernon a distinctly rural look. Farming remains a viable industry of Skagit County, with the most prominent crops being blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, tulips, daffodils, cucumbers, specialty potatoes, apples, and vegetable seeds.¹¹ The most

⁵Froyalde, “Skagit County Profile,” 5.

⁶James R. Fox, *Washington State Almanac, 2010-2011*, 24th ed. (Sammamish, WA: Electronic Handbook, 2010), 122-25.

⁷Skagit Valley Chamber of Commerce, *Skagit County* (Mount Vernon, WA: Skagit, 2010), 36.

⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

⁹City of Sedro-Woolley, “About our City,” accessed May 20, 2011, <http://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Home/details.htm>.

¹⁰Fox, *Washington State Almanac*, 123.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 6.

recent census of agriculture in 2007 indicated that there were 1,215 farms in the County, covering 108,541 acres, producing more than \$263 million worth of produce.¹²

Since Skagit County remains an agricultural area, a substantial number of Hispanics have made Mount Vernon their home. Clearly, not all Hispanics work within agriculture, but, as a group, Spanish-speaking immigrants make up nearly 16 percent of the county's total population, whereas, statewide, Hispanics constitute approximately only 10 percent of Washington's population.¹³ Local officials believe that nearly one-third of Mount Vernon's population consists of Hispanics, both legal and illegal immigrants. Another significant aspect connected with Skagit's farm acreage is that the county has put restrictive measures in place to prevent significant reduction of arable land, which, in term, caps Mount Vernon's urban growth potential.¹⁴

Since the mid-1980s, there has been a distinct shift in the local economy away from natural resource industries. The office of Skagit County Public Health tracks numerous aspects of the county's demographic changes, and notes, "Economically speaking, the most significant development for Skagit County over the past two decades has been the transition from a largely extractive economy based on logging, mining, fishing, and farming to a more diversified economy."¹⁵ In addition, Mount Vernon sustains a growing "out-commuter" population whose employment takes them south to the Seattle area, as well as north to Bellingham. Recent per capital income figures show

¹²Fox, *Washington State Almanac*, 6.

¹³Economic Development Association of Skagit County, *Skagit County Demographics* (Mount Vernon, WA: EDASCO, 2011), 1.

¹⁴Michael J. McCormick and Roger Wagoner, "Population & Employment Forecasting & Allocation 2025," Report by Skagit County Management Act Steering and Technical Advisory Committees, 2003.

¹⁵Alex von Cube, *Skagit County Demography* (Mount Vernon, WA: Skagit County Public Health, 2007), 12.

that Skagit County ranked eighth among Washington's thirty-nine counties at \$37,989 compared to the state average of \$42,747.¹⁶

EBC is one of the oldest churches in Skagit County. It was officially organized with ten charter members on May 19, 1893, as "The First Swedish Baptist Church of Skagit City."¹⁷ Swedish immigrants came to the Skagit County area primarily to farm, log, and fish during the 1880s.¹⁸ Some of these immigrants came directly from Sweden, but most relocated from the Midwestern states. The town of Skagit City was founded in 1870. Pre-dating Mount Vernon, Skagit City was located on Fir Island and was situated on the west bank of the south fork of the Skagit River, approximately three miles south of present-day Mount Vernon.

As a "river town," Skagit City served as a hub for this rural area and, at its peak, included several stores and hotels, along with saloons, churches, and, of course, a riverboat dock. However, Skagit City's initial prosperity was short-lived. Mount Vernon was established as a trading post as early as 1877. Two extensive log jams between Skagit City and Mount Vernon prevented river traffic from reaching Mount Vernon, thereby imposing severe limits on the city's population growth. Things changed with the removal of these jams in 1880, and Mount Vernon began to out-pace Skagit City in economic growth. By 1884, Mount Vernon had assumed such prominence in the area that it was named the county seat.¹⁹ From this point on, Skagit City began to decline rapidly, with its demise culminating in 1929.²⁰ Today, there are no remaining signs of its existence.

¹⁶Fox, *Washington State Almanac*, 123.

¹⁷Gordon Carlson, *Seventy-Five Years of Columbia Baptist Conference* (Seattle: Columbia Baptist Conference, 1964), 142.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

Since the earliest days of white settlement, a large portion of the immigrants to Skagit County have been of Scandinavian descent. Accordingly, most of these Scandinavians came from a background of Lutheranism and Dutch Reformed. However, a number of Swedish Baptists began to populate Skagit County as early as 1880. In 1889, six small Swedish Baptist Churches met in Seattle and formed “The Columbia Baptist Conference,” a regional association with ties to the Swedish Baptist Conference of America, headquartered in Illinois. In an effort to start new churches, the Columbia Baptist Conference sent several missionaries north to Skagit County. Two of those missionaries, Matilda Malmberg and Olaus A. Okerson, were instrumental in the initial formation of EBC.²¹ The church conducted its first baptismal service on May 21, 1893. The service was held on the bank of the Skagit River, with over 130 curious on-lookers watching the baptisms.²² This service, and every service during those early years, was conducted in Swedish.

Since seasonal flooding frequently made it difficult to cross the Skagit River, the congregation of EBC decided to build two separate chapels in 1901, one on each side of the river. Those chapels were located at North Fork (Harmony) and Cedardale. Each new chapel cost \$385.²³ However, this split arrangement proved unsatisfactory with respect to congregational fellowship. It was also found that ministry efforts were not only duplicated in each location, but seemingly less effective. Therefore, the people of EBC pooled their resources in 1905 and voted to construct a single facility within the city limits of Mount Vernon at the corner of Washburn and Second Streets. With the move,

²¹Carlson, *Seventy-Five Years*, 142.

²²Ibid.

²³Shirl S. Bjok, *A Pictorial Review of God's Faithfulness to Emmanuel Baptist Church* (Bellingham, WA: Cox Brothers, n.d.), 3.

the congregation changed the name of the church to “The Swedish Baptist Church of Mount Vernon.”

Several years after relocating in Mount Vernon, English began to replace Swedish as the language of choice during the worship services.²⁴ Although EBC benefited from the increasing prosperity of Mount Vernon, church membership rolls saw only a modest increase for many years. The church grew from 83 members in 1909 to 112 members in 1939. As the Swedish identity of the church continued to wane, the congregation officially changed the name of the church to Emmanuel Baptist Church in 1932.

By 1936, EBC sought to update and expand its facilities. New property was acquired and ground was broken for the construction of a new building in Mount Vernon on the corner of Cleveland and Hazel streets. The new building was completed and dedicated on May 19, 1937. The move to this new location and building began an “era of major growth for Emmanuel.”²⁵ By 1964, church membership had reached nearly 350 people, and it was not uncommon for nearly 400 people to attend worship services.

Another move was proposed and approved in 1963, and the congregation voted to purchase two and a half acres at the church’s present site on East College Way. The first service held in EBC current location took place on November 8, 1964. In 1967, the church voted to purchase an additional two and one-quarter acres of property adjacent to the present building for future expansion.

Significant expansion did occur in 1973. In that year, EBC constructed a “multi-purpose building to provide a social room for youth, numerous Sunday School rooms, modern kitchen, and a gymnasium that could be used as a dining hall comfortably

²⁴Centennial Committee, *Celebrate the Centennial* (Mount Vernon, WA: Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1993), 2.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 2-3.

seating over 600 people.”²⁶ For the most part, that expansion still stands. Church membership continued to grow slowly. By the late 1970s, it exceeded 400 people. In 1989, the membership topped 500 for the first time. During the 1990s, attendance grew rapidly, with the church reporting a membership exceeding 1,000 in 1999. A new multi-million dollar children’s wing was constructed in 2000 to replace an older, smaller building that housed children’s classrooms.

Working with a variety of missionary agencies, EBC contributed to the simultaneous support of nearly thirty missionaries during the 1990s. No new church plant has been undertaken by EBC in its 118-year history, with the exception of a single instance in 1951. In 1951, EBC’s “home missionary” project amounted to a church plant in Wickersham, Washington. A small, dilapidated church building was purchased and renovated, resulting in additional classrooms, a kitchen, and youth activity room.²⁷

Known as the “Little Brown Chapel,” this small outreach maintains a congregation of 30-50 in a quite rural area of Skagit County. EBC continues to be involved in this ministry, frequently furnishing various kinds of support.

Since its inception, EBC has remained affiliated with the same association of Baptist churches, although the name of that association has changed over the years. The association briefly traces its roots:

Nearly 160 years ago, Swedish immigrants settled in the United States, having come to America primarily because of religious persecution. These followers of Christ, had a strong conviction about the *Bible* as the Word of God. They believed in *believer’s baptism by immersion*. And they had a strong conviction about *living a holy life* as followers of Jesus Christ. They began to reach other Swedish immigrants

²⁶D. Thurlow Yaxley, “A Centennial Calendar” (unpublished notes distributed among the congregation of Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1993), 6.

²⁷Bjok, *A Pictorial Review of God’s Faithfulness*, 10.

with the life changing message of the Gospel, and eventually organized as a fellowship of churches, called the Swedish Baptist General Conference.²⁸

That conference was organized in 1879 at Village Creek, Iowa and later moved to the Chicago area. The name of the conference was changed in 1945. According to the conference, its core values remained the same, but the name change reflected an appeal beyond its Swedish heritage:

The Baptist General Conference became the new name of our family of churches by 1945 as English became the predominant language used in our churches, and as more and more non-Swedish churches were planted and organized. While the landscape of the U.S. dramatically changed, the core values of the BGC remained the same. We continued to affirm unequivocally, the *Bible* as the Word of God. A clear conviction about *believer's baptism and regenerate church membership* remained strong. And the same concern and conviction for distinctive, Christ-like living in a pagan and secular world, characterized our movement. As a missional movement, the Baptist General Conference became a beautiful multiethnic, worldwide family of believers and churches . . . diverse, yet committed to the common mission of fulfilling Christ's great commission for the church.²⁹

In 2008, the Baptist General Conference underwent yet another name change.

The new name is "Converge," a name thought to capture the focus of the conference:

In an effort to articulate the mission and message of Jesus in a more effective way all over the world, Converge was adopted as the missional name of our movement in 2008. Converge is the name that best captures for us the three-fold strategy of *connecting* God's people around God's purposes, to *ignite* a passion for God and His Spirit, in order to *transform* lives and communities all over our world.³⁰

Converge currently maintains two national offices, one in Arlington Heights, Illinois, and another in Orlando, Florida.

During the 118-year existence of EBC, a total of twenty-four "senior" pastors have served in the church. The average tenure of these pastors was less than five years. Additional staff has fluctuated over the decades, consisting of a mixture of paid associates and volunteers. Clearly, there has been a great deal of pastoral turnover at EBC.

²⁸Converge Worldwide, "Our History," accessed May 23, 2011, <http://www.convergeworldwide.org/about/facts-and-info/our-history>, emphasis added to highlight certain beliefs held in common among these churches.

²⁹Ibid., "Our History," emphasis added.

³⁰Ibid., emphasis added.

As previously noted, it was not until 1989 that EBC's membership exceeded 500. Ten years later, the membership had climbed to over 1,000. The sudden spike of attendance does not reflect a population surge in the Mount Vernon. There appear to be several factors at work in this sudden influx of members. First, the church was pastored by a man whose strong personality pushed for numerical growth. Second, the tenure of this pastor began after a tumultuous dismissal of his predecessor and lasted for ten years. This "lengthy" stay gave the church some greatly needed stability and consistency. Third, a music director was hired who, in addition to developing a strong music program for Sunday mornings, produced musical plays of professional quality which were open to the community. EBC events became a "hot ticket" in the Mount Vernon and surrounding area during the 1990s.

Yet, the decade of the 90s ended with a great deal of disharmony within the church. A large segment of the church did not embrace an abrupt move to elder rule from congregational rule. In addition, the rapid growth included a substantial number of people who did not share the same convictions on a number of doctrinal issues.

The unexpected departure of EBC's director of music in 1999 proved to be a contentious issue that has ramifications to this day. His replacement instilled a more contemporary sound to the music and discontinued the musical plays. The senior pastor focused on attracting people in their 30s, and thus made numerous changes that alienated a sizable portion of older members within the congregation.

I came to EBC in 2001 as an associate pastor. Attendance hovered at 800-900, but 2002 saw the senior pastor and lay elders engage in an ugly power struggle. By the fall of 2003, the pastor was forced to resign. Attendance dropped to around 700 people, but, in the process, much personal animosity occurred between individuals as various groups formed within the church to promote specific agendas. Attendance has settled into the 500-600 range over the last five years, and pastoral turnover has continued during that time. Since 2003, EBC has seen two youth pastors and two worship pastors come

and go. Currently, the pastoral staff consists of a preaching pastor (hired in 2005), an adult ministries pastors (my current role), and a youth pastor (hired in 2010).

EBC presently consists of a congregation that expresses a desire to grow spiritually. Quite a few of the current members have been a part of the church for a decade or longer, but the frequent inner turmoil over a host of issues in past years has resulted in many damaged relationships. In numerous instances reconciliation has not taken place. In this regard, a “change of culture” within the church is desperately needed if we are to be effectively fulfilling our scriptural mandates as Christ’s people. It was my hope that the vision expressed in this project would continue to play a key role in bringing about this change. The current pastoral staff and lay elders are unified in their endorsement of biblical counseling; all see the potential it offers in moving the church toward spiritual health and growth.

Rationale

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the apostle Paul states, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”³¹ Paul challenged the Ephesian Christians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” they had received in Christ (Eph 4:1). Indeed, “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15). God’s Word is the truth in which Christians are to walk (John 17:17) in order to live lives that are honoring to Him. The New Testament, of course, is replete with instructions as to how believers are to go about recognizing and building such a life. The “one-another” commands, for example, give specific guidelines in terms of the way believers are to engage their brothers and sisters in Christ.

³¹All Scripture references are from the Updated New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Sadly, the people of EBC fall woefully short of the New Testament picture of Christian fellowship. Past turmoil, coupled with an unwillingness of so many to seek God's glory above their own, has resulted in many broken relationships. There exists a pride within our congregation that we are a "Bible-teaching church," and indeed, this has been the case for a number of years. However, it is quite apparent that we, as a whole, are lacking in living out the calling with which we have been called in Christ. Attendance has plateaued at 550-600 for the last five years, and the retention rate of visitors is quite low.

While there are a number of factors to consider concerning the present lack of numerical growth at EBC, leadership is primarily concerned with insuring the internal spiritual health of the church. Every member of the church family should be encouraged to deal with personal sin forthrightly. Sin issues must not be hidden or glossed over. The appearance of piety must not be substituted for genuine transformation within one's heart. As one who has been a part of this congregation for over a decade, I believe I can provide some insight and leadership toward moving EBC into a place of greater spiritual health.

Hence, this project was born out of a conviction that certain aspects of EBC's culture must change. Presently, all elders of the church support the widespread implementation of a biblical counseling ministry within the body as a major focus of that change. There needs to be more emphasis on personally honoring God and genuinely loving others. Biblical counseling addresses sin issues from Scripture with a view to personal application of its truths. This is exactly the direction in which the church needs to be moving if, in fact, we are to see lives changed. It is necessary if we are to effectively implement the outreach and discipleship mandates of our Lord Jesus Christ as summarized in Matthew 28:19-20.

Since the pastors and lay elders of EBC were unified in supporting a biblical counseling ministry, the next step was to reach the leaders of home-groups. Home-groups consist of ten to twelve people who meet weekly in host homes. These groups

have been an important component of discipleship at EBC in that they represent a place where people gather to study God’s Word, build deeper relationships with one another, and have an opportunity to implement the “one-another” commands of Scripture in caring relationships. Approximately half of EBC’s congregation attends a home-group, making home-groups an effective avenue to acquaint a large number of people with the basics of biblical counseling.

Since each home-group has a leader, the purpose of this project was to equip those leaders with a working understanding of how biblical counseling can impact the spiritual well-being of the church. This was to be accomplished by offering a series of twelve weekly classes, in which they learned the foundational philosophy of a biblical counseling ministry. Specific areas addressed included the relationship between biblical counseling and progressive sanctification, the sufficiency of Scripture in dealing with life issues or problems, how to seek and apply answers from Scripture, and how to best pass their knowledge along to the members of their home-groups. Also, they learned about the certification process and opportunities associated with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (formerly the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors).

Thus, the task of this project was to equip home-group leaders for biblical counseling ministry at EBC. The effectiveness of this task was measured by soliciting input from these leaders at the beginning and the end of the project, then evaluating their comprehension and acceptance of the concepts taught to them. Success was measured by the degree to which biblical counseling was embraced by the home-group leaders, especially as noted by changes in their thinking.

Definitions and Limitations

For the purpose of this project, “biblical counseling” was defined as follows:

Biblical counseling is the Spirit-empowered process of one Christian coming along side another with words of encouragement, admonition, comfort and help, drawn from Scripture and presented in the context of relationship towards both God and man. The goal of this counseling is that the brother or sister in need of spiritual counsel would grow in his understanding of how the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ

speaks to every area of his life (directly and indirectly) and that he would respond, by God's grace (based upon his union in Christ) to God's truth in grateful obedience (imperatives) in every circumstance to the building up of the church, the evangelization of the lost, and all for the glory of God.³²

Thus, biblical counseling is not aimed at solving medically-caused behavioral problems, nor is it applicable to non-Christians except as a means of presenting the gospel to them. It primarily targets believers and deals with their ongoing, life-long walk in Christ.

The specific audience of this project was limited to the home-group leaders at EBC. I anticipated that approximately thirty individuals would be involved. Many of the home-group leaders also served on other ministry teams at the church, including the deacon, deaconess, Christian education, trustee, worship and missionary teams. Hence, this group of people were in a position to have a significant impact upon the entire congregation in terms of promoting the implementation of biblical counseling even beyond the specific home-groups that they lead.

Total duration of the project was fifteen weeks. There were thirteen classroom times, each consisting of seventy-five minutes on Sunday mornings. The first week was a time of gathering data from the group concerning their initial understanding of biblical counseling. The next twelve weeks consisted of a teaching time in which the basic tenets of a biblical counseling ministry were explained. During the final classroom session, data were collected to measure the change and growth that might have occurred with respect to the group's comprehension of biblical counseling. Week 14 was used to analyze the data and assess the impact of the project with a view toward future activities associated with growing a biblical counseling ministry at EBC. The fifteenth week consisted of a time of reflection upon my personal growth through this project, as well as an overall evaluation of the project's strengths and weaknesses.

³²Stuart W. Scott, "What Biblical Counseling Is" (classroom lecture notes, 80511—*Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, Summer 2009), 2.

Research Methodology

As previously noted, this project was designed to introduce the fundamental philosophy of ministry associated with biblical counseling to the home-group leaders of EBC. Between 40 and 50 percent of the church's congregation participate in small groups. These small groups are Bible study groups of approximately ten people that meet in homes once a week. While the specific number of home-groups fluctuates from quarter to quarter, EBC has averaged between thirty and forty of these groups over the past four years.

By targeting home-group leaders, my hope was that they, in turn, would be able to articulate and make application of most of the information they learned within their own home-groups. The over-arching goal, of course, was to see the dynamic concept of biblical counseling embraced by the bulk of EBC's congregation. Home-group leaders have an excellent opportunity to apply various principles of biblical counseling within their groups, since a portion of the group time is given over to sharing with and praying for one another.

All current home-group leaders were invited to participate in this project. While participation was voluntary, those who chose to do so were asked to commit to a thirteen-week course of classroom time on Sunday mornings. The length of each class was seventy-five minutes. Sunday morning was chosen because it represents a time-slot in which most, if not all, of the home-group leaders will be available.

This fifteen-week project can be broken down into five phases. Phase 1 involved gathering personal data and information concerning the participants' present understanding of biblical counseling. This was accomplished via a questionnaire given during the first class period. These data were compiled during the first week of the project.

Phase 2 of the project consisted of teaching twelve classes that dealt with a basic understanding of biblical counseling and its role within the church community. Critical theological foundations were addressed, along with the practical implications of

those foundations. As part of this project, I assembled this curriculum and taught each class.

Phase 3 began during the last class (week 13). At this point, the same questionnaire (minus the personal data) that was issued during the first class was given again to the participants. An analysis of this data was used to determine the growth in personal understanding of biblical counseling by those who took the class. In addition, an invitation was extended to the participants to move onto more formal training in biblical counseling through ACBC teaching seminars, as well as the biblical counseling tracks offered at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Furthermore, in our last session together, I solicited information via a participant questionnaire that provided data regarding the clarity and effectiveness of my teaching over the past twelve weeks. This information was used in the development of my personal growth.

Phase 4 of this project took place during week 14. It consisted of an analysis of data gathered at the beginning and the end of the project. These data consisted of a pre-project survey administered during the first session and a post-project survey collected in the last session. The same survey was used on both occasions, and analysis involved comparing survey results to detect understanding and acceptance of biblical counseling principles on the part of the participants. Upon completion of that analysis, I met with the elders of EBC to determine additional ways in which we, as church leaders, could advance biblical counseling within our church. This included both the formal and informal aspects of biblical counseling. “Formal,” refers to specialized training necessary to handle some of the more difficult situations within the church. “Informal” deals with the encouragement of our congregation to come alongside one another in a discipleship-counseling mode.

Phase 5 occurred during week 15 of the project, which was an assessment of my personal growth through this project. It involved a reflection upon the writing of the curriculum used and the feedback from the participants. I used this information to

pinpoint specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. This assessment was quite valuable as I look to the future in leading the development of a biblical counseling ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
PURSUING A BIBLICAL COUNSELING
MINISTRY WITHIN THE CHURCH

The practice of using the Bible to “counsel” people is not a new phenomenon. In a general sense, the use of Scripture to address life and life’s problems extends back as far as the written Word of God has been around. David Powlison notes, “Godly people, wise and experienced in living the Word, have applied God’s Word to the problems of life in all times and places.”¹ In tracing the recent history of biblical counseling within the church, Powlison points out that “identifiable biblical counseling” appeared in pastoral writings during the 1800s.² Heath Lambert notes that it is particularly evident in the writings of the Puritans:

The Puritans took counseling seriously. They didn’t call it counseling, but they believed that ministry was important, and they began a particularly rich period in theological thought regarding personal ministry of the Word. Those men wrote hundreds of works to help people deal with their problems in living.³

Yet, despite the historical roots of biblical counseling, using Scripture as the primary means to counsel others has become a source of controversy within the overall Christian community. David Powlison believes that the reason for the current debate and controversy surrounding biblical counseling can be traced back to a steady decline in the

¹David Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times,” in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, by John MacArthur, Wayne A. Mack, and The Master’s College Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 21.

²Ibid., 18.

³Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 25.

use of Scripture to address personal problems, a decline that began during the late nineteenth century and extended well into the twentieth century. Powlison states,

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, American Christians basically lost the use of truths and skills they formerly possessed. That is, practical wisdom in the cure of souls waned, even while the conservative church, by definition, retained its grasp upon orthodox doctrine, biblical moral absolutes, the spiritual disciplines, and missionary calling. The church lost that crucial component of pastoral skill that can be called *case-wisdom*: wisdom that knows people, knows how people change, and knows how to help people change.⁴

Powlison cites “liberal theology and secular psychology” as foundational replacements for the application of Scripture in the counseling domain.⁵ In tracing that changing emphasis, he explains how conservative churches were significantly impacted in the realm of counseling by certain trends:

In general, conservative Christians simply did not talk or write about counseling. And when they did begin to think about and practice counseling, they adopted the powerful paradigms of the encircling secular psychologies and liberal pastoral theologies. The presuppositions for both practice and thought were neither exposed by nor subjected to biblical analysis.⁶

The ramifications of these trends linger strongly today. However, since the 1960s, use of the Bible in counseling has been making a comeback, fueled in particular by the publishing of *Competent to Counsel* by Jay Adams in 1970.⁷ This resurgence has clashed with the secular counseling methodologies which had gained dominance over past decades, even within the church. Many people within the Christian community view the resurgence of Bible-centered counseling with skepticism, often seeking to discard or severely limit the Bible’s role in the counseling process. Hinson and Eyrich describe some common misperceptions of biblical counselors:

⁴Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times,” 18.

⁵Ibid., 19.

⁶Ibid., 21.

⁷David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009), 352.

For too long now, biblical counseling has been misunderstood or misrepresented as a simplistic approach to the complex problems of human nature. Pejorative labels like “Bible Bangers,” “Nothing Buttery,” “obscurantist,” and “irrelevant” have been used to criticize biblical counselors. They are generally represented as non-professionals interfering in various areas of the psychological domain, where they are said to have no business practicing their supposedly inadequate approach to counseling.⁸

Within the rather broad and diverse field of “Christian counseling,” the prevailing sentiment does not openly call for the elimination of Scripture from counseling. Nevertheless, Scripture is frequently replaced by (or placed in subservience to) various theories emanating from the field of psychology. Examples of such approaches are plentiful, including those discussed by Jones and Bultman,⁹ Johnson and Jones,¹⁰ and McMinn and Campbell.¹¹

Yet, it would seem reasonable for any local church that is strongly committed to the authority of God’s Word to ensure that its counseling ministry rests upon a more solid foundation than merely the shifting opinions and practices of man. To that end, one finds that Scripture has much to say about the issues that drive people to seek counseling. That is not surprising, given the fact that the Author of Scripture is also the Creator of man. Instead of driving God’s people to another source, life’s problems and difficulties can be handled successfully by utilizing the resources that Christ Himself has placed at the disposal of His church. Indeed, this is the expectation and promise that one sees reflected in God’s Word.

Prior to examining several such passages, a definition of biblical counseling is in order. Undoubtedly, there are a variety of notions about what constitutes biblical (or

⁸Ed Hindson and Howard Eyrich, eds., *Totally Sufficient* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004), 11.

⁹Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 425.

¹⁰Eric L. Johnson and Stanton Jones, eds., *Psychology & Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 271.

¹¹Mark R. McMinn and Clark D. Campbell, *Integrative Psychotherapy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 403.

“Christian”) counseling. Therefore, at Emmanuel Baptist Church, biblical counseling is defined as follows:

Biblical counseling is the Spirit-empowered process of one Christian coming along side another with words of encouragement, admonition, comfort and help, drawn from Scripture and presented in the context of relationship towards both God and man. The goal of this counseling is that the brother or sister in need of spiritual counsel would grow in his understanding of how the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to every area of his life (directly and indirectly) and that he would respond, by God’s grace (based upon his union in Christ) to God’s truth in grateful obedience (imperatives) in every circumstance to the building up of the church, the evangelization of the lost, and all for the glory of God.¹²

Clearly, the implementation of such a ministry is dependent upon a high view of Scripture in terms of its authority and sufficiency in the life of the believer. Scripture itself makes such claims upon the lives of God’s people, both in the Old and New Testaments. Several passages make this point quite strikingly.

New Testament Texts

Second Peter 1:2-4

One of the most instructive texts with respect to biblical counseling is 2 Peter 1:2-4:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The apostle Peter prays that his readers will experience grace (χάρις) and peace (εἰρήνη), both of which are sourced in the knowledge (ἐπιγνώσει) of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Based on the Granville Sharp rule,¹³ Meisinger believes that the phrase “of God and of

¹²Stuart W. Scott, “What Biblical Counseling Is” (classroom lecture notes, 80511—*Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, Summer 2009), 2.

¹³“When the copulative καὶ connects two nouns of the same case, if the article ὁ or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle; i.e., it denotes a farther description of the first-named person.” H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the*

Jesus our Lord” has one Person, not two, in view.¹⁴ As a direct reference to Christ’s deity, it means that Christ is able to provide the “all things” of verse 4. Peter’s affirmation of Christ’s deity is found in numerous other places in Scripture, such as Paul’s writings to the Colossians (Col 1:16, 19) and Philipians (Phil 2:5-8).

The believer’s appropriation of grace and peace is to increase or be “multiplied” (πληθυνθειη) as a result of his knowledge associated with Christ. Abbott-Smith define the root word of this knowledge (ἐπιγνωσις) as referring to “acquaintance, discernment, recognition,”¹⁵ hence the thought here is one of a personal relationship. As noted by Walls and Anders, the verse has a relational tone throughout: “This knowledge is not an academic or theoretical knowledge. It is a personal knowledge. It is a knowledge that grows because a person begins to know someone fully and to understand that person’s heart.”¹⁶ Thomas describes it as “full or mature knowledge,” adding that “all spiritual grace comes from our personal knowledge and experience of God.”¹⁷

Barbieri sees Peter’s inclusion of this statement as significant, particularly his use of the word ἐπιγνώσει.

The insertion of the word “knowledge” is significant. The people to whom Peter was writing were being deceived by individuals who claimed to have a true knowledge of God and of Christ, but who exhibited immoral behavior. Quite possibly “knowledge” was one of their catchwords, and Peter uses that word to attract attention.¹⁸

Greek New Testament (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), 147.

¹⁴George E. Meisinger, “The Sufficiency of Scripture for Life and Godliness,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 1, no. 2 (1995): 6.

¹⁵G. Abott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977), 168.

¹⁶David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II, III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 108.

¹⁷Griffith Thomas, *2 Peter*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 262.

¹⁸Lou Barbieri, *First & Second Peter*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary

Green concurs, noting that “true knowledge of God and Christ produces grace and peace in the life; what is more, it produces holiness (v. 3). The whole New Testament unites in denouncing a profession of faith which makes no difference to behavior.”¹⁹ Barbieri also points out the relational context of Peter’s thought in connection with one’s knowledge of Christ: “The Christian life is never static, but it is a growing thing. Growth is dependent on the knowledge of God and Christ. As the Christian acquires greater knowledge, grace and peace will be multiplied in life.”²⁰

Peter assures the believer that the One who called us to Himself will, through His divine power, grant to us “everything pertaining to life and godliness.” Green points out, “It is not entirely certain whether Jesus or the Father is conceived of as issuing the call and offering the divine power. . . . But Jesus is the last person mentioned, and the *glory and virtue* are more appropriate to Him than the Father.”²¹ Regardless, the main point here is that “the One who calls, enables.”²² Griffith Thomas states, “This is the adequate and permanent assurance to the believer of the provision for his life.”²³ Wayne Mack describes the counseling significance of Peter’s words:

Perhaps there is no better summary of the Bible’s teaching about our complete sufficiency in Christ than the one given by the apostle Peter when he wrote that by His divine power God “has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). “Life” has to do with everything that we experience on the horizontal plain—in terms of what it takes to live effectively and biblically in our daily activities and relationships with our environment and other people. “Godliness”

(Chicago: Moody, 2003), 107.

¹⁹Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 18 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 62.

²⁰Barbieri, *First & Second Peter*, 107.

²¹Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, 63.

²²Ibid.

²³Thomas, *2 Peter*, 263.

has to do with our relationship with God—with living a God-centered, God-conscious life marked by godly character and conduct.²⁴

Hempy concurs and believes that this passage “may be the greatest concise passage on the sufficiency of Scripture.”²⁵ It is important not to minimize Peter’s declaration that believers have been given all things, everything (πάντα) that needed in this life. Ed Bulkley focuses on the importance of this passage:

Note the word *everything*. God has provided absolutely *everything* man needs for physical and spiritual life. This is a primary consideration. If Peter is correct, then God has given us all the information we need to function successfully in this life. *Every* essential truth, *every* essential principle, *every* essential technique for solving human problems has been delivered in God’s Word.²⁶

Counselors who prefer a blend of psychology and Scripture tend to disagree with such an understanding of this text. For example, Eric Johnson, states that “it has to be pointed out that Scripture is not mentioned here, and good exegetes differ as to what exactly is being referred to by ‘everything.’”²⁷ Lambert discusses Johnson’s point, noting that “the argument is that Peter does not identify Scripture as the source of all things needful but rather God himself as the source.”²⁸ He goes on to state,

This point is certainly correct—as far as it goes. God gives Christians the power to live lives fully pleasing to him, but how do we have access to such divine power? Peter explained that this power comes through the knowledge of Christ manifested in his precious and great promises. The word “Scripture” is not used here, but no faithful Christian interpretation of Peter’s words could conclude that a person has access to this knowledge of Jesus Christ and his promises *apart from Scripture*.²⁹

²⁴Wayne A. Mack, “The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 9, no. 1 (1998): 80-81.

²⁵Robert A. Hempy, Jr., “The Sufficiency of Scripture and Modern Psychology,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 4, no. 1 (1998): 12.

²⁶Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can’t Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 268.

²⁷Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 118.

²⁸Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 13.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 14.

Johnson also argues that “everything” is vague and “provides no sure basis for the conclusion that the Bible contains all the information one may use in psychology or counseling, and excludes all other sources.”³⁰ Again, Lambert responds with a view toward biblical counseling:

Such an argument, however, has never been made by biblical counselors. The carefully developed view of the biblical counseling movement is not that the Scriptures provide Christians with all of the information we *desire* but rather with the understanding we *need* to do *counseling ministry*.³¹

Similarly, Michael Green notes that the One who calls, enables, although “He does not give all we might like, but all that we need for life and godliness (cf. 1 Thes. 4:7f).”³² As Thomas puts it, everything we need “for the commencement, continuance, and completion of the Christian life is thus provided. The certainty and encouragement of this assurance is evident.”³³ Clearly, this is great encouragement for everyone involved in biblical counseling.

God has provided everything that a believer needs to live a Christ-honoring life, but Peter also points out that He has given believers the “process” to access His resources: “He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises” (v. 4a).

Thomas calls this the “channel” of what Christ gives His people:

These are God’s means of bringing us into the knowledge of him and thereby providing us with all things needed for life and godliness. The promises of the Gospel include all, whether of the old or new covenants (See 2 Corinthians 1:20; 7:1; Galatians 3:14, 22, Ephesians 1:13; Hebrews 9:15; 10:36; 11:9, 11, 13, 39).³⁴

“By them you may become partakers (*κοινωνοὶ*) (sharers/companions) of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (v. 4b). Christians become

³⁰Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care*, 118.

³¹Scott and Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, 14.

³²Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, 63.

³³Thomas, *2 Peter*, 263.

³⁴*Ibid.*

partakers in the very life that belongs to God from the moment a person places faith in Christ.

However, sharing in that life is a growing thing; it is not static. D. Edmond Hiebert points out,

These promises, embodied in Christ and His gospel, are the objective means through which the divine life is communicated (1 Peter 1:23). The verb “ye may become” (*genesthe*) basically denotes a process and implies the ongoing growth that must characterize the Christian life.³⁵

In connection with the previous definition of biblical counseling, there is a progressive nature to every believer’s growth in Christ. Anders and Walls note the following in connection with this process:

That is, we are able to move closer to God and further away from the sinful culture. Participating in the divine nature simply means that as believers, through the power of the Spirit, we begin to change positively and demonstrate more and more of the character of God in our lives. . . . As a result we escape the internal decay or rottenness that accompanies so much of the evil desires of the world.³⁶

Furthermore, it is important to understand that it is the individual Christian in focus here, not the church as a whole. Sidebottom states, “The believer shares in a divine nature instead of a worldly one. It is remarkable that it is the individual who is to attain this, and not the Christian body as a whole.”³⁷ For the individual man or woman, Thomas says, “This is the culmination of redemption—union and communion with God (1 John 1:3).”³⁸

The change process is highlighted in Peter’s statement of the Christian “having escaped the corruption (*φθορᾶς*) that is in the world by lust.” Again, Thomas emphasizes

³⁵D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude* (Greenville, SC: BJU, 1989), 48.

³⁶Max Anders and David Walls, *I & II Peter*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 109.

³⁷E. M. Sidebottom, *James, Jude, and 2 Peter*, New Century Bible Series (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), 107.

³⁸Thomas, *2 Peter*, 163.

the progressive nature of the Christian's outward change: "In the Greek, these words occur after 'and become partaker of the divine nature,' suggesting that the partaking enables the escape rather than that the escape is the means to 'deification' as in the contemporary Hellenistic beliefs."³⁹

Given God's abundant provision for spiritual growth, it is sad that every Christian does not avail himself of such a wonderful opportunity. Speaking of Christians who fail to avail themselves of the provisions given them in Christ, John MacArthur notes,

As if the riches of God's grace (Eph. 1:7) were not enough, as if "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3) were not sufficient, they try to supplement the resources that are theirs in Christ. They spend their lives pointlessly accumulating sensational experiences, novel teachings, clever gurus, or whatever else they can find to add to their hoard of spiritual experiences. Practically all of it is utterly worthless. Yet some people pack themselves so full of these diversions that they can't find the door to the truth that would set them free.⁴⁰

Second Timothy 3:16-17

Alongside of 2 Peter 1:3-4, biblical counselors also see 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as an extremely valuable, supportive, and undergirding passage: "All of Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." This is a powerful text, but it is not without its difficulties, particularly in connection with the opening phrase *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος*. Knight summarizes the questions surrounding this phrase:

Does *γραφὴ* refer here to various passages of scripture or is it used as a collective, and if the latter, what collection does it refer to? Does *πᾶσα* mean "every" or "all"? Is *θεόπνευστος* active or passive in meaning? Does it function as an attributive adjective ("God-breathed scripture") or as a predicate adjective ("scripture is God-breathed")? In other words, where should the understood verb "is" be placed, after *γραφὴ* ("scripture is God-breathed") or after *θεόπνευστος* ("God-breathed scripture is...")? This in turn is tied to whether *καὶ* is a conjunction between *θεόπνευστος*

³⁹Thomas, *2 Peter*, 106.

⁴⁰John F. MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 39.

and ὠφέλιμος (“God-breathed and profitable”) or adjunctive adverb “also” (God-breathed scripture is also profitable”).⁴¹

With respect to γραφή, Knight points out that the term “was used in the Greek of the day for any piece of writing, but in the NT it is used only of Holy Scripture.”⁴² Donald Guthrie agrees, saying that “γραφή could mean any writing, but the uniform New Testament use of it with reference to Scripture (i.e. the Old Testament) determines its meaning here.”⁴³ Young notices a “considerable variety in translation” of γραφή with respect to English Bible versions, yet “it is interesting to note that each of these translations uses the English word ‘scripture.’ None of them renders the word *graphe* as ‘writing,’ but each is apparently convinced that the apostle is speaking of Scripture.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, the term need not be limited to just to Old Testament. Kent describes how both the Old and the New Testaments fall under Paul’s assertion in this passage:

Graphe is without the article, thus qualitative, and emphasizes that all that can lay claim to the quality of divine Scripture is God-breathed. Since only the Old Testament was complete at this time, Paul’s reference must be primarily to it, but the qualitative emphasis leaves room for the New Testament to be considered by later Christians as within the scope of this assertion.⁴⁵

John Stott notes that although Paul never referred to his own epistles as “Scripture,” it is perfectly appropriate to consider them so:

Nevertheless, on a number of occasions he gets very near it, and he certainly directs that his letters be read publicly in the Christian assemblies, no doubt alongside of Old Testament readings (e.g. Col. 4:16; 1 Thes. 5:27). Several times he claims to be

⁴¹George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 444.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 445.

⁴³Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 163.

⁴⁴Edward J. Young, “The God-Breathed Scripture: Scripture—God-Breathed and Profitable,” *Grace Journal* 7, no. 3 (1966): 5-6.

⁴⁵Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 290.

speaking in the name and with the authority of Christ (e.g. 2 Cor. 2:17; 13:3; Gal. 4:14), and calls his message “the word of God” (e.g. 1 Thes. 2:13). Once he says that, in communicating to others what God has revealed to him, he uses “words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:13). This is a claim to inspiration, indeed to verbal inspiration, which is the distinctive characteristic of “Scripture.” Peter clearly regarded Paul’s letters as Scripture, for in referring to them he calls the Old Testament “the other scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16). In addition, it seems evident that Paul envisaged the possibility of a Christian supplement to the Old Testament because he could combine a quotation from Deuteronomy (25:4) with a saying of Jesus recorded by Luke (10:7) and calls both alike “Scripture” (1 Tim. 5:18).⁴⁶

The salient point here, of course, is that Paul’s term *γραφή* is most accurately viewed as a reference to all Scripture collectively.

That, in turn, helps to determine the best translation of *πᾶσα*, i.e., whether it means “all” or “every.” Since the subject is without the article, Hiebert points out that it would commonly mean “every scripture.”⁴⁷ However, he goes on to note that “if ‘every scripture’ is inspired then Scripture in its entirety is also inspired, hence ‘all scripture’ is equally possible as a rendering.”⁴⁸ H. Wayne House further explains,

In concurrence with the observation of Guthrie, *πᾶς* when used with an anarthrous noun is translated “every” in order to call attention to the individual members of the class denoted by the noun. However, when the noun accompanying *πᾶς* is a proper noun or collective term, the adjective may be translated “the whole” or “all.”⁴⁹

In his discussion of the various uses and translations of *πᾶς*, Moule cites 2 Timothy 3:16 and states that *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος* “is most unlikely to mean *every inspired scripture*, and much more probably means *the whole of scripture [is] inspired.*”⁵⁰ Yet, as already noted by Hiebert, Hendriksen states, “But even if the rendering ‘every scripture’

⁴⁶John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 101.

⁴⁷D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 100.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹H. Wayne House, “Biblical Inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137, no. 545 (1980): 55.

⁵⁰C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 95.

be accepted, the resultant meaning would not differ greatly, for if ‘every scripture’ is inspired, ‘all scripture’ must be inspired also.”⁵¹

Most pertinent to the authority vested in this verse concerns the term *θεόπνευστος*. Is the term passive or active in meaning? Does it function as an attributive adjective or as a predicate adjective? Knight describes the inherent meaning of this term: “*θεόπνευστος* (a biblical hapax) is a compound of the word for God, *θεός*, and the verb “breathe,” *πνέω*, using the first aorist stem *πνευσ-*, with the verbal adjective ending *-τος*. The word may be properly rendered ‘God-breathed’”⁵² Ryrie states that *θεόπνευστος* is passive, “meaning that the Bible is the result of the breath of God.”⁵³ He elaborates,

If, by contrast, the form were active, then it would mean that the Bible exudes or speaks of God. Of course, that is true, but it is not what Paul said in this verse. Our English word “inspire” carries the idea of breathing into something. But this word tells us that God breathed out something, namely the Scripture. To be sure, human authors wrote the texts, but the Bible originated as an action of God who breathed it out.⁵⁴

Cook stresses the importance of a proper understanding of the idea of “inspired” in this passage:

Inspiration is actually a very poor word to convey the idea found in the original text. A more exact English equivalent would be “expiration,” although in modern English this word also has a different sense than that to which we refer at this point. The truth of Biblical inspiration involves the latent sense of a breathing out not a breathing in as the English term suggests.⁵⁵

Young, in his treatment of this passage in connection with *θεόπνευστος*, points out that, in order for Paul to make his intended point, the term must be passive “because he wished to

⁵¹William Hendriksen, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 301.

⁵²Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 446.

⁵³Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 78.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵W. Robert Cook, *Systematic Theology in Outline Form* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 1:36.

make as clear as possible the fact that the Scriptures did not find their origin in man but in God.”⁵⁶ Instead, they were the product of the creative breath of God Himself:

It is a strong figure, this expression “breathed out by God.” A strong figure, however, is needed, in order that Timothy may realize that he is being asked to place his confidence not in writings which merely express the hopes and aspirations of the best of men, but rather in writings which are themselves actually breathed out by God, and consequently of absolute authority.⁵⁷

Walvoord concurs, stating, “Second Timothy 3:16 is therefore a flat affirmation that the Bible in distinction to all other literary works is a product of divine power and intelligent will. The Bible is the ‘breath of God.’”⁵⁸

Geoffrey states it well,

It is precisely because all Scripture is God-breathed that it is so universally profitable. The Word of God provides a complete guide to doctrine and practice. As doctrine, it is profitable for teaching the truth and for refuting all falsehood. As to practice, it is profitable for restoring the fallen and for training in all righteous living.⁵⁹

Specifically, Paul says that God’s Word is *ὠφέλιμος*; that is, it is “useful, beneficial, advantageous,”⁶⁰ or “useful, serviceable, profitable.”⁶¹ And Paul lists four specific areas in which Scripture is of such use. The first is in the area of “teaching” or “instructing” (*διδασκαλίαν*). It is from Scripture that Christians learn doctrinal truth. It is profitable for “reproof” (*ἐλεγμὸν*), that is, as noted by Fee, rebuking in the sense of

⁵⁶Edward J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 21.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸John F. Walvoord, “Contemporary Problems in Biblical Interpretation, Part I: Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116, no. 461 (1959): 6.

⁵⁹Geoffrey B. Wilson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 157.

⁶⁰William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 909.

⁶¹Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon*, 491.

exposing the errors of false teachers and their teachings.⁶² It is profitable for “correction” (ἐπανόρθωσιν). This word occurs only here in the New Testament, and Fee sees it as “a companion of rebuking, but emphasizes the behavioral, ethical side of things.”⁶³ And it is profitable for “training in righteousness” (παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ). In connection with this kind of training, Robert Preus states,

Righteousness: the way in which we are to live. Scripture trains us, educates in the way we are to walk as children of God, whether we are a Timothy or a layperson. In short, Paul tells us, in the Bible God teaches us all that we are to believe and do. And notice that Paul says that Scriptures make the man of God perfect; that is an old English word which really means totally equipped. It makes every man of God equipped in every direction, fully prepared for every exigency, fully informed for every emergency of life or death.⁶⁴

This ultimate purpose of Scripture’s profitableness is expressed by the conjunction, ἵνα. And that purpose, as Knight points out, is so that the “man (person) of God” (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος) “may be complete, capable, complete” (ἄρτιος ἦ) in the sense of being “able to meet all demands” that come into the life of believers.⁶⁵ Knight summarizes such purpose,

The concluding participial phrase strengthens the ἵνα clause by affirming that “the person of God” has been “equipped” by Scripture “for every kind of good work.” ἐξηρτισμένος, the perfect passive participle of ἐξαρτίζω, is used here with the meaning “having been equipped” or “having been fully equipped.” . . . That for which (πρὸς) the person of God has been equipped is πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν, i.e., every aspect and task of the Christian life.⁶⁶

To be so equipped means that believers are able to fulfill their charge to live fruitful lives before the Lord, as they are called to do in passages such as Ephesians 2:10 and 2 Timothy 2:21. Christians are not dependent of their own resources, nor upon the resources of secular pursuits. In one’s relationship with Christ, God has provided the

⁶²Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 280.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Robert C. Preus, “Scripture: God’s Word and God’s Power,” in *Can We Trust the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1979), 64.

⁶⁵Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 450.

⁶⁶Ibid.

surety of his Word for all of life. Whatever situation the Christians encounters, God has provided scriptural principles by which the believer can operate with confidence.

Taken together, 2 Peter 1:2-4 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 are two passages that provide a most sound foundation for biblical counseling. The first declares that believers, in their relationship with the risen Christ, have been given everything needed for this life to be lived in a Christ-honoring way. Through understanding and application of God's Word, they can grow progressively more like Him. Furthermore, believers can place confidence in the entire Bible, inasmuch as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 asserts that all of Scripture is divine in origin and profitable in progressive sanctification. Of course, other New Testament passages also offer support for the methodology of biblical counseling.

Hebrews 4:12

One of those passages is Hebrews 4:12, which speaks to the penetrating power of God's Word in a believer's life: "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The immediate context of this verse involves a warning against operating independently from God and His will. Such independence leads to a disobedient lifestyle, a life not in harmony with God's expressed will.

The most effective antidote or correction for such behavior in the life of a Christian is to use Scripture to probe his motivation. Ray Stedman speaks of the scrutiny afforded the believer by God's Word:

David asks, in Psalm 19:12, "Who can discern his errors?" The answer he gives in the psalm and that of the writer of Hebrews is the same. Only the Word of God, which is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, is capable of exposing the thoughts and attitudes of a single human heart! We do not know ourselves. We do not even know how to distinguish, by feelings or rationale, between that which comes from our souls (*psyches*) and from our spirits (*pneumas*). Even our bodily functions (symbolized here by *joints and marrow*) are beyond our

full knowledge. Only the all-seeing eye of God knows us thoroughly and totally (Ps. 139:1-18), and before him we will stand and ultimately give account.⁶⁷

Stedman goes on to state the importance of using Scripture for this task, as opposed to other sources one might apply to one's situation:

Plainly, Scripture is the only reliable guide we have to function properly as a human in a broken world. Philosophy and psychology give partial insights, based on human experience, but they fall far short of what the Word of God can do. It is not intended to replace human knowledge and effort, but is designed to supplement and correct them. . . . This uniqueness of Scripture is the reason that all true human discovery in any dimension must fit within the limits of divine disclosure. Human knowledge can never outstrip divine revelation.⁶⁸

The penetrating power of God's Word is another reason that the Bible is so valuable to counselors, for it is able to effect change, as summarized by Hughes:

God's Word is effectual—"living and active." It does what it promises to do. It regards neither age nor education. It can change you if you are twelve or 102. This is why I take seriously every child who sits under God's Word. If you will listen to God's Word, it will change your life. This truth is both a promise and a warning to all of us—so "no one will fall by following their [Israel's] example of disobedience" (v. 11).⁶⁹

Compared to secular counseling methodologies, God's Word stands unique in its active nature. F. F. Bruce states,

For God's Word—that word which fell on disobedient ears in the wilderness and which has been sounded out again in these days of fulfillment—is not like the word of man; it is living, effective and self-fulfilling; it diagnoses the condition of the human heart, saying "Thou alilest here, and here"; it brings blessing to those who receive it in faith and pronounces judgment on those who disregard it.⁷⁰

This probing aspect of Scripture is invaluable in dealing with counselees. Philip Hughes points out the phrase "sharper than any two-edged sword" means "that as the instrument

⁶⁷Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 60.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews*, Preaching the Word, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993), 120.

⁷⁰F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 80.

of God's mighty acts it is more powerful and penetrating than the keenest instrument devised by man."⁷¹ Hughes states,

Nothing could be more inaccessible and intangible, humanly speaking, than the notions and motives concealed in the furthest depths of man's mind. No scalpel can dissect them, no electronic detector can discover them. Only God's word can pierce through to this intangible realm, and it does so in a manner that is both dynamic and critical. *The heart* here, of course, is not the anatomical organ, but designates, as constantly in Scripture, the central seat of human personality, the deep fount of man's life in all its aspects, spiritual, intellectual, moral, and emotional. It is here, in this radical center of human selfhood, that the word of God does its work. That is why the effects it produces are radical and critical for the being of man in its entirety. And that is why this sword of the Spirit, which the Christian is given to wield, is the most powerful weapon in the whole universe.⁷²

Hughes also quotes John Calvin, "There is nothing so hard and firm in a man, nothing so deeply hidden that the efficacy of the word does not penetrate through to it."⁷³

Today's Christian bookshelves contain many writings aimed at helping others, and a great many of these incorporate secular knowledge in place of Scripture, but, as J. Dwight Pentecost rightly notes, there is a tremendous difference between mere "book-learning" as opposed to the living Word of God:

No matter how much we have been helped by the plethora of Christian books offered in bookstores today, we should always remember that the Word of God is the only living book in the world. Further, it is the only book about which any of the statements in Hebrews 4:12 is true. Therefore, we would do well to spend at least as much time in the Word of God as we spend reading all other books combined.⁷⁴

The same is true in connection with the counseling methodology used by Christians in coming alongside one another in Christ. No "book-learning" apart from Scripture can produce the desired results most believers are seeking.

⁷¹Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 1977), 164.

⁷²Ibid., 166.

⁷³Ibid., 165.

⁷⁴J. Dwight Pentecost, *A Faith that Endures* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1992), 86

Colossians 1:28-29

Perhaps the task or goal of biblical counseling is nowhere better stated than in Colossians 1:28-29: “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” The biblical counselor proclaims (καταγγέλλομεν) Christ, admonishing (νουθετοῦντες) and teaching (διδάσκοντες) every person they counsel.

The reality of becoming more consistent in Christlikeness is a goal achievable by every believer. Such thinking flies in the face of many false teachers, as William Barclay notes in his description of the situation in Paul’s day,

That God wanted every man, that every man could be presented to God, would have seemed incredible and even blasphemous to a Jew. *The Gnostic* would never have agreed that every man could be warned and taught, and presented complete to God. As we have seen, he believed that the knowledge necessary for salvation was so involved and elaborate and difficult that it must be the possession of the spiritual aristocracy and of the chosen few.⁷⁵

Often, it seems, in the arena of counseling, there appears to be almost a “gnostic” approach. Professional counselors are frequently viewed as a kind of “aristocracy.” Christians may well think of themselves as “hopeless” and devoid of the “knowledge” necessary to deal with trials and difficulties in their lives. Yet, this passage (in conjunction with those previously mentioned) clearly points to an encouraging reality that is attainable by any believer. Every person in Christ has the Word and the Holy Spirit available to help and guide them in life. Believers must remember who they are in Christ, and not merely view themselves in comparison with (or dependent upon) worldly accomplishments.⁷⁶

⁷⁵William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 152.

⁷⁶See appendix 2 for more perspective on Col 1:28-29.

Ephesians 4:17-24

In setting forth a biblical and theological foundation for biblical counseling, it is difficult to move on without taking note of Ephesians 4:17-24. This passage speaks of personal change and the new way of life that is opened by a person coming to Christ:

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Biblical counselors primarily work with men and women who know Christ as Lord and Savior. Biblical counseling is not applicable to non-believers, except in some pre-conversion counseling designed to point out a person's need for Christ. Ephesians 4:17-24 describes the shift that occurs in a person's life as a result of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. One's pre-conversion thinking and lifestyle are supplanted by a new perspective on life due to divine intervention into the believer's life. By understanding the work of Christ in his life, the Christian is launched on his changed way of thinking and living. And, as Paul points out, this new direction is not completed upon salvation, but is something that takes place throughout one's earthly journey.

A more complete discussion concerning the exegesis of this passage is presented in appendix 2, but the overall thrust of Ephesians 4:17-24 concerns the ongoing nature of sanctification, as the believer "changes clothes" in practical ways throughout his life. MacArthur explains the ongoing nature of the transition, which begins at the believer's new birth:

When a person becomes a Christian, God initially renews his mind, giving it a completely new spiritual and moral capability—a capability that the most brilliant and educated mind apart from Christ can never achieve (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-16). This renewal continues through the believer's life as he is obedient to the Word and will

of God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). The process is not a one-time accomplishment but the continual work of the Spirit in the child of God (Titus 3:5).⁷⁷

With respect to “being renewed,” Hoehner concurs with MacArthur: “The present tense suggests that the renewal of the mind is a repeated process throughout the believer’s life, which is in contrast to the inceptive act involved in putting off the old person (v. 22) and putting on the new person (v. 24).”⁷⁸ Naturally, as Wuest points out, “This renewal is, of course, accomplished by the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹

Clearly, this text offers significant support for biblical counseling. Aside from the effects of demonstrable organic illness, a Christian can experience dramatic changes in his ways of thinking and acting based upon his union with Christ. No case is hopeless, no case is beyond the touch of Christ in terms of significant change.

Old Testament Texts

Psalm 19:7-14

The New Testament is clear about the sufficiency of Scripture for the purposes of biblical counseling. The Old Testament attests to the same. Within the pages of Old Testament Scripture, many of the examples, illustrations, and admonitions drawn from everyday life are directly applicable to counselees today. In addition, the Old Testament is replete with passages that extol a high view of God and His Word. Certainly, there were counter philosophies in existence throughout the timespan of the Old Testament, philosophies and worldly wisdom that stood in opposition to Scripture. However, the sufficiency of God’s Word for faith and the practice of all aspects of life is repeatedly acknowledged in numerous passages. Limited space does not allow for more than a

⁷⁷John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 177-78.

⁷⁸Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 607.

⁷⁹Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), 110.

cursory examination of such passages, but Psalm 19:7-14 serves as an excellent example of the value of using God's Word in a person's life:

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

The structure of Psalm 19 speaks of God in two respects. The first half of this psalm, speaks of God's glory as it is manifested in the created world. In the second half, verses 7-14, David transitions to the more detailed revelation that God has given man in His recorded written Word, the Scriptures. In short, David views the written Word as the pinnacle of God's revelation to people.

Several terms are used in connection with Scripture,⁸⁰ but all of them are direct references to the written Word of God. David also uses adjectives in connection with his names for Scripture, and these adjectives attest to the value of the Bible in connection with counseling. David calls God's Word "perfect," that is, as Leupold notes, perfect "in the sense of being all-sided so as to cover completely all aspects of life."⁸¹ His Word is "sure." Plumer states, His Word is thus "reliable, durable, faithful, trustworthy, standing fast, to be believed. *Sure*, in Hebrew a participle of the verb, from which the adverb amen is formed. There is no doubt about a thing, if God once says it."⁸²

Moreover, God's Word is "right," about which Murphy states, "None but He can penetrate into our nature or understand our circumstances, so as to adapt His

⁸⁰See appendix 2 for more on these terms.

⁸¹H. C. Leupold, *The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 182.

⁸²William S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 257.

commissions to our case. They come from the upright One, and do not therefore incline to either hand from the straight line of equity.”⁸³ His Word is also “pure.” In other words, as Spurgeon states, “No mixture of error defiles it, no stain of sin pollutes it; it is the unadulterated milk, the undiluted wine.”⁸⁴ His Word is “enduring forever.” Leupold comments, “Nor does it offer a mere chance of opinion which may lose its value shortly.”⁸⁵ Counseling methodologies of secular derivation have no such assurance. God’s Word is also “true” and “righteous,” prompting Spurgeon to note, “The judicial decisions of Jehovah, as revealed in the law, or illustrated in the history of his providence, are truth itself, and commend themselves to every truthful mind; not only is their power invincible, but their justice is unimpeachable.”⁸⁶

Such is the authority and wonder of God’s Word. G. Campbell Morgan summarizes the impact of David’s description of God’s Word:

To man, higher than all nature (see Ps. viii), an articulate message is given. A word is spoken. It is the great law of Jehovah—“perfect,” “sure,” “right,” “pure,” “clean,” “true,” “righteous.” Mark well the sevenfold description, and how perfectly all the needs of man are met.⁸⁷

With respect to these six modifiers, Ron Allen comments, “Each may be studied by itself. But we are meant to receive the cumulative impression that all six give us together.”⁸⁸ He goes on to point out that “when they are all sounded in concert, the full impression is

⁸³James G. Murphy, *The Book of Psalms* (Minneapolis: James Family, 1994), 158.

⁸⁴C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (McClean, VA: MacDonald, 1980), 1:273.

⁸⁵Leupold, *The Psalms*, 182.

⁸⁶Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 1:273.

⁸⁷G. Campbell Morgan, *Notes on the Psalms* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1947), 43.

⁸⁸Ronald B. Allen, *Praise! A Matter of Life and Breath* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), 141.

of the wisdom, grace, authority, and majesty of God’s written revelation,” which results in “an inescapable impression of the *quality* of Scripture as an expression of the character of God.”⁸⁹

Indeed, David speaks of several specific beneficial effects of Scripture upon a person. It is “restoring” to the soul, which as Leupold notes, is “not to be thought of in the sense of conversion but rather as a beneficial reviving effect that permeates the very life and soul of a converted child of God.”⁹⁰ Or as described by Kirkpatrick, “Like food to the hungry (Lam. i. 11, 19); like comfort to the sorrowful and afflicted (Lam.i.16; Ruth iv.15).”⁹¹ Boice points out, “The connection between the law’s perfection and its ability to revive the soul is not easy to see at first glance, but it is found in the fact that being perfect means being so complete as to cover every aspect of life.”⁹² This is important from a counseling standpoint, because, like the New Testament, it is clear that Old Testament passages echo the sufficiency of God’s Word in connection with life and its problems. Accordingly, Boice goes on to describe the practical ramification of the usefulness of God’s Word for all of life:

It means that the Bible is not deficient in any way. It is an all-sufficient revelation. Therefore, no matter what our sins may have been or our problems are, the Bible is able to turn us from our sins, lead us through our problems, and both feed and enrich us so that we are able to enjoy the full benefits of spiritual life. Jesus testified to this when he told the devil, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).⁹³

Additional comments on this passage are presented in appendix 2, but in Psalm 19 the solid foundation of God’s Word for use in counseling situations is stated as well as

⁸⁹Allen, *Praise!*, 143.

⁹⁰Leupold, *The Psalms*, 182.

⁹¹A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 104.

⁹²James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 1:172.

⁹³Ibid.

in any other passage in the Bible. It's a psalm that brings much needed hope to a counselee, a hope not escaping the notice of Erling Olsen:

You may never have gone through one of the recognized halls of learning—much less graduated! You may not have a single degree behind your name. You may be even a simpleton; yet, if you desire wisdom, the only sure way to its attainment is by a study of the Word of God, and by obedience to the testimony of the Lord.⁹⁴

A well-founded trust in God's Word is of extreme value in today's post-modern era, where "truth" varies on a daily basis, or from person to person. This is even true of so many scientific endeavors where an understanding of truth has varied over the centuries. It provides security, certainty, and hope to the one looking for answers in this life to the problems he faces. Stuart Briscoe notes,

Much of what people think today about the mysteries of life comes not from God and His scriptural revelation, but from man and his limited and often erroneous speculation. To put it bluntly, we have an awful lot of dangerous nonsense filling the areas of people's minds that were intended for the truth of God as revealed in Scripture.⁹⁵

Briscoe continues,

Instead of a variety of theories emanating from a host of philosophies which breed inevitable conflicts of thought and ideology, this approach leads to great unity and purpose: the desire to please God according to His revealed will. There's hope in this approach; there's none in the other.⁹⁶

Such is the foundation upon which biblical counseling rests.

Psalm 119

Of course, in terms of elevating Scripture to its deserved status, no passage surpasses Psalm 119. Indeed, the high view of Scripture extolled in the latter half of Psalm 19 is amplified in Psalm 119, a psalm which contains 176 verses and 315 lines. Psalm 119 opens by declaring, "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who

⁹⁴Erling C. Olsen, *Meditations in the Book of Psalms* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1979), 116.

⁹⁵Stuart Briscoe, *What Works When Life Doesn't* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1976), 76.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 81.

walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart.”

As pointed out by Derek Kidner, “This giant among the Psalms shows the full flowering of that ‘delight . . . in the law of the Lord’ which is described in Psalm 1, and gives its personal witness to the many-sided qualities of Scripture praised in Psalm 19:7ff.”⁹⁷ The scope of this study does not permit an examination of the “many-sided qualities of Scripture” extolled in this longest of all Psalms, which Manton rightly calls “a choice piece of Scripture.”⁹⁸ Yet, for those so inclined, Boice provides an indication of the volume of material that exists about Psalm 119:

So much has been written on Psalm 119 that it is impossible to do full justice to it. In his *Treasury of David* Charles Spurgeon devotes 349 pages to it, which is virtually a book in itself. Charles Bridges, a Church of England evangelical of the last century, wrote 481 pages about it (Banner of Truth Trust edition). His book contains a sermon for each of the psalm’s twenty-two stanzas and was issued in 1827, when Bridges was only thirty-three years old. Most impressive of all is the three-volume work on Psalm 119 by Thomas Manton, one of the most prolific Puritans. Each volume is from 500 to 600 pages in length, for a total of 1,677 pages (Banner of Truth Trust edition). The work has 190 long chapters, more than one for each verse.⁹⁹

Boice, in his three-volume commentary on the psalms, devotes fourteen chapters himself to this great psalm, summing up its purpose by noting, “This psalm praises God for his Word, the Bible, because God has given us the Bible and it is only through the Bible that we can come to know who God is and how to praise him.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Gaebelein comments, “In reading this great Psalm we find that its leading feature is the praise of the Law and the Word of God.”¹⁰¹ So prevalent is the extolling of

⁹⁷Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 14b (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 416.

⁹⁸Thomas Manton, *Psalm 119* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 1:1.

⁹⁹James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 3:970.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Book of Psalms* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers,

God's Word throughout this psalm, only a handful of verses do not specifically refer to it. Most commentators see only 2-5 verses in which God's Word is not mentioned! In fact, this prominent feature of the psalm has evoked comments suggesting that Scripture is too highly esteemed, prompting Kidner to respond:

This untiring emphasis has led some to accuse the psalmist of worshipping the Word rather than the Lord; but it has been well remarked that every reference here to Scripture, without exception, relates it explicitly to its Author; indeed every verse from 4 to the end is a prayer or affirmation addressed to Him. This is true piety: a love of God not desiccated by study but refreshed, informed, and nourished by it.¹⁰²

Indeed, as MacLaren points out, "We love the law only when, and because, we love the Lawgiver."¹⁰³

Time spent studying Psalm 119 will most likely lead one to the same conclusion as that expressed by Blaiklock:

Preached with confidence Scripture will demonstrate its own authority. It cannot be contained. It can flow into a faithful man's voice, and lay hold of his life. Studied and absorbed and passed through the screen of a man's living experience, it can stir, confront, challenge modern man, meet the problems, perplexities, the crawling ruin of this day. The Bible has the answer. Present it with sanctity, sanity, and confidence. There is no other book.¹⁰⁴

Such is the conviction of the biblical counselor.

Proverbs

One last section of the Old Testament must be mentioned in connection with the application of Scripture in counseling methodology. The Book of Proverbs thoroughly testifies to the authority and practicality of Scripture for the purpose of guidance in the believer's life. Counseling, of course, deals with a broad spectrum of

1965), 438.

¹⁰²Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 419.

¹⁰³Alexander MacLaren, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), 330.

¹⁰⁴E. M. Blaiklock, *Psalms for Worship, Psalms 73-150* (New York: A. J. Holman, 1977), 107.

issues in people's lives, and that is the overall thrust of Proverbs. Proverbs ("pro" = for; "verba" = words) signifies a short maxim, expressing truth in a few words. Ellisen notes that "the Proverbs have been called 'short sentences drawn from long experiences.'"¹⁰⁵

However, there is a distinction between the Proverbs of the Bible and proverbs found in the literature of many cultures. Richard Mayhue notes, "The proverbs of Scripture deserve to be called 'the Proverbs of proverbs' because these are the only proverbs of divine origin. They are not proverbs of human creation alone."¹⁰⁶ With respect to the purpose of the book of Proverbs, Mayhue states,

Proverbs answers the universal question, "How should I live my life?" It does not focus so much on how an individual can be successful and self-fulfilled as it does on how a person can live so as to please God. It is a book about morality, duty, ethics, values, virtues, and principles that communicate and enable one to live a life in accord with God's will.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, the first proverb asserts, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Needless to say, such rich wisdom is invaluable and accessible by biblical counselors in the fulfilling of their calling. Kidner writes that the book of Proverbs "is not a portrait-album or a book of manners: it offers a key to life."¹⁰⁸ He goes on to note that "wisdom as taught here is God-centered," as opposed to man-centered, "and even when it is most down-to-earth it consists in the shrewd and sound handling of one's affairs in *God's* world, in submission to His will."¹⁰⁹ Ironside notes, "As a part of 'all Scripture,' we may rest assured we shall find it 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

¹⁰⁵Stanley A. Ellisen, *Knowing God's Word* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 146.

¹⁰⁶Richard Mayhue, *Practicing Proverbs* (Reading, England: Cox & Wyman, 2004), 33.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1964), 13.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 13-14.

correction, and for instruction in righteousness,' helping to perfect the man of God unto all good works."¹¹⁰

Ellisen points out that the Book of Proverbs uses three terms for wisdom to distinguish related but different aspects of this ability. "Wisdom" (*Chokhmah*) appears 47 times and refers to a moral discernment between good and evil, right and wrong, as well as applying to secular prudence in business matters. "Understanding" (*Binah*) occurs 53 times in several forms, and speaks of an intellectual ability to discern between truth and error or between reality and sham. It is the faculty to objectively perceive long-range values as opposed to momentary attractions in ordering one's life. "Sound wisdom" (*Tushiyyah*) is used only 3 times. However, Ellisen states that this term comes from the root "to elevate," and "means a divine or spiritual insight into truth, developed by long acquaintance with God's Word. It is the ability to view life from the divine perspective or to put divine principles into everyday practice."¹¹¹ Moreover, Ellisen describes the purpose of Proverbs:

In Proverbs the subject of "wisdom for building godly character" is emphasized and illustrated. The purpose of this book is to contrast the two ways of life, wisdom and folly, and to show the utter idiocy of following the easy road of living by the passions. It stresses the need to start early with God in life, discipline the life for the higher and lasting values of life, and recognize the power and potential of strong character and spiritual living.¹¹²

Additional references to the value of the book of Proverbs in connection with biblical counseling have been placed in appendix 2, but, clearly, this section of Scripture provides strong support for the foundation of biblical counseling.

¹¹⁰H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Book of Proverbs* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1974), 12.

¹¹¹Ellisen, *Knowing God's Word*, 150.

¹¹²Stanley A. Ellisen, *Bible Workbook: The Wisdom Books* (Portland, OR: Western Seminary Press, 1975), 7.

Conclusion

From the preceding brief look at some biblical texts, it seems clear that both testaments provide a ringing endorsement for the methodology employed in biblical counseling. The resurgence of true biblical counseling (as defined earlier in this chapter) is one of the most encouraging developments within the church during the current era, because it frees local churches from a dependence upon worldly procedures and methodologies. The task of “making disciples” (Matt 28:15), which includes growing Christ’s people “in all aspects unto Him,” is tremendously enhanced through biblical counseling. There is no surer foundation upon which to build than Christ and His Word. Indeed, the implementation of a biblical counseling ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church would seem to be essential in light of the following words of the apostle Paul: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col 2:8).

CHAPTER 3
THE CONSIDERATION OF PRACTICAL ISSUES THAT
RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

From a biblical and theological perspective, it would appear that biblical counseling must be an integral part of the interpersonal dynamic of any local church.

William Goode, former pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana, states,

Almost every week someone asks me how to start a counseling ministry in a local church, a question that, to me, illustrates a widespread misunderstanding of the true nature of counseling. For too long, biblical counseling has been seen as an optional ministry in the church. Along with radio programs and homes for unwed mothers, it has been relegated to a growing heap of “frivolous” ministries, the ones we hope to get around to some day.¹

Rather than viewing biblical counseling as an independent ministry within the church, one should understand it to be an essential ingredient to the overall task of making disciples. As pointed out by Goode, “Believers will never become like Christ if they are not winning the battle against sin in their lives and investing themselves in the lives of others. And there can be no discipling if there is no plan to help the disciple who gets into trouble.”²

Unfortunately, many local churches do not have biblical counseling integrated into their efforts of preaching, teaching, and evangelism. EBC has been one of those churches. Heretofore, the prevailing tendency with respect to counseling has been to send members of the congregation to professional counselors within the community. Counseling within the walls of the church was rarely done, primarily due to the belief that counseling necessitates the services of a professional, or expert, someone who has been

¹William W. Goode, “Biblical Counseling and the Local Church,” in *Counseling*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 222.

²Ibid.

trained in the field of psychology. However, even though a given counselor may be a Christian, the practice of referral amounts to a default in the discipleship process to which the body of Christ has been called.

While the challenge of changing the ministry/counseling culture of EBC is large, it certainly is not impossible. Other churches have successfully addressed the practical aspects of moving into a culture of biblical counseling. EBC has the benefit of drawing upon their knowledge and experience, as well as the advice from other members of the biblical counseling community. Specifically, practical considerations have been utilized from the leadership of three churches: Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana; Grace Fellowship Church in Florence, Kentucky; and Thousand Oaks Bible Church, Thousand Oaks, California. Additionally, EBC has relied upon the counsel of Stuart Scott (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) and John Street (The Master's College and Seminary).

Faith Baptist Church

One of the premier examples of a local church effectively utilizing biblical counseling is Faith Baptist Church (FBC), located in Lafayette, Indiana (www.faithlafayette.org). The impact of biblical counseling at FBC is evident throughout all its ministries, including its outreach into the surrounding community. Steve Viars, a leading proponent of biblical counseling, joined the pastoral staff at FBC in 1987 and currently serves as senior pastor.

Viars traces the development of Faith's biblical counseling ministry back to one of the church's former pastors, William W. Goode.³ Pastor Goode initially encountered resistance even from within his own denomination. The fact that the leadership at FBC "expected people to grow and were willing to lovingly come alongside

³Steve Viars, "Counseling in the Local Church—A Working Model" (D.Min. project, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1988).

people and exercise church discipline if necessary”⁴ caused some to view the church as “legalistic.” Others resisted biblical counseling because they did not agree with, or had a poor understanding of, certain theological issues closely connected to biblical counseling.

The cry of “legalism” has been heard at EBC also during times of church discipline. And, similar to the situation at Faith Baptist, many attending EBC have lacked understanding in two critical theological issues. One of those issues is an understanding of practical implications of “progressive sanctification” in the life of a believer. The second issue mentioned by Viars was a lack of confidence in the “sufficiency of Scripture” to deal with life’s problems. That, too, is an issue at EBC. The encouraging news is that the systematic teaching of both concepts produced congregational acceptance of both truths, which, in turn, has resulted in a 30-year track record of effective biblical counseling.

Indeed, FBC has become a leader in providing training in biblical counseling to people and leaders from other churches. Annual conferences are offered, and training curriculums are available for those new to biblical counseling, as well as for those who are more seasoned biblical counselors. Speaking specifically to pastors who are interested in bringing biblical counseling to their churches, Viars presents nine important practical guidelines necessary for the implementation of biblical counseling.

1. “Evaluate what you have been taught.” Most evangelical pastors are trained in seminaries that default their counseling instruction to those versed in psychology. Viars invokes Acts 17:11 in connection with a call to evaluate such training.
2. “Choose biblical counseling.” In short, make a definite decision in favor of biblical counseling based on a desire to remain true to God’s Word.
3. “Develop a biblical philosophy of ministry.” An important step in the implementation of biblical counseling is to set forth in writing the church’s purpose, how the church intends to achieve its purpose, a clear statement concerning progressive sanctification, church discipline procedures, and a determination as to how the philosophy of ministry is going to move from “the pulpit to the pew.”

⁴Viars, “Counseling in the Local Church,” 37.

4. “Become a biblical theorizer.” Since 1988, Viars has called upon those involved with biblical counseling to be contributors to the overall model of counseling in accordance with the Bible.
5. “Preach and teach for change.” In connection with biblical counseling, the task of preaching should move people toward change, and as the congregation views change taking place in people’s lives, they will be hopeful and excited.
6. “Be available for biblical counseling.” Pastors must make time for counseling, even if some other things must be released.
7. “Avoid secular terminology.” The practical aspect of this advice is that biblical descriptions connect people’s problems to sinful habits and attitudes, thereby eliminating the “disease-like” qualities that tend to leave counselees hopeless.
8. “Be cautious in integration.” Viars warns against falling into the trap of saying that “all truth is God’s truth” with respect to psychological therapies in counseling. The rationale behind such thinking is dealt with later in this chapter.
9. “Challenge people to be biblical counselors.” The dynamic of biblical counseling involves all believers as together they seek to identify and solve their issues biblically.⁵

One of the greatest aids that FBC makes available to other church leaders is a publication entitled, *Starting a Biblical Counseling Ministry in a Local Church*.⁶ This publication is quite helpful with respect to the practical concerns of implementing biblical counseling. While it contains far too much material to summarize in this discussion, it is worth noting the four basic sections of its content, because these sections provide an overall implementation strategy.

The first stage involves solidifying the church leadership.⁷ As one might expect, developing a consensus among church leadership is critical to a successful shift to biblical counseling. Since EBC is an elder-led church, the elders have been at the center of most discussions and teaching about biblical counseling. Key decisions flowing out of consensus include the commitment to make biblical counseling an integral part of church ministry, along with a commitment to find ways to train staff and lay leaders. Also, the

⁵Viars, “Counseling in the Local Church,” 68-76.

⁶Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, *Starting a Biblical Counseling Ministry in a Local Church* (Lafayette, IN: Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, 2011).

⁷Ibid., 4-45.

elders are responsible to determine ways in which biblical counseling can enhance all ministry within the church and ways in which it can be used to penetrate the community of Mount Vernon. Faith Baptist Church provides several examples of using biblical counseling both within the church, as well as in the community. Both dimensions are evident upon visiting FBC.

Consensus among leadership with respect to the epistemology and methodology of biblical counseling is also essential to the implementation of the ministry. Both the epistemology and methodology have been addressed at EBC and will be discussed in another section of this chapter. Leadership must also be united concerning those who are selected to be involved as counselors within the church. At EBC, the solidifying of leadership at the highest level has been accomplished.

Stage 2 of implementing biblical counseling with a church involves developing congregational acceptance.⁸ Primarily, this task necessitates teaching the basic concepts upon which biblical counseling rests. These concepts include the critical need for biblical counseling since the fall of mankind as described in Genesis 3, how people change, progressive sanctification, and manifesting the characteristics of a local body in which biblical counseling will flourish. With regard to becoming the kind of church given over to biblical counseling, “the ‘heart’ of the leadership, church discipline, and the ‘one another’ ministries each play a vital role.”⁹ Key materials helpful in covering these subjects are provided in the appendices of Faith’s publication.

At this point, EBC is in the process of moving through stage 2. Faith’s material suggests using a variety of congregational settings to develop understanding about biblical counseling. Sermons, lay leadership meetings, individual conversations, and small group discussions are among the potential opportunities to teach about biblical

⁸Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, *Starting a Biblical Counseling Ministry*, 45-50.

⁹Ibid., 45.

counseling. There might be occasion to hold “input nights,” in which people can interact and provide feedback concerning matters pertaining to biblical counseling. Faith’s material encourages the use of key phrases that can be clearly defined and explained biblically, citing Bible passages that support or convey these truths. In particular, it is suggested that the congregation embrace the concepts of the sufficiency of Scripture, the process of personal change and growth, the need for a desire to please God in all things, identifying idols of the heart, how to solve problems biblically, and the idea of “replacement” (e.g., Eph 4:22-24). Accordingly, “This will help you to cultivate an understanding of biblical counseling and will have a tendency to ‘disarm’ those who may be skeptical about this subject.”¹⁰

Stage 3 of implementing a biblical counseling ministry involves the selection and training of the counseling staff.¹¹ FBC’s material outlines a plan that ranges from “informal” training to the appointment of a “counseling administrator.” This is an important stage, because “the people you select to serve as counselors will set the pace for the effectiveness of your counseling ministry.”¹² Another helpful guide in connection with this task is Robert Kellerman’s book, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church*. Subtitled “The 4E Ministry Training Strategy,” Kellerman sets forth many of the same concepts as Faith’s manual, but he concentrates on the development of biblical counselors. Specifically, the “4Es” are the following: Envisioning God’s Ministry, Enlisting God’s Ministers for Ministry, Equipping Godly Ministers for Ministry, and Empowering/ Employing Godly Ministers for Ministry.¹³ As is the case with Faith’s manual, the

¹⁰Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, *Starting a Biblical Counseling Ministry*, 45.

¹¹Ibid., 51-56.

¹²Ibid., 51.

¹³Robert W. Kellerman, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011).

appendices are generously supplied with additional materials and forms that are necessary for a biblical counseling ministry within a local church.

The final or fourth stage outlined by FBC involves an official launching of the ministry. One of the most practical actions recommended is for leadership to issue a challenge to the congregation for continued prayer for the biblical counseling ministry. Other practical considerations involve the securing of necessary forms, such as personal data inventory forms given to counselees, case report forms for the counselors, along with a weekly counseling record. Samples of these forms are provided in the appendix of this project. In addition, the church should develop a brochure that is attractive and that answers the following questions: What hope is there for my problems and questions? Who can come for counseling? What kind of counseling is offered? Who are the counselors? What does the counseling cost? When will I be counseled? How long will the counseling last? What will my counselor expect of me? Where do I begin? FBC provides a helpful three-year strategic timeline that can be used to keep a local church on track and moving systematically through these four stages.¹⁴

Another publication quite valuable in focusing on the various practical issues associated with starting a biblical counseling ministry is the dissertation project by Mark W. Dutton.¹⁵ Dutton served on staff at Faith Baptist Church for over twenty years. Clearly, much of Dutton's material has been incorporated into the FBC material, especially with respect to understanding the scriptural foundation of biblical counseling and the philosophy of ministry behind it. He emphasizes the practical nature of biblical counseling in terms of how it affects people's lives, citing William Goode's advice when evaluating any church's counseling program: "What *kind* of counseling is offered? How

¹⁴Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, *Starting a Biblical Counseling Ministry*, 157-64.

¹⁵Mark W. Dutton, "Developing a Biblical Counseling Ministry in a Local Church" (D.Min. project, Bible Baptist Seminary, 2003).

effective is the ministry? Do people have *confidence* that the Word of God has answers to every day life's problems? These are the practical issues facing the local church."¹⁶

In addition, Dutton provides helpful reminders concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in counseling.¹⁷ In terms of actual practice, biblical counselors must remember that it is the Holy Spirit who brings counselees to salvation, as well as convicts them of their sin. The Holy Spirit also convicts counselees of righteousness (by revealing the righteousness of Christ), of judgment (Eph 2:1-3), provides counselees with the assurance of salvation (Rom 8:16), helps counselees understand God's Word (1 Cor 2:14) and enables them to be godly (Gal 5:22-23). Both counselors and counselees are dependent on the Holy Spirit in order to pray properly (Rom 8:26), and He is the one who equips the counselee to disciple others through spiritual gifts. In short, one of the most practical considerations regarding all aspects of biblical counseling is one's recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit.

Grace Fellowship Church

Brad Bigney serves as senior pastor of Grace Fellowship Church (GFC) in Florence, Kentucky (www.graceky.org). GFC enjoys a thriving biblical counseling ministry, and Bigney eagerly shares his passion for that ministry wherever he teaches. At EBC, his suggestions have been incorporated in the overall implementation strategy. Specifically, Bigney outlines fifteen points that he advises pastors to follow in growing a biblical counseling ministry.¹⁸ The following represents a summary of those points:

1. Don't get excited all by yourself. Pray for God to raise up other people with you, and offer multiple and repeated personal invitations of those people. Be vigilant among the congregation and look for people who show giftedness and interest.

¹⁶Dutton, "Developing a Biblical Counseling Ministry," 24.

¹⁷Ibid., 51-61.

¹⁸Brad Bigney, "Growing Biblical Counseling in a Local Church" (classroom lecture notes, 80554—*Marriage and Family Counseling*, Winter 2009).

2. Don't keep what you are doing a secret. Let others see what you are doing and how you are doing it.
3. Give people a loving shove. Encourage people who have been with you to counsel others, offering to be available and help them whenever necessary.
4. Start with something easy. Bigney suggests training mentor couples to do all the pre-marital counseling in the church. The idea is to let people "cut their teeth" on something that is not so "scary" for them.
5. Bring it right into the pulpit. He suggests preaching some topical series using some of the material garnered through your own training, and to include some biblical counseling homework sheets in the bulletin along with the sermon notes.
6. Show your leaders how to do it. Do "What Ifs" with your leadership team, elders, deacons, or small group leaders, i.e., present various counseling situations for them to consider.
7. Talk it up constantly. Start talking about changing and growing at every opportunity. In other words, he says to create a culture that thinks about personal change. Indeed, the motto at Grace Fellowship is, "Training godly disciples who can handle life effectively by handling God's Word accurately."
8. Equip and expect your pastors to counsel—and you lead the way. All pastors should be involved in counseling, and Bigney cites Acts 20:18-20, 28, 31.
9. Put your money where your mouth is. Ask your leaders for some money that can be used as scholarships to help key people attend biblical counseling training conferences.
10. Cry out to God to raise up a counseling ministry. In short, we should pray specifically, strategically, and relentlessly.
11. Strike while the iron is hot. Each year have a reunion in which people can share about how they've been using the materials, including testimonies, and provide people with the tools that you use the most in counseling. Display good resources for them to use. Challenge them to read one counseling book before the next conference.
12. Take the plunge and get ACBC (Association of Certified Biblical Counselors) certified. Put six dates on the calendar at the beginning of the year for a full day of study to work on the exams.
13. Take advantage of technology. For instance, one might use the Faith Baptist Counseling DVDs for a training night.
14. Plug it into your regular teaching times. This would be Sunday mornings, adult Bible fellowships, and small groups.
15. Don't lose heart and never give up. First, know that it's God's ministry (Hebrews 6:10; 2 Corinthians 4:1). Be ready and willing to spend yourself working hard; it will not be convenient, or easy, or without resistance. We plant the seeds, but God gives the increase (Col 1:28-29).

As well as these practical suggestions, Bigney notes the value of proper forms that should be used in a biblical counseling ministry. He requires counselees to fill out personal data forms, very similar to those used at Faith Baptist Church. Case forms

recommended by The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (formerly NANC) are used to insure progress in counseling sessions. He recommends that the counselor make generous notes to himself/herself in connection with each counselee. In this litigious society, it also makes sense for the church to confer with its insurance carrier and make provision (including any necessary forms) to cover the church and its counselors in the event of a lawsuit. Copies of key forms are provided in appendix 3.

Thousand Oaks Bible Church

Lance Quinn is another pastor with considerable experience and success in biblical counseling. He has served as a pastor at Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, and at The Bible Church of Little Rock in Little Rock, Arkansas. He currently serves as senior pastor at Thousand Oaks Bible Church in Thousand Oaks, California (www.thousandoaksbiblechurch.org). Quinn offers some practical advice to those beginning a biblical counseling ministry, derived from his own experience. His suggestions were gleaned from a seminar taught in a class at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under the direction of Stuart Scott. As one might expect, Quinn echoed many of the suggestions presented in other sources, and his pragmatic orientation has been followed at EBC. For instance, he points out the direct connection between a church's proper theology and its counseling practices:

No individual ministry in the local church should ever be started until its proper theological basis has been established. This cannot be stressed enough! Too many local church ministries have begun based on a perceived "felt need" with no prior theological reflection. When these ministries are later evaluated (if they are ever evaluated!), pragmatics have taken over with no real link between orthodoxy and orthopraxis! This is precisely why secular counseling theories have so easily crept into the church.¹⁹

Thus, Quinn stresses the importance of embracing key theological elements, particularly in reference to maintaining a high view of God, understanding the implications of holding

¹⁹Lance Quinn, "Leading Your Church to Affirm Nouthetic Counseling" (classroom lecture notes, 80553—*Problems and Procedures of Biblical Counseling*, Summer 2008).

to the sufficiency of Scripture, as well as holding to an accurate anthropology in that one is able to distinguish between “sin” and “disease.” He also emphasizes the value associated with adhering to the biblical calling of the church (discipleship), the priority of godly leadership, and a church-wide emphasis on families and small groups.

Like Viars at Faith Baptist, Quinn urges churches to put a specific philosophy of ministry for biblical counseling in writing. That philosophy must reflect the key theological elements underpinning biblical counseling. Quinn points out that the strategy to implement biblical counseling will “change with each church and its differing environments . . . but also note that your theological and philosophical convictions will never change—only refined and crystallized.”²⁰

In conjunction with others who have successfully implemented biblical counseling, Quinn warns that, once the prevailing notions about counseling are discerned, it is critical for the leadership of the church to be solidly committed to a biblical counseling ministry: “Many a ministry and/or church has suffered because the pastor, who has become excited about *Nouthetic Counseling*, has jumped wildly ahead of his contemporaries.”²¹ With respect to bringing the entire congregation on board, he states that a good beginning point is to teach an actual counseling class on a day/evening other than Sunday. Such a class might run from six to sixteen weeks. At EBC, Quinn’s suggestion was followed using a thirteen-week DVD series produced by The Master’s Seminary. Those who finished the class have become enthusiastic proponents of biblical counseling within the congregation. In addition to a special class, the entire congregation can be exposed to biblical counseling concepts through a short, topical preaching series. With respect to such a series, Quinn says, “It might be best to teach proactively on what the Bible teaches regarding helping/shepherding people, rather than immediately, reactively responding in

²⁰Quinn, “Leading Your Church.”

²¹Ibid.

a series of messages to the intrusion of psychological counseling into the church.”²²

Quinn also believes that role-playing can help people understand the counseling process, particularly in a scenario where a counselor can counsel and teach at the same time. Role-playing allows for starting and stopping at key points in the dialogue. However, opportunities to observe actual counseling cases are extremely beneficial as well: “It has been my experience that the most effective tool in having people become excited about Biblical Counseling is for them to observe a skilled counselor at work and how the Word of God does change people!”²³

As the church moves in the direction of biblical counseling, Quinn encourages church leaders to look for people who demonstrate that they are serious about it, and then begin to invest in them by meeting with them individually and regularly. Begin to give them opportunity to counsel and observe their counseling, following up with teaching about their counseling theology and methodology. Equally as important, Quinn thinks that good books should be made available to those willing to learn. He advocates starting a bookshop or resource center in the church, so that people can purchase their own copies of strategic books. Such books will challenge them to grow spiritually, as well as help them understand the nature, structure, and heartbeat of biblical counseling.

Stuart Scott, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The classes taken at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under Stuart Scott have provided a wealth of information that directly translates into the practical application of biblical counseling. These classes include *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* (80551), *Methodology in Biblical Counseling* (89552), *Problems and Procedures of Biblical Counseling* (89553), and *Marriage and Family Counseling*

²²Quinn, “Leading Your Church.”

²³Ibid.

(80554). Dr. Scott, professor and director of the Doctor of Ministry program in biblical counseling at the seminary, is largely responsible for the impetus of initiating a biblical counseling ministry at EBC. While much has been gleaned from his experience and teaching, only three issues will be mentioned here, due to limited space. All three have arisen thus far at EBC during these early days of implementation.

The first of these issues concerns misconceptions about biblical counseling. In order to gain acceptance of this new ministry, one should anticipate that many in the church have distorted notions of biblical counseling. Some of these notions are outright caricatures; others are simply based upon a lack of familiarity with biblical counseling, or perhaps an incomplete understanding of it. While it is important to clearly define the meaning of “biblical counseling,” Scott points out that it is important for people in the church to clearly understand what biblical counseling is not.²⁴ For example, it is not an autonomous ministry, an optional ministry, or an entity separate from discipleship. It is integrated throughout the ministries of the church. Biblical counseling is a necessary part of the church’s calling. Scott’s advice coincides with other experienced biblical counseling leaders in this regard.

Furthermore, Scott notes that many people believe that counseling of any kind is an activity that is reserved for the “experts.” This tends to give counseling a “Gnostic flavor,” whereas the reality is that all believers are called to engage in counseling to some extent (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 20:20; Eph 4:1ff., etc.). Clear teaching is needed to dispel the “professional expert” notion associated with counseling.

Equally faulty is a notion that tends to characterize biblical counselors as insensitive, uncaring, or perhaps “legalistic” in their approach. Yet, as pointed out by Scott, that is not the case with biblical counseling, when it is carried out as seen in

²⁴Stuart W. Scott, “What Biblical Counseling Is Not” (classroom lecture notes, 80511—*Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, Summer 2009), 1-2.

Scripture. Good examples of sensitivity and empathy are found in Acts 20:31 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that biblical counseling is “not seeking to integrate secular theories of change with what the Holy Spirit teaches in the Word of God concerning salvation and sanctification.”²⁵ From a practical application standpoint, this is critical, yet far too commonly done. This particular matter is addressed later in this chapter.

Another mistaken notion about counseling is that it is primarily concerned about the outward behavior of people. Actually, biblical counseling is primarily concerned about heart of the counselee, which in turn produces outward behavior. And, finally, a common misconception about biblical counselors is that they routinely ignore genuine and proven medical issues. Again, this is a false notion, because part of the methodology within biblical counseling is to encourage counselees to have a complete physical exam by a doctor of internal medicine if there is any chance the issues involved may have organic root causes. Any of the above false concepts in connection with biblical counseling work to hinder its acceptance within the church.

A second area in which Scott’s notes have been extremely valuable at EBC concerns focusing on the epistemology of a given counselor. The practical ramifications of this issue are immense. Paul Feinberg defines “epistemology” as “the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the theory of knowledge. It is an inquiry into the nature and source of knowledge, the bounds of knowledge, and the justification of claims to knowledge.”²⁶ Clearly, the practical ramifications of one’s epistemology in counseling are critical to the counseling process.

²⁵Scott, “What Biblical Counseling Is Not,” 2.

²⁶Paul Feinberg, “Epistemology,” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 382.

Therefore, with respect to training and applying “truth” to counseling situations, Scott points out that it is necessary to ask the following questions about the one who is counseling: “How does he/she propose to know what he/she knows? What is his/her source of knowledge?”²⁷ He goes on to point out that there are four levels of knowledge: revelation (general and special), empiricism (“hard science”), reason or theories produced by reason, observations of human studies (“soft science”) and intuition (“feelings, senses”). Because of the inherent presuppositions of secular psychology that oppose those of biblical counseling, it is essential that counselors selected for training adhere to a statement such as the covenant mandated by The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. The content of this covenant is provided in appendix 4.

With respect to methodology, EBC has embraced ten basic principles recommended by Scott.

1. Demonstrate loving care toward the counselee. There are numerous practical ways in which a counselor can do this, but, essentially, it involves “building a Christlike relationship with the disciple/counselee where you put yourself in a position to help them love God and love others (full of grace and full of Truth).”²⁸
2. From the outset of counseling, instill hope in the counselee. The counselee may be operating within the framework of an “empty” hope, one that is founded upon wrong goals, a denial of reality, or mystical thinking. In contrast, genuine hope is founded upon thinking biblically about God’s character, seeking the potential good in the counselee’s situation, an awareness of the divine resources available to the counselee, a biblical understanding of the nature and cause of the problem at hand, and being solution-oriented from the perspective of God’s revelation. Certainly, the counselor should model such hope for the counselee. In short, genuine hope is connected directly to one’s growing relationship with Christ.
3. Gather as much pertinent data as possible from the counselee. In order to move a counselee into place of genuine hope, the counselor must gather data about the person coming for help. Hence, principle three entails making use of a “personal data inventory form,” along with asking pertinent questions of the counselee and being a careful listener as the counselee talks. Wayne Mack

²⁷Stuart W. Scott, “Comparing the Epistemologies of Counselors” (classroom lecture notes, 80552—*Methodology of Biblical Counseling*, Winter 2010), 1.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 1.

expands upon this subject and related issues in *Counseling (How to Counsel Biblically)*.²⁹

4. Interpret the data accurately and biblically. This aspect of a biblical counselor's methodology requires constant refinement, because a great deal of emphasis must be placed on data interpretation as the counselor proceeds.
5. Devise a strategic counseling plan based upon data interpretation and assessment. This means writing out a working plan to deal with each area of concern with respect to the counselee. A prioritized step-by-step plan should be laid out with a focus on solutions to the issues at hand.
6. Give the counselee biblical instruction. This instruction must not only be accurate biblically, but it also should be appropriate to the counselee's problems, need and condition, spiritual maturity, receptivity, and personal background. Clearly, this calls for the development of sensitivity and discernment of the part of the counselor.
7. Help the counselee internalize biblical truth for his/her specific situation. Essentially, this means working with the counselee in order for him/her to see the heart issue(s) involved.
8. Help the counselee develop a dependent resolve in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. Diligence will be required on the part of the counselee, but not a dependence upon fleshly effort. Rather, it is a "by God's grace, I will" approach.
9. Assign homework to the counselee. Homework will enhance the application of biblical truth to the counselee's life. For the biblical counseling process, homework is critical because it puts truth in action, and puts the responsibility for change on the counselee. It keeps expectations clear for both the counselor and counselee, minimizes dependence of the counselee on the counselor, and provides good data for future counseling. Further, it continues counseling between sessions and allows the counselee to begin to see things differently in his/her life daily. It also insures that the counselor will be a faithful steward of his/her time, and allows the counselor to discover those who are serious about change, and those who are not. Wayne Mack offers some helpful suggestions in connection with homework assignments in *Homework Manual for Biblical Living* in two volumes.
10. Move the counselee into discipleship with others in the church by having him/her minister to others in the body. As the Word of God is transferred into their own lives, counselees can impact others in the body of Christ. When such active discipleship is seen within a congregation, an exciting dynamic is created that propels the ministry of local church to increased effectiveness for the glory of God, both within the walls of the church and without.³⁰

²⁹Wayne Mack, "The Practice of Biblical Counseling," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, by John MacArthur, Wayne A. Mack, and The Master's College Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 101-200.

³⁰Stuart W. Scott, "Crucial Elements of Biblical Methodology" (classroom notes, 80552—*Methodology of Biblical Counseling*, Winter 2010), 1-11.

While one might incorporate additional principles into the practical outworking of a biblical counseling ministry, these ten are certainly basic. Initially, of course, it is quite important for the counselor to discern whether the counselee is a Christian or not, and one should be able to determine the counselee's spiritual state within the first three sessions. At this point, then, the counselor knows whether his/her task is evangelistic or discipleship oriented. Either case demands reliance upon the Holy Spirit for change to occur. Most biblical counseling involves working with Christians.

Constant training of those involved in the counseling ministry is required in order to grow the counselors that God has placed in the church. At EBC, this training involves the use of training materials provided by men and women experienced in the field of biblical counseling, as well as annual trips to training seminars offered by Faith Baptist Church and the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

John D. Street, The Master's Seminary

John D. Street, a prominent and knowledgeable leader in biblical counseling, chairs the Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling Graduate Program (MABC) at the Master's College and Seminary in Santa Clarita, California. In addition to other sources, his information has also been quite helpful with respect to implementing a biblical counseling ministry at EBC. Street emphasizes that a biblical counseling ministry requires careful planning and prayer. Churches that "launch into counseling training without forethought not only ruin people's lives and undermine genuine hope in hurting counselees but permanently destroy any prospect of having an effective counseling ministry in their church."³¹

Like others, Street insists that biblical counseling is not an option for the local

³¹John D. Street, "A Multitude of Counselors: How to Train Lay Leadership to Assist You in Biblical Counseling!" (workshop presented at the Shepherds Conference at Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, 2004), 1.

church, and that the church's governing body must be fully committed to biblical counseling, not just giving their permission for others to move ahead. Leadership needs to be trained, and that includes most pastors, since "seminary counseling requirements contain heavy doses of psychology or are ominously limited."³² All pastors, as well as elders/deacons, should be trained. Along with proper training, the church must also be committed to the practice of church discipline. Without decisive action of church leadership, biblical counseling will remain ineffective.

From a practical standpoint, Street provides estimates of the minimum time commitment required by those who will be trained in biblical counseling. He suggests the following minimum requirements:

1. Counseling training classes should require a minimum of 115 hours of biblical counseling instruction.
2. Counseling training requirements should contain a minimum of 10 hours of observation.
3. Counseling training supervision should oversee at least 25 hours/sessions of the student's actual counseling.³³

With respect to operational procedures that result in long-term effectiveness, Street advises a church to seek excellence in a training and supervision training program, balanced between instruction and proficiency. In this regard, his "bare minimum" recommendation is 25 hours in the following areas:

1. Instruction in a basic course: "An Introduction to Biblical Counseling.
2. Instruction in the principles of biblical interpretation: "Hermeneutic for Biblical Counseling."
3. Instruction in practical methods and observation: "Methods of Biblical Counseling."
4. Instruction in biblical/systematic theology: "Theological Basis for Counseling."

³²Street, "A Multitude of Counselors," 4.

³³Ibid., 2.

5. Practice of hypothetical counseling cases: “Biblical Counseling Practicum.”
6. Supervised counseling in actual casework: “Biblical Counseling Internship.”³⁴

Street also advises that the curricula of the church’s counseling training include the following fundamental elements:

1. Lectures must demonstrate how both counseling theory and practice grow out of biblical/theological principles.
2. Instructors must constantly challenge class discussions to use biblical insight in making comments and observations and to be constructively critical of what they read or hear.
3. Practicum classes should use triads for maximum learning.
4. Instructors need to require reading reports and formal papers to get into the thinking of their students.
5. Always use an abundance of case studies and/or counseling examples in every class.³⁵

In applying these elements to counselor training, Street warns against being afraid to evaluate students. They need to be given tests. Grades should be given for their reading reports and papers: “They need to know how they can improve and they cannot improve if you are controlled by a fear of man.”³⁶ These specific guidelines are helpful in terms of establishing an ongoing biblical training program.

Street also provides an “oversight paradigm” for long-term effectiveness in training others. He points out that in order to know whether or not the training program is producing the “right kind” of counselors, there must be a means of measurement that is reliable and accurate. Assessment data, he notes, should be directly related to an ideal of theological understanding (handling God’s Word) and case understanding (handling people problems). To maintain the level of meaningful assessment he believes in using reading reports in connection with reading assignments, quizzes/tests on class lectures

³⁴Street, “A Multitude of Counselors,” 2-3.

³⁵Ibid., 3.

³⁶Ibid.

and discussions, role playing in triads in front of the class with the other class members filling out evaluation sheets, and having them watch DVDs of other biblical counselors and complete a written critique of that session. Providing several counseling case studies throughout the training courses is important, as is having them turn in reports regularly to be evaluated (use the ACBC Case Report). Also, helping them set up a physical or electronic portfolio of the progression of their work. Since most students are not seminary graduates trained in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, they should be taught how to appropriately use a good Bible software program and evaluate their progress.

As difficult as it may be at times, Street cautions about maintaining appropriate control of the counseling training program: “Training the body of Christ to counsel one another is important for everyone in the church, but that does not mean that everyone who takes your course is capable of taking on more formal counseling cases.”³⁷ Training should be rigorous enough to identify the difference. However, those who can move on to advanced training should be supported by the church and given opportunities to attend advanced training in conferences/classes offered by qualified schools and other church ministries.

The Sufficiency of Scripture vs. Integration of Psychology

Finally, in terms of practical issues facing the implementation of biblical counseling, two foundational concepts linked to biblical counseling must be understood. The first concerns the “sufficiency of Scripture” for the task at hand. This doctrine is set forth in the previous chapter. However, there is a practical outworking of this doctrine that is frequently overlooked by Christians. David Powlison notes, “The problems, needs, and struggles of real people—right down to the details—must be rationally

³⁷Street, “A Multitude of Counselors,” 5.

explained by the categories with which the Bible teaches us to understand human life.”³⁸ A major hindrance to the practice of Scripture’s sufficiency in counseling involves the attempt of many Christians to blend, or “integrate,” psychology and psychotherapies into their counseling practices by appealing to truth found in “general revelation.”

Douglas Bookman presents an especially helpful discussion of this matter, connecting Scripture to the counselor’s epistemology.³⁹ As he notes, the school of thought broadly known as “Christian Psychology” has become a part of counseling within the church community. Yet, as Bookman astutely notes, the question to be answered is not “How are theology and psychology best integrated?” It is not even, “Should theology and psychology be integrated?” Instead, the pertinent question is, “Can theology and psychology be integrated?”⁴⁰

Counselors who would support integrating psychology and theology are described as “integrationists.” Most integrationists operate from an epistemological perspective that Bookman calls the “two-book approach.”⁴¹ This approach makes the axiomatic assertion that “all truth is God’s truth,” based on the following theological formulation: God has made Himself known via two channels, namely special and general revelation; special revelation is the propositional truth recorded in Scripture and general revelation is non-propositional truth deposited by God in the created order of things—it must be investigated and discovered by mankind. The epistemological conclusion is that although the two channels of truth are distinguishable, both are in fact revelatory. Thus, truth accurately derived from the consideration of the natural order of things (general

³⁸David Powlison, “The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 2 (Spring 2005): 2.

³⁹Douglas Bookman, “The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling,” in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, ed. John MacArthur and Wayne Mack (Nashville: W. Publishing, 1994), 63-97.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 66.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 68.

revelation) is just as true as that derived from Scripture. The ramification of such thought for the integrationist is that any defensible truth derived by means of psychological research into the order of humanity is truth derived from general revelation. Hence, it is truth derived from God, and thus truth as dependable and authoritative as truth exegeted from Scripture. However, Bookman notes that this approach is seriously flawed in that it incorrectly defines the term “revelation,” and it also wrongly defines the term “general.” He points out that the biblical concept of revelation “is by definition nondiscoverable by human investigation or cognition.”⁴²

Therefore, Bookman rejects the integrationist claim that perceived truths established by human research constitute a subset of the category of general revelation:

Inherent to the biblical concept of revelation is the idea of nondiscoverability, but the most dominant element of general revelation as construed in this rationale is that the facts to be granted the status of revelation are by definition the result of human research and observation.⁴³

Bookman’s position upholds the reality that God is indeed the author and sustainer of the universe, as well as the notion that facts, realities, and truth concerning the created order may be discovered. Certainly, the possibility exists that humanly discovered and verified facts or realities are no less true than truth communicated in writing by God. Furthermore, many of the facts and verities discovered by human investigation can be employed to help people. However, the issue at hand is not whether it is possible that truth might be discovered by human investigation; the issue is whether truth thus discovered can be assigned to the category of general revelation. In short, Bookman’s writes,

My contention is that by reason of proper definition of the theological category “general revelation” and by reason of the intrinsic and divine integrity and authority that must be granted to any truth-claim that is placed under that category, it is erroneous and misleading to assign to that category humanly deduced or discovered facts and theories. The issue is larger than appropriate taxonomy. In fact, to assign such humanly determined truths to the category of general revelation introduces a

⁴²Bookman, “The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling,” 72.

⁴³Ibid., 75.

twofold fallacy into the argument when it is used as a rationale for the integrationist position.⁴⁴

Bookman terms the first fallacy, “falsely perceived validity,” in that to assign a concept to the category of general revelation when that concept is in fact a theory concocted by a human person is, in effect, to lend God’s name to a person’s idea. Bookman rightly notes, “That is fallacious, no matter the intrinsic truth or falsehood of the theory under consideration.”⁴⁵ Revelation is by definition true and authoritative in that it comes from God.

A second fallacy is called “crippled accountability.” Once any theory is acknowledged as revelatory in nature, the issue of challenging it becomes moot. After all, man’s responsibility toward God’s revelation is not to “test” it, but to obey it. Thus, it is self-contradictory to claim that general revelation can include truths that must undergo more testing and examination to insure their trustworthiness.

Bookman also points out that the term “general” is defined incorrectly by integrationists. He notes that the term is historically and universally employed in evangelical theology where it “is intended to characterize not the character of the revelation under discussion but the audience to whom that revelation is available.”⁴⁶ Thus, general revelation is not “general” because it deals with a broad and non-specific category of facts, but because it is accessible to all people of all time—to people generally.

The practical ramifications of adopting an integrationist’s rationale is summed up by Bookman:

I am persuaded that, in the interest of validating the integrationist impulse and effort, many in the Christian psychological community have, wittingly or unwittingly, exchanged the biblical doctrine of general revelation for one of their own making. The evangelical world is entirely the loser in this bargain.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Bookman, “The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling,” 74.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 76.

⁴⁷Ibid., 78.

Conclusion

There is much more, of course, that could be discussed in connection with bringing biblical counseling to a local church. However, the primary suggestions and sources utilized at EBC are noted in this chapter. As EBC moves ahead in the process, the goal is to see the practical outworking of God's Word in people's lives throughout the congregation. Hopefully, EBC will be used by the Lord to encourage others to do the same through the implementation of a biblical counseling ministry in their given context.

CHAPTER 4

THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT

The completion of this project was an important step in the implementation of a church-wide biblical counseling ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church. EBC is an elder-led church in that men meeting the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are chosen by the congregation to exercise spiritual oversight of the church. They must receive a minimum approval vote of 90 percent from the congregation in order to serve. Large financial decisions and the hiring of pastoral staff are presented as recommendations to the church at large, but congregational approval is needed in order to finalize such decisions. The elders have deemed it a necessity to develop a biblical counseling ministry. It was decided that one of the most effective ways to move forward with biblical counseling at EBC was to work through the home-group leaders by teaching them basic concepts of biblical counseling. They, in turn, would be in a position to pass that information on to the members of their small groups, as well as have an opportunity to facilitate application of biblical counseling principles among the group.

Thus, this project consisted of developing and teaching a class on the fundamentals of biblical counseling in the context of EBC. The overall duration of the project was fifteen weeks, and a description of weekly methodology is provided in this chapter. It began with a preliminary invitation to the church's thirty-six home-group leaders.

Invitation to Home-Group Leaders

Two weeks prior to the beginning of this project, an invitation was sent to the home-group leaders at Emmanuel Baptist Church. They were invited to attend a Sunday

morning class entitled, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*. Sunday morning offered the fewest scheduling conflicts with the leaders. Several groups met on Sunday evenings, whereas the others met on various nights throughout the week. Since all home-group leaders were normally available on Sunday mornings, it offered the best potential for consistent attendance by the participants.

As Pastor of Adult Ministries, home-groups fall under my area of supervision, so I made the invitation a personal appeal from me. In hindsight, perhaps making the class mandatory for all home-group leaders might have been more effective in achieving full participation of the leaders, rather than issuing simply an “invitation.” Home-group leaders who did not respond to the email invitation (see appendix 5) received a phone call in an attempt to secure their commitment to the class.

Week-by-Week Syllabus of the Class

Most of the home-group leaders responded positively to their invitation, and the class also included a number of “potential” facilitators that were identified by current leaders. Even though the home-group leaders were of primary concern in this project, I did not prevent non-leaders from attending. Some people heard about the class and expressed an interest in attending. While I included these people in the class, data was drawn from the home-group leaders.

The first week of the class was dedicated to soliciting information from the attendees concerning their views on counseling issues. A series of thirty-two statements was given to each leader, asking for a response that reflected their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Responses were numerically recorded on the following basis: 1 = agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = do not know, 4 = somewhat disagree, and 5 = disagree. This range/spectrum was selected in order to reflect the intensity of belief. A copy of this survey is provided in Appendix 1. Statements on the survey were drawn from the material to be taught throughout the class. Each reflected an important aspect of counseling or related issue. In the final class, the same survey was then re-taken by the

attendees. Hence the survey was designed to indicate any change in thinking on the part of attendees in connection with the basic elements associated with biblical counseling.

That first class session consisted of all participants taking the survey, followed by a presentation outlining the various topics that would be discussed in the coming weeks. A heavy emphasis was placed on the attendees coming to all the classroom sessions, inasmuch as the material was cumulative in nature. Later sessions were dependent upon one's understanding of certain concepts presented during the earlier classes. The first class concluded by answering questions from the participants concerning the overall content and direction of the class.

The material used to teach this class for my project did not originate with me. Instead, I primarily drew upon the sources mentioned in chapter 3, especially notes received in Stuart Scott's classes at Southern Seminary. While I mixed and edited some of the content of these materials in order to accommodate the short duration of the class schedule at EBC, I remained true to the meaning of the elements and principles that I was taught.

Week 1

The first week of teaching was entitled, "Common Misconceptions of Biblical Counseling; Biblical Counseling Defined." It seemed best to immediately address some of the "straw men" and faulty concepts associated with the term, *biblical counseling*.

Nine misconceptions commonly associated with biblical counseling were addressed, especially the notions that tend to move counseling into an arena other than the local church. The fact that biblical counseling is not an activity separate from the context of church ministry, the fact that it is not an optional ministry in which only a few Christians participate, and the relationship between biblical counseling and discipleship were major areas of discussion during out class time.

In addition to working through some common misconceptions of biblical counseling, an instructive definition of biblical counseling was presented to the group. This definition was given in chapter 1 and was broken into three main parts:

1. Biblical counseling discerns desires, thinking, and behavior in one's life that God wants to change.
2. Biblical counseling seeks to change or modify one's desires, thinking, and behavior by means of God's Word and the Holy Spirit.
3. Biblical counseling seeks the sanctification of the Christian into Christ-likeness for the glory of God.

Week 2

In week 2, the teaching focused on "Important Foundations of Biblical Counseling." I concentrated on three critical elements of biblical counseling: the development of sound theology, a high view of God, and the sufficiency of Scripture. With respect to the development of sound theology, one of the most helpful illustrations was the "theological pyramid" provided by Scott in his discussion of the levels of development in a Christian's theology. Level 1, the base of the pyramid, consists of the canonical Scriptures. Next comes level 2 in which those Scriptures are understood through the literal-grammatical-historical method of exegesis. Level 3 builds upon that exegesis, resulting in the discipline of biblical theology, which formulates propositional doctrinal statements. The correlation of these propositions typically produces systematic theology, which is level 4 of theological development.

Finally, on the top level of the pyramid (level 5), there is practical theology, which is where the Christian reaches the practical theological conclusions about life. Indeed, one has levels 1 through 4 in order to arrive at level 5. Key Scriptures that address the importance of sound theology include Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Colossians 1:9-10, and Philippians 1:9-11. By seeking conclusions about life apart from Scripture, Christians are "wasting" the effort involved in levels 1 through 4. Sound theology results in healthy theology, and healthy theology is always expected to result in holy living.

Biblical counseling, then, is practical theology. Moreover, biblical counseling mandates a high view of God, because His character comes into play as believers deal with the circumstances and events of life. In this classroom session, we touched upon God's sovereignty, holiness, justice, grace, omnipotence, omnipresence, faithfulness, and love. The importance of having a clear understanding of God's character was emphasized in connection with the living out of our personal lives.

In discussing the sufficiency of Scripture, it was pointed out that this is the battle of the Bible's credibility for our current generation. The class read 2 Peter 1:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 19:7-14, and skimmed sections of Psalm 119. The key point of this section was that the Bible is sufficient for life. When properly interpreted, Scripture provides the believer all of the information necessary to understand one's need for Christ, as well as how a believer can please the Lord by the way he lives regardless of the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Week 3

This week's session was entitled, "The Role of Scripture and the Role of Psychology." For many people, psychology has become essentially synonymous with counseling practices, and most of western culture seeks out a psychologist or psychiatrist for help with personal struggles in life. Yet, Scripture and psychology operate from contrasting platforms of worldview assumptions, which represent a potential problem for any believer seeking counseling.

Therefore, the teaching in this session centered on the contrasting worldviews underpinning counseling rooted in psychology versus counseling rooted in Scripture. The fact that the field of psychology rests on a foundation built by atheists who expressed total contempt for any religious teaching, especially Christianity, should give pause to any believer dependent on this secular field of study for advice on how to live life. In contrast, the class was called to remember key doctrinal issues inherent in the Christian worldview. One's theology, epistemology, and anthropology have direct bearing on how believers

are to counsel. Similarly, biblical counselors take into consideration the doctrines of sin, soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology when processing the world around them.

The class concluded with discussion of a chart contrasting psychological models of counseling with biblical counseling in eight key areas. However, it was noted that most Christians who enter the field of psychology do so from a sincere motivation to help others. Yet, commonly held ideas shared by all forms of psychotherapy should give any believer pause. Believers must exercise discernment when it comes to following anyone's advice in connection with life issues.

Week 4

“More Foundations and the Role of Organic Illness” was the topic for week 4 of the class. Two more foundational truths associated with biblical counseling were introduced and discussed. Given the prevalence of evolutionary thought with respect to the origin of man, a biblical view of mankind is critical with respect to a counseling approach. Hence, an examination of biblical data concerning the unique creation of men and women, along with the devastating effects of sin upon people, was presented. Man's purpose and ultimate destiny were also covered in the teaching.

The second foundational truth discussed was progressive sanctification. Sanctification was defined as that work of the Holy Spirit whereby He sets the believer apart from sin unto God and progressively conforms him to the image of Christ, which, in turn, enables him to perform good works worthy of Christ's approval. Progressive sanctification was contrasted with two other popular understandings of sanctification: the Wesleyan view (Christian perfection) and the Keswick view (higher/deeper life). The thrust of this discussion was that the biblical counselor must possess a correct theological understanding of guilt, repentance, forgiveness, and the process of replacement in order to help people change biblically.

Biblical counselors also recognize the reality of organic illness in terms of a known disease or provable medical condition. It seems that many people have the erroneous perception that biblical counseling avoids medicine altogether. Thus, the class teaching concentrated on the discernment necessary to evaluate emotional/behavioral problems through a series of questions, as well as to trace all disease back to the fall/curse in Genesis 3. The purpose of this teaching was to help people see that there is a vast difference between a mere description of symptoms and a legitimate physical illness. However, even in the face of serious organic illness, a believer can glorify God through his/her responses to the circumstances of disease.

Week 5

In week 5, I presented the class with notes from Scott concerning a “Comparison of Current Popular Counseling Models.” No attempt was made to discuss the some 300+ psychological theories currently in use. Rather, an explanation was given of six schools of psychological thought into which most of these counseling models may be lumped:

1. Depth psychology—a broad term that refers to any psychological approach examining the “depth” (subtle or unconscious parts) of human experience.
2. Neo-Freudian psychology—those followers of Freud who accepted the basic tenets of his theory of psychoanalysis, but who altered it in some way. Notable psychologists in this camp include Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson, Carl Jung, Eric Fromm, and Karen Horney.
3. Behavioral psychology—a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Familiar names associated with behaviorism include: Ivan Pavlov, B. F. Skinner, John Watson, Ed Thorndike, and Clark Hull.
4. Rational-Emotive psychology—the theory that people are born with a predisposition to be either rational or irrational, and that “mental disorders” are the product of faulty learning.
5. Third Force psychology—the belief that all people are inherently good, and that though a conscious evolution of attitudes, values, and beliefs, one becomes a “self-actualized” person with the inner wisdom and confidence to guide their own life in a manner that is personally satisfying and socially constructive. Notable proponents include Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and William Glasser.
6. Family System psychology—theories that hold behavior stems from family relationships, regardless of whether the counselee knows it or not.

Following this discussion, class time centered on the controversial subject of “integration,” or the attempt to combine psychological theory with Scripture. The focus on one’s epistemology was emphasized and notes from Douglas Bookman’s chapter on “the 2-book approach” were used to demonstrate clarity with respect to some faulty assumptions made by many Christians.¹ Critical in this discussion was one’s understanding of general revelation as it relates to discoverable truth.

The final presentation of this class involved a depiction of the “psychological gospel” as opposed to the biblical counseling approach to life’s issues. Many Christians (perhaps even inadvertently) try to synthesize a number of psychological postulations with biblical truth. Such attempts result in the wrong views of the person, the situation, the available resources, the change process, and one’s view of God in the overall counseling process.

Week 6

The class of week 6 flowed naturally from the discussions of week 5, namely, “The Biblical Process of Change and Its Role in the Local Church.” The fact that real change occurs at the heart level was stressed and connected to the process of progressive sanctification. Biblical counseling goes beyond looking for mere behavior modification regarding external problems. Many principles in God’s Word apply to issues that people perceive to be “modern” problems. Actually, only the labels of those issues are new.

Thus, most of the class time involved a presentation of the problem of sin as it affects worship in the heart. A scriptural case was presented for the heart being man’s “control center” (Gen 6:5; Matt 22:34-40; Prov 4:23; Mark 7:20-23; 1 Sam 16:7; Ps 111:1; Prov 23:7). One’s focus will either be on “self” or on Christ, but the “occupation” of every person’s heart is worship. Key points included examples of how one’s heart is

¹Douglas Bookman, “The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling,” in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, ed. John MacArthur and Wayne Mack (Nashville: W. Publishing, 1994), 63-97.

turned to idolatry. One can recognize personal idols in the following way: a person will sin in order to get something that he desires, or he will fall into sinful behavior because he did not get it.

Real or deep change comes from transformation, that is, the renewing of the mind/heart as described in Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:5, and Ephesians 4:20-24. Key elements in the change process that were highlighted included sin and guilt, repentance and faith, forgiveness, replacement (Eph 4:22-32; Col 3:5-17), and mind renewal. Through regeneration, a person's mind has a new capacity to be interjected with and controlled by divine thoughts (1 Cor 2:11-12; Rom 1:16; Luke 10:27; Eph 5:17-18; Col 3:16).

Another topic covered in this class concerned the need for personal involvement in connection with biblical change on the part of all church members. Inasmuch as all believers are called upon to be engaged in personal sanctification, all believers are therefore to be involved in "biblical counseling." Unfortunately, many churches "out-source" the challenges of sanctification to "professional" counselors within their respective communities. Other churches limit their involvement in biblical counseling to another "tag-on" ministry. However, the biblical approach is to have everyone involved in the counseling/ discipleship ministry of the church, either in formal or informal aspects, and out-source only genuine medical issues to physicians. Within the local church, there is public ministry, such as preaching, private ministry of the Word, which entails one's personal journey, and, then there is interpersonal ministry, or one-on-one counseling.

Week 7

In week 7, the class was taught "Personal Involvement and Some Guidelines." Picking up where the last class left off, the goal to "get interpersonal" within the church was reiterated. It was noted that in a church the size of EBC, for the most part, this requires one to be a member of a home-group. It is primarily in the home-group setting that strong relationships can be formed beyond the superficial level. To "be involved" is to build a relationships with people whereby one puts himself in a position to help and be

helped. It is in the context of true friendships that spiritual growth and change take place. Drawing primarily from Scott's notes, fourteen guidelines concerning personal involvement were covered:

1. You must have loving compassion/concern for others.
2. Demonstrate your compassion.
3. Make yourself available.
4. Take problems seriously.
5. Be persuasive, but don't be manipulative.
6. Express confidence in the Christian's ability to change and obey Scripture.
7. Receive the disciple's disagreements without being defensive.
8. Adhere to principles of confidentiality.
9. Be honest.
10. Model the fruit of the Spirit.
11. Communicate clearly.
12. Listen well.
13. Be solution-oriented—merely dwelling on the problem is of no benefit.
14. Pray with and for the disciple.

This section of the class was followed by a presentation on hope in which genuine hope was contrasted to false hope. Genuine hope was defined as an effectual confidence in who God is and what He has promised in regard to the future with present day implications toward believers being Christ-like. In Scripture, hope is not something "wished for," but, instead, hope is an "effectual expectation" that has bearing on a person's life here and now. Scripture that was examined included 1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 John 2, Romans 12:9-13, and 2 Corinthians 4:1-12.

The contrast between false hope and true hope was discussed, noting some of the wrong places that people tend to place their strongest hope, i.e., in oneself, other people, or circumstances. In turn, this was contrasted to genuine hope that flows out of

one's salvation. True hope is based on Scripture (e.g., Ps 119:49; 130:5), is realistic (not being in denial or given over to mysticism), results from a conscious choice (1 Pet 1:13), and is rooted in what is known (Rom 5:1-5; Jas 1). The class ended with a discussion of how to pass along genuine hope to others.

Week 8

This session focused on “Providing Biblical Instruction and Handling Crisis Situations.” In providing biblical counseling to another brother or sister in Christ, people should avoid two common errors. First, the counselor should know that biblical counseling is not all instruction. Counselees need to be heard, not merely lectured or “sermonized.” Second, the counselor must realize that there is a definite need for instruction within the sessions. Unlike some secular therapies in which the counselor merely listens to the counselee, biblical counselors inject truth into the meetings.

Thus, the instruction to be given was discussed under three general headings:

1. It should be biblically-based (2 Tim 3:16-17).
2. It should be biblically accurate (2 Tim 2:15).
3. It should be biblically appropriate (i.e., with respect to the content, method of instruction, and timing with respect to the counselee's situation).

The remainder of the class covered the subject of dealing with a crisis situation. A crisis was defined as “a state of intense distress which results when a person faces any problem or problems that he/she thinks must be resolved immediately, but perceives no satisfactory solution to that problem.” A crisis may come about in numerous ways, and it might also include a variety of side effects, which compound the crisis itself. Several guidelines were provided for people who might find themselves coming alongside another in crisis:

1. Listen carefully to the person's concerns.
2. Be genuinely compassionate.
3. Encourage them to talk about the problem.

4. Assess the problem(s) biblically.
5. Give them hope.
6. Give them direction.

When exploring ways to give people direction, the following areas were covered:

1. Help them perceive the problem biblically.
2. Help them face and conquer their fears.
3. Help them correct wrong thinking.
4. Help them understand how they can trust and obey God by solving their problems.
5. Teach them how to pray about the problem biblically.
6. Help them understand their personal responsibility for their actions and reactions toward the problem.
7. Help them see the importance of accountability (i.e., the church).
8. Assist them in evaluating their progress.
9. Motivate and encourage them.
10. Help them prepare for future crisis situations.

In addition, the class was given a set of thirteen questions that can be used to assess the severity of a person's crisis experience. The class concluded with a summary discussion of several key points in connection with the counselee in crisis, as well as for the counselor to remember his own involvement. While the counselor must never find himself/herself in the mistaken attempts of Job's friends who resorted to hasty conclusions and superficial interpretations of the situation, nevertheless, the counselor should be alert for something God may be trying to do through the crisis.

Week 9

This class was used to provide attendees with an acquaintance of additional resources that could be used to continue their understanding of biblical counseling. Hence, this session was entitled, "Some Helpful Tools for Counseling." Several books were noted, followed by a brief discussion of the content and helpfulness provided by each book. The books named were *How People Change*, *Instruments in the Redeemer's*

*Hands, Seeing with New Eyes, Competent to Counsel, Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling, Homework Manuals, Volumes 1, 2, and 3,*² as well as a variety of brochures and booklets published by New Growth Press, Focus Publishing, P & R Publishing, and Faith Resources (Faith Baptist Church, Lafayette, Indiana). At the conclusion of the class, a handout was provided that listed numerous publications in connection with a variety of topics.

Week 10

The subject covered in this class was “Examples of Biblical Counseling in Action.” The first example consisted of showing a portion of a DVD produced by Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana, in which Randy Patton counseled a couple (“Trey and Deb”). These sessions were recorded in order to provide people with an opportunity to see biblical counseling in action.

The discussion of this counseling session was followed by more discussion of two handouts provided to the class. The first consisted of Garrett Higbee’s counseling of “Tony” and bipolar disorder. The second handout described interaction between Stuart Scott and “Jackie,” who suffered from “dissociative identity disorder.” The presentation of the handouts was to demonstrate to the class that biblical counseling addresses areas of current concerns. Although Scripture does not put the same “labels” on people that are found today, it deals with the problems currently identified within society.

²Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2006); Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002); David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003); Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); John J. Kruis, *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Wayne A. Mack, *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living*, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1979); idem, *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living*, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980); Wayne A. Mack and Wayne E. Johnston, *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living*, vol. 3 (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2005).

Week 11

Since culture seems to be obsessed with one's past, this class, "The Believer and the Past; Helping Non-Believers," presented materials designed to put a biblical perspective on this topic. Many attempt to explain "anti-social" behavior by examining events or circumstances associated with a person's past. In short, culture says, "You are what your experience has made you." Such a perspective leads to a variety of therapeutic techniques, none of which reach the heart of the issue. And, of course, that is because the heart *is* the issue!

Thus, biblical counseling seeks to discover what the person is truly worshipping in his/her heart; what things one's heart truly loves; what is the treasure in one's life (Matt 6). At the same time, biblical counselors avoid the two extremes of saying the past is everything, you are a result of your experience, as well as the past is nothing, do not pay any attention to it. A discussion of the work of God in connection with one's past was presented, along with how Christians are to view their past.

A second topic of this class addressed the matter of nonbelievers in connection with biblical counseling. Since the goal of all counseling, whether biblical or secular, is to change people, biblical counselors are able to approach nonbelievers on a deeper basis than are secular counselors. Meaningful change begins when a person comes to Christ in faith.

Therefore, this class examined some important areas to cover with a nonbeliever. As an unrepentant sinner, a person is incapable of understanding or doing God's will in his/her life from the heart. Thus, the biblical counselor views time with a nonbeliever as a "pre-counseling" (or an evangelistic) opportunity. The unsaved are to be approached with both hands holding help. One hand holds something very minimal (temporary), while the other hand holds the entrance into real counseling (eternal). As the biblical counselor works through the explanation of the person's situation, there comes a point when the unsaved person has received all the pre-counseling help he/she can be given.

Rather than falsely representing Christ as a cosmic genie, or a God who can be domesticated to serve the proud sinner, the counselee must comprehend redemption, radical surgery, repentance, and Lordship of Christ. Sometimes this may result in the counselor being rejected or even ostracized by the counselee. Nevertheless, the truth is what people need to hear. This discussion was followed by a suggested reading list and homework list for the unsaved person whom the biblical counselor is helping.

Week 12

The last class, “Class Input; History of Biblical Counseling; Training Opportunities,” ended the time together as a class. Largely based upon David Powlison’s publications on this subject, the class saw the flow of biblical counseling for the past 300 years. The Protestant Church relied on Scripture for many decades in terms of counseling, but by the early years of the twentieth century, psychology had replaced Scripture extensively within the Christian community. It was not until the mid-1960s that biblical counseling was “rediscovered” and utilized within Christian circles to any extent. A synopsis of Jay Adams’ history was presented, and an update of the current status of biblical counseling was also given. Particular emphasis was given to NANC (now ACBC), the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CEEF), Faith Baptist Counseling Ministries, along with The Master’s Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Following this discussion, class participants re-took the survey that they had taken at the first class. The information from this post-project survey was compared to the answers recorded in the pre-project survey. The data gathered was designed to measure the class’s growth in understanding various components and issues associated with biblical counseling, and the results of those surveys are presented in chapter 5.

The concluding section of this class consisted of two testimonies with respect to the benefit of pursuing additional training in biblical counseling. One testimony concerned NANC training, while the other spoke about attending the counseling

conference offered by Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Various books were cited in both testimonies as a means of growing in one's understanding and application of biblical counseling.

Survey Observations

The use of surveys proved somewhat helpful in determining where home-group leaders stood in terms of their thinking through a grid of biblical counseling. However, information gathered from the surveys did not meet my full expectations. Not every home-group leader completed the survey on both ends of the project, somewhat to my dismay. Their laxity in this regard remains a mystery, for I tried to emphasize the importance of their compliance in that regard.

The leaders of one home-group (husband and wife) rejected the notion that counseling could be done apart from input from the field of psychology. As a result, this couple stopped attending the class sessions after week 3. The positive takeaway is that I know exactly where this leader stands with respect to the sufficiency of Scripture, but I am disappointed that we were not able to dialog further. The leaders of another three groups also failed to complete a final survey, although attendance records show they were present for the majority of sessions. It is consoling, however, to have their initial surveys, which do not reflect any particular allegiance to integrationist counseling. Still, I dislike the void left by the absence of the second survey.

Certainly, one of the challenges of working with people in the church is the problem of "volunteer" mindsets. Requests can be made, and needs may be noted, but congregants sometimes feel no compulsion to respond. In other words, home-group leaders cannot be *made* to attend a class in the church, nor can they be *made* to complete a survey. Therefore, we must work with the information at hand, recognizing the incomplete nature of the data. I am grateful for the number of home-group leaders who did follow through and complete both surveys. Perhaps in the future, the elders can raise the requirements and expectations for all who wish to serve as a home-group leader.

As noted, the survey specifically included statements associated with progressive sanctification, the sufficiency of Scripture (apart from a dependence upon psychological theory), as well as an openness to using God's Word in counseling with people about their difficulties in life. Overall, the collected responses were more favorable toward key aspects of biblical counseling than I initially suspected.

For example, the statements in connection to progressive sanctification demonstrated mild confusion about the subject initially, particularly statements 26 and 28: "Christians would be wise to heed the slogan, 'Let go and let God,'" and "Lasting changes in behavior involve altering one's current circumstances and/or relationships."

Approximately one-third of the respondents to the first survey "agreed" or "somewhat agreed" with these statements. However, in the second survey, no one agreed with statement 26. Clarification through discussion seemed to help them understand the issues at stake. By the end of the project, all of the home-group leaders that completed the survey agreed with statement 31, "I believe that every Christian should be engaged in personal discipleship" (only the spouse of a leader disagreed), a concept discussed at length in connection with biblical counseling. Likewise, all respondents in the second survey agreed with statement 14, "Confession of sin and repentance should be ongoing in a believer's life," as well as statement 20, "Personal spiritual growth is the result of you cooperating with God."

Even among home-group leaders, there was an expressed reluctance to share personal problems with others (statement 1). Perhaps the statement should have defined the context of such sharing more clearly, but the first survey showed only 7 leaders who disagreed with the notion, "I am a private person and tend *not* to share my problems/struggles with others." Some leaders later told me that they viewed the question reflecting an introverted personality or, in some cases, indiscriminate sharing. In the context of coming alongside another (as in biblical counseling), more might be willing to share, but I used the statement to point out a reluctance of the church to be

transparent under most circumstances. Our church culture needs to change to the point of not fearing the “stigma” of having struggles in our Christian walk. For biblical counseling to flourish among home-groups and other brothers and sisters, we must be a more open people.

With the exception of the leader who quit coming to class, the initial survey displayed a surprisingly favorable predisposition of the home-group leaders toward the need of Scripture in counseling situations. It was surprising in the sense that I expected a more overt integrationist philosophical approach to counseling. Instead, these home-group leaders reflected a high view of Scripture in connection with solving life’s problems.

For example, statement 8 says, “I would have the most confidence in a counselor who combines knowledge drawn from psychology with the wisdom found in Scripture.” Only 6 home-group leaders initially answered in agreement with this statement, but 3 of those leaders changed their mind by the end of the class sessions and disagreed with the statement. Statistically, 50 percent of those sympathetic to the integrative approach moved into the biblical counseling side by the end of the project, which I found quite encouraging.

On a related statement, “I think that the Bible alone is sufficient to help me deal with life’s problems” (statement 7), only 3 leaders disagreed initially. By the last class, only 1 leader disagreed. This, too, was encouraging, although, I would prefer that everyone agree.

Similarly, 100 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, “Many of the personal problems people face today are not addressed in the Bible.” And 100 percent agreed with the notion, “Scripture is totally sufficient to address any issue of which it speaks and for which it claims to be sufficient.” Thus, the home-group leaders in general have a high view of Scripture, which bodes well in terms of their acceptance of biblical counseling methodology.

Furthermore, all respondents agreed, “Every local church should have a counseling ministry” (statement 10). While not every person may have envisioned a biblical counseling ministry as defined in the class, at least this finding suggests acceptance of an “in house” approach to counseling as opposed to sending people away from the church for personal counseling. This attitude must be blended into the thought of being transparent with one another biblically, as well as coupled with statement 31, “I believe that every Christian should be engaged in personal discipleship.”

However, while these home-group leaders expressed a high view of Scripture in their responses, the subtle influence of integrationist thinking was also detected. Initially, 11 respondents agreed with the statement, “Scriptural truths may be supplemented by truths that have been discovered by human investigation and observation” (statement 18). Seven of the 11 shifted their position to “disagree” or “do not know” by the end of the project, demonstrating some remaining lack of clarity on the issue. Likewise, 9 people believed, “Many believers need to examine their family history in order to resolve current problems in their lives” (statement 19). Five changed their position to “disagree” in the second survey, but, nonetheless, more needs to be done to help clarify these issues within the congregation.

Other related statements, including, “Low self-esteem seems to be a huge factor in limiting many people’s personal development” (statement 13), “Our personalities are basically formed during the first five or six years of our lives,” (statement 15), and “You are what your experience has made you” (statement 27) showed similar confusion. However, given the widespread nature of “Christian counseling” publications and programs over the past several decades that promote the integration of psychology with Scripture, such confusion should be expected. The discernment to sort through these kinds of issues in light of Scripture must be a primary concern for future teaching at Emmanuel.

Clearly, more teaching is needed with respect to the fundamental underpinnings of psychology in general. That need is reflected in the fact that 10 of the 45 respondents

initially supported statement 23, “Christian psychologists probably make the best counselors.” In the second survey, 7 of those leaders still agreed with the statement, and I am not sure why. Perhaps there is a general impression absorbed from culture that psychologists are problem “fixers,” or perhaps my section on this topic was unclear or too brief. Likewise, given the material covered, it was disappointing to see that 7 leaders in the second survey still agreed with statement 28, “Lasting changes in behavior involve altering one’s current circumstances and/or relationship.” I suspect people viewed this statement apart from the doctrine of progressive sanctification. At any rate, more clarity and emphasis upon the sufficiency of Scripture must remain a priority as EBC moves toward implementation of biblical counseling.

A third targeted area with these home-group leaders dealt with helping them see the vision of biblical counseling at work in their groups. Hence, it was gratifying to read the final survey in which all but 1 leader agreed with statement 6, “If someone shared a personal problem with me, I would feel comfortable in helping that person look in the Bible for insights about that problem.” In a similar vein, no respondent agreed with statement 2 by the end of the project, “If I had a serious problem, I would seek the services of a professional counselor.” Four respondents had previously agreed with that statement. The same results were seen with respect to statement 16, “A layperson can provide genuine, spiritual help to fellow-believers and non-believers.” Furthermore, every home-group leader agreed with statement 12, “In the home-groups/Bible studies which I have attended, people have trusted one another enough to share personal struggles.” Every one of them also indicated their agreement with statement 32, “I know a trusted Christian friend with whom I share my personal problems/struggles.”

Statistically, the most dramatic shift from the first survey to the second survey involved statements 24 and 30: “I am familiar with the National Association of Nouthetic

Counselors,” and “I am familiar with the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation.”³

Only 2 respondents agreed with both statements initially, but by the second survey, everyone was familiar with both organizations. In addition, 23 people expressed an interest in having formal training in biblical counseling.

³The National Association of Nouthetic Counselors is now called the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

CHAPTER 5

THE FINAL ANALYSIS: EVALUATION AND REFLECTIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS PROJECT

Introduction

The completion of this project was a significant step toward the implementation of biblical counseling at Emmanuel Baptist Church. Since the leadership of the church is united in their commitment to biblical counseling, their desire is to help the entire church embrace the mindset and practices associated with it. Thus, this project was designed to move EBC toward biblical counseling by exposing home-group leaders to its basic tenets. In turn, these leaders will be able to pass along that information to the people in their groups. Thus, the intention of this project was to proliferate a clear understanding of biblical counseling in a systematic way to a large portion of the congregation.

According to attendance records over the past decade, approximately half of the adults attending EBC are committed to a home-group that meets weekly. Numerically, approximately 300 people attend a home-group on any given week. Home-groups are comprised of 10 to 12 people on average, and are led and usually hosted by an elder-approved home-group leader. The groups meet with regularity from September through May, but most groups maintain monthly social gatherings during June, July, and August. Since about half of the church connects weekly with a home-group leader, it is obvious that home-group leaders have a great deal of inherent potential to be a positive force in moving EBC into biblical counseling, both doctrinally and in terms of practical application.

This project was planned with the understanding that a twelve-week class is only the first phase of equipping home-group leaders at EBC in the area of biblical counseling. Furthermore, a single twelve-week class is not sufficient to move the congregation to the point of enthusiastically embracing biblical counseling. From my decade of ministry at EBC, I know that many people in the congregation are not familiar with biblical counseling. In addition, I find that many hold faulty understandings of it. Therefore, the elders are looking ahead toward future training and teaching opportunities having to do with biblical counseling. This project served as the initial impetus at the congregational level for the establishment of a viable biblical counseling ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

As indicated in preceding chapters, the specific purpose of this project was to initiate the equipping of EBC's home-group leaders with a basic level of understanding of biblical counseling and its dynamics within the church body. Along with the acquisition of this understanding, home-group leaders are exhorted to implement the dynamics of biblical counseling within their home-groups. This project, then, specifically involved designing and teaching a class toward that end. As described in chapter 4, the material covered throughout the sessions was chosen to meet the specific goals listed next.

At the inception of this project, 32 home-groups met each week. Since the class was not mandated by the elders, not all home groups were represented. Only 25 of them were represented in the class, which amounted to 48 people (leaders and their spouses). Additionally, 7 more people were added to the class. These 7 were invited because they are expected to lead future home groups. Thus, a total of 55 home-group leaders participated in the class sessions of this project.

In the process of encouraging home-group leaders to attend this introductory class on biblical counseling, other congregational members also became aware of the class. Rather than discouraging their interest, I allowed them to attend as long as there

was ample room in the class for the home-group leaders. I deemed it quite appropriate for these “extra” people to be exposed to the biblical counseling material, as any number of them might ultimately prove to be advocates of biblical counseling at Emmanuel in the future. Although these people enjoyed full participation in the class sessions, survey data reported in this project was limited to the 55 home-group leaders.

Evaluation of the Project’s Goals

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this project in achieving its overall purpose, four measurable goals were established: (1) home-group leaders need to understand the nature of the believer’s progressive sanctification and the role that biblical counseling can play in that process, (2) home-group leaders need to embrace a commitment to the sufficiency of Christ and His Word in terms of dealing with personal problems encountered in the believer’s life, (3) home-group leaders need to grow in their ability to discern and connect biblical principles to the various struggles and challenges in their lives, and (4) my need to grow in my ability to promote biblical counseling within EBC by developing a classroom curriculum that teaches basic underlying tenets and philosophies associated with the subject.

With respect to the first three goals, specific material was selected for the class sessions that allowed all attendees to be exposed to these concepts. From that standpoint, these three goals of the project were met. My assumption is that this material was taught clearly, especially since I allowed ample time for discussion to take place. Questions were taken during the class, and I was available following the class to take questions as well. In addition, it was often necessary to repeat certain key concepts in dealing with questions were raised during times of class discussion, so I believe the presentation of the material was adequate.

The fourth goal was accomplished simply by carrying out this project. I now have a basic, introductory series on biblical counseling that I am able to offer to the church on a regular basis. My experience at EBC thus far is that most people in the

church have the same questions and/or misunderstandings about biblical counseling, although they may word their concerns differently. In response to expressed concerns or questions by congregants, I will modify the content of the class sessions in the future as needed.

In general, therefore, the four specific goals of this project were successfully met within EBC. The primary caveat here is that about 20 percent of the home-group leaders did not attend the class. However, from a content perspective, the attending home-group leaders were able to learn about some critical elements and components of biblical counseling. Furthermore, each class session involved the distribution of pertinent notes, which the leaders can lean on for future reference. There is much more work to be done in the area of equipping the home-group leaders, but this project was a good start for our church.

An unplanned bonus of this project was the opportunity to expose a number of congregants to biblical counseling who are currently not serving as home-group leaders. As long as there was room in the class, I allowed other people in the congregation to sit in on the sessions. They participated in the class surveys, so I accumulated data from another 65 people who attended the class sessions; ironically, more non-leaders than actual home-group leaders. Hopefully, these people will prove to be a help to the leaders of their home-groups in terms of passing biblical counseling theory and practices on to the other constituents of their groups.

Input from Surveys

In order to determine what class attendees believed about some of the key underpinnings of biblical counseling, a survey was taken during the first class session. Thirty-two statements were presented, to which the respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement by entering a number of 1 through 5 (1 = agree; 2= somewhat agree; 3= do not know; 4= somewhat disagree; 5 = disagree) (see appendix 1).

Key concepts, as described in the first three goals, were probed, although, in some cases, concepts overlapped somewhat. For example, the student's understanding of progressive sanctification was targeted in statements 10, 14, 20, 24, 26, and 28, while statements 1, 3, 4, and 11 were indirectly linked to the concept. The sufficiency of Scripture in dealing with life's problems was emphasized in statements 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27, and 29. The ability and/or willingness to connect biblical passages to life-problems was targeted in questions 6, 12, 16, 24, 25, 30, and 32.

The same survey was issued during the last class in order to see if any change or movement in thinking with respect to these concepts had occurred. The last survey also included a page of questions designed to elicit feed-back from the class, as well as to see if any attendees had an interest in pursuing more training in biblical counseling. The comparison of pre-project and post-project responses are presented in graph form in Appendix 6.

Strengths of the Project

Within the context of Emmanuel Baptist Church, several strengths of this project are worth noting. First, the thrust of the project was successful in that it reached over three-quarters of the home-group leaders with some key concepts of biblical counseling. This high percentage of participating home-group leaders represents a substantial base from which to build. The elders of EBC are encouraged by the overall attendance, and we currently are moving toward making this class series a regular part of training for all home-group leaders.

A second strength of this project was that it provided a platform from which we are able to cast a clear vision of biblical counseling for Emmanuel Baptist Church. The classes designed for this project may be taught quarterly, or as often as necessary, and be made available to the general congregation. As previously noted, there was a surprisingly high interest within the church among non-leaders of home-groups. Such interest may well serve to spread key concepts of biblical counseling throughout the

congregation. Linked to the call of our church to make disciples, there is much potential for a shift in EBC's culture away from seeking outside counsel and toward one of nurturing discipleship relationships. Again, the format of the project class series used repeatedly could prove to be a wonderful enhancement of carrying out the "one anothers" among our church family.

Likewise, a third strength of this project was linked to its content. Future classes can expand upon various sections of material covered in this project. Areas of concern or confusion detected during and after this project may be addressed in greater length during future teaching opportunities. A topic of repeated inquiry following this project was the role of psychology within Christian counseling circles. While, touched upon in the third week of the project's series, a more detailed presentation may be developed from the foundation of the covered material. The same could be said in connection with any of the topics discussed in the class sessions. However, because of this project, those topics have been broached and put on a "front burner" of people's minds.

In addition to a new interest in biblical counseling that has occurred among many people at EBC, another strength of this project has been the development of a group of volunteers who have expressed an interest in being trained to become certified biblical counselors within our church. One of the visions cast during the classes was the formation of a cadre of certified counselors that could serve within Emmanuel to handle more difficult counseling situations. Since the conclusion of this project, a number of people have attended the biblical counseling conference offered by Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana, which offers several levels of training. Currently, approximately a dozen people are working their way toward certified status with ACBC. Furthermore, there is discussion about future opportunities to reach into the community through a viable counseling ministry at EBC. The elders see these potential developments and are planning accordingly as a tangible result of this project and its class sessions.

Finally, as a result of the recommendations made during this project, EBC has established a resource center to make key books available to the congregation. This center is modeled after that at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Our center is focusing on materials published by biblical counselors and includes many short books and pamphlets. People have already embraced this resource center, and it is encouraging to see them purchase these biblically-centered materials. Each month, the center has expanded the number of books offered.

Weaknesses of the Project

One weakness of the project was the failure of some home-group leaders to attend the class sessions on biblical counseling. Roughly 20 percent of the leaders remain developed little with respect to understanding and disseminating the concepts of biblical counseling at EBC. Their absence raises doubts concerning their support of biblical counseling, or at least questions about their understanding of it. At this point, it is uncertain if any of them will prove to be an obstacle in the implementation biblical counseling, or if their absence was merely due to scheduling conflicts. Indeed, the focus of this project was to bring clarity to the vision for implementing biblical counseling by addressing key concepts and any misunderstandings concerning the subject. Thus, these absentees represent somewhat of a setback for momentum toward a ministry of counseling at EBC.

A perceived weakness by two participants in the class sessions concerned the lack of practical illustrations of biblical counseling being practiced. That is, these two wanted to see more examples of “biblical counseling in action.” I do not consider this to be a genuine weakness of the project, because the project was not designed to produce skilled biblical counselors in twelve weeks. I am aware of this issue, because it comes from the last page of the second survey where participants were given a chance to critique their overall experience, as well as to offer suggestions for improvement. The

only improvement suggested was this matter of providing more practical illustrations of biblical counseling in action.

Given the amount of material covered, there simply was not any time for the enactment of counseling situations. Perhaps future classes could engage in role-playing as it pertains to biblical counseling situations. I have surmised that the primary source of this desire from home-group leaders is their lack of confidence in making application of what they were learning. Yet, in time, I hope that it will become apparent to them that biblical counseling is a natural part of Christian interaction, just as sharing the gospel is a natural occurrence in their relationships with non-Christians.

Perhaps another caution to note in connection with this project involves the data collected through the two surveys given in class. While this body of data was helpful, it was not definitive with respect to the status of biblical counseling at Emmanuel. The data pointed in a direction that is favorable to the acceptance of biblical counseling by our home-group leaders. However, I suspect that preconceptions and a lack of familiarity with counseling nuances played a strong role in the way people responded to certain statements, especially those connected to the sufficiency of Scripture. Although the statements were crafted with this difficulty in mind, I am not sure that people responded with an ability to distinguish between biblical counseling and “Christian” counseling in general. Be that as it may, the survey data was useful in pointing to the need for further clarification in future teaching opportunities. Clearly, most home-group leaders favored the underpinnings of biblical counseling, but that support will be even stronger in the coming months.

What I Would Do Differently

Strategically, I would not change anything about this project. It represents the next step as we incorporate biblical counseling into the fabric of Emmanuel Baptist Church. If I could rewind, however, the one area that I might have placed more emphasis upon is that of the recruitment of home-group leaders. Every leader received a letter of

invitation, followed by a phone call prior to the class. Since no leader indicated that he would not be coming to class, I anticipated that all of them would attend.

In hindsight, I would engage in more individual contact with the leaders, making it a point to stress the importance of their attendance. In short, I should have been more aggressive in pursuing them. Upon completion of the project, I contacted those leaders who failed to attend the classes in an effort to determine the reason for their absence. Only two reasons were cited for non-participation. The most common reason given was that they attended another class on Sunday mornings that met at the same time as the biblical counseling class. The other reason was that they “usually only attended worship services.”

On the other hand, no leader expressed any opposition to biblical counseling in our conversations. Therefore, I must assume that an objection to biblical counseling was not a factor in their non-attendance. Still, it would have been nice to have all of the home-group leaders go through the material together.

Something else that I would do is to allow time for a short “quiz” following each session over the material covered. I think that it would give me instant feedback concerning the effectiveness of my teaching or of any misunderstanding that might have taken place. The down side is that such an activity would take away from the teaching and discussion time.

Along these lines, I wish that I could have videotaped the class sessions, which would have given people who missed a class the opportunity to go to our website and view the class. Although there were notes for each class, not everything discussed ended up in the notes. Initially, the option of videotaping was discussed with the church’s technology team, but, unfortunately, at the time, we lacked the means by which to do this. Things have changed, however, and I would definitely videotape future classes.

Theological Reflections

In reflecting upon the theological implications of this project for Emmanuel Baptist, I am primarily enthused about the potential for a more biblical outworking of our walk with Christ, both individually and corporately. EBC has been a church that has preached God's Word for several decades. The church has professed a high view of Scripture throughout that time, and yet sin issues have plagued the church to the extent that its focus has been largely inward. That is, the spiritual health necessary for making EBC an attractive place to others to come and grow in Christ has been lacking to a large extent. The practical theology associated with applying Scripture into the fabric of people's everyday life has remained spotty at best.

With a new emphasis on biblical counseling, I can foresee a culture shift within the church, assuming that the momentum for embracing biblical counseling continues, for the focus is upon one's heart. A grasp of progressive sanctification can help people see the necessity of investing some positive effort in their journey toward maturity in Christ. It can lead to a healthy self-evaluation in multiple areas of their lives. I am not alone in this assessment, because the elders of EBC see this spiritual emphasis as a much needed one in the coming years.

Thus, biblical counseling can breathe new life into a congregation facing the challenges of daily life in an ever-increasingly hostile secular culture. Scripture can assume its elevated place in people's thinking, resulting in more consistent spiritual growth. Not only does an understanding of progressive sanctification result in the maturation of each believer, but also it removes the stigma of seeking out counsel from more mature believers in the body. Counseling can be seen as a necessary and integral aspect of discipleship.

Certainly the church has been called to discipleship through the "great commission" of Matthew 28:19, but that call should never be limited to the proclamation of the gospel to the lost. It also includes the proclamation of the gospel to the saved. Who does not need to deal with sin on a daily basis? Who does not need to be encouraged

in this life with the hope of Christ? Who does not need to be admonished at times? I think this project will be a springboard for a new culture at EBC in this connection.

I anticipate that our church body will see the role of biblical counseling in connection with discipleship, and therefore be more open to come in for counseling. Frequently, by the time a married couple comes in for “counseling” they are in a crisis mode. I hope that people will be more proactive in taking “preventive” measures by growing in their knowledge of Scripture in connection with their specific walk with the Lord. The stigma of being counseled should be dissolved into a positive development.

Another key theological impetus of the biblical counseling ministry at EBC concerns growth in the conviction of the sufficiency of Scripture. The home-group leaders participating in this project understood this concept fairly well, I believe. However, I know that the truth of Scripture’s sufficiency is a recurring issue among our congregation, especially in light of culture’s current assault upon the authority of the Bible. Strengthening this notion both conceptually and practically will greatly aid the impact of our church upon the community of Mount Vernon. Confidence in the Bible and success in dealing with life problems will prove to be a major boon to the overall spiritual wellbeing of our church. I look forward to an increase of confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture at EBC.

Along these lines, it is my goal that people go to the Word of God first when faced with life’s trials and temptations, as well as sin entanglements. A large segment of our congregation tends to look elsewhere when initially confronted with life problems. To that end, I know that more training is needed. This project has revealed that home-group leaders have such a desire; they simply need to gain confidence in their ability to do so, and I am looking toward future training for them to that end.

Personal Reflections

On a personal level, this project and the training preceding it represents an encouraging turn in the development of my ministry at EBC. My role as the pastor of

adult ministries has many aspects, but biblical counseling has become the unifying theme. Various dimensions of biblical counseling will color the applications given in sermons, in home-groups, and in the various equipping classes for adults offered throughout the year. I have always had a passion for biblical counseling and I am convinced that the application of its dynamics within the congregation of EBC will have a dramatic impact upon the spiritual health of our church.

I enjoy teaching the Word of God, and the material used in this project will continue to serve this church body in the coming years. As I have become increasingly familiar with the growing library of biblical counseling materials, I find that I have a new confidence in anticipating and answering questions people have about a meaningful counseling ministry within the church. One of the most enjoyable aspects of connecting the gospel of Jesus Christ to the outworking of biblical counseling is to demonstrate the need for direct application of Scripture in people's lives. Knowing God's Word is a wonderful thing, but it is meant to change lives and meet people's deepest needs. I have moved into a much better place in our church when it comes to the teaching aspect of my ministry. This project has redefined my role at EBC to a certain extent. I have become a point person for all of the counseling that "officially" takes place at EBC.

I look forward to the coming months and years and being used to help build a foundation of biblical counseling by involving others who share a similar passion for it. My goal is to develop a core group of certified ACBC counselors from those who have expressed an interest in such a ministry since this project took place. It has been truly gratifying to see others get excited about biblical counseling at EBC and its potential to spur discipleship growth. These people, as well as the elders of EBC, see the potential for solid spiritual growth among our church family because of biblical counseling. They also can visualize biblical counseling being used in evangelistic situations within our community of Mount Vernon, Washington. One can easily find a "counselor" in our area, but biblical counselors are few and far between. We want to work with like-minded

churches to make biblical counseling an accessible option for believers in this area.

Therefore, from a personal standpoint, the Lord has guided me to the place He wants me to be. There is nothing I had rather be doing than helping others connect with the Lord through the methods and principles I have learned and taught in biblical counseling. Whereas our church leadership views the implementation of a biblical counseling ministry at EBC to be “watershed” event in the history of the church, I consider it a similarly important event in my personal growth and ministry as a pastor.

Conclusion

This project was designed to be a significant step toward the implementation of biblical counseling at EBC. For twelve consecutive Sunday mornings, a class was taught to the church’s home-group leaders; a class that presented some key principles of biblical counseling, as well as demonstrated the overall importance of biblical counseling to a local church. Despite its shortcomings, the project succeeded in exposing over three-quarters of our home-group leaders to these basic concepts, along with accompanying exhortations to pass that information on to others. From the standpoint of EBC’s leadership, this project marks the official beginning of a biblical counseling ministry at EBC.

It is recognized, however, that this project represents the beginning of an ongoing process in terms of firmly establishing a biblical counseling ministry at EBC. The root of that ministry has taken hold, but much more attention must be forthcoming in the coming months to assure its continued growth. As previously noted, the implementation of biblical counseling at EBC is a process, not an event. Nevertheless, this project has fulfilled its intentions by setting that process in motion among a substantial segment of EBC’s congregation.

APPENDIX 1
SURVEY FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Name (please print): _____

Age (check one):

_____ Less than 20 _____ 41-50
_____ 20-30 _____ 51-60
_____ 31-40 _____ Over 60

I am in a home group (circle one): yes no

I am a home group facilitator (circle one): yes no

I am open to becoming a home group facilitator (circle one): yes no

For each of the following statements, please enter the number that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement:

1 = agree 2= somewhat agree 3 = do not know 4 = somewhat disagree 5 = disagree

- 1) _____ I am a private person and tend not to share my problems/struggles with others.
- 2) _____ If I had a serious personal problem, I would seek the services of a professional counselor.
- 3) _____ I would go to a non-Christian counselor to help me with problems in my life.
- 4) _____ If I had a serious personal problem, I would prefer to see a counselor *not* affiliated with my home church.
- 5) _____ I would only go to a Christian counselor to help me with problems in my life.
- 6) _____ If someone shared a personal problem with me, I would feel comfortable in helping that person look in the Bible for insights about that problem.
- 7) _____ I think that the Bible alone is sufficient to help me deal with life's problems.

- 8) _____ I would have the most confidence in a counselor who combines knowledge drawn from psychology with the wisdom found in Scripture.
- 9) _____ The inspired, inerrant Word of God is the only authoritative source by which we can know absolute truth.
- 10) _____ Every local church should have a counseling ministry.
- 11) _____ I know how to repair ruptured personal relationships, and, if necessary, I am willing to lovingly confront others to do so.
- 12) _____ In the home groups/Bible studies which I have attended, people have trusted one another enough to share personal struggles.
- 13) _____ Low self-esteem seems to be a huge factor in limiting many people's personal development.
- 14) _____ Confession of sin and repentance should be ongoing in a believer's life.
- 15) _____ Our personalities are basically formed during the first five or six years of our lives.
- 16) _____ A layperson can provide genuine, spiritual help to fellow-believers and non-believers.
- 17) _____ Many behavioral issues can be treated effectively with medication under the direction of a physician.
- 18) _____ Scriptural truths may be supplemented by truths that have been discovered by human investigation and observation.
- 19) _____ Many believers need to examine their family history in order to resolve current problems in their lives.
- 20) _____ Personal spiritual growth is the result of you cooperating with God.
- 21) _____ Most conservative seminaries include counseling in their theological curriculums.
- 22) _____ Scripture is totally sufficient to address any issue of which it speaks and for which it claims to be sufficient.
- 23) _____ Christian psychologists probably make the best counselors.
- 24) _____ I am familiar with the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors.
- 25) _____ Many people are victims of their own irrational beliefs about themselves which results in self-defeating behavior.
- 26) _____ Christians would be wise to heed the slogan, "Let go and let God."
- 27) _____ You are what your experience has made you.
- 28) _____ Lasting changes in behavior involve altering one's current circumstances and/or relationships.

- 29) ____ Many of the personal problems people face today are not addressed in the Bible.
- 30) ____ I am familiar with the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation.
- 31) ____ I believe that every Christian should be engaged in personal discipleship.
- 32) ____ I know a trusted Christian friend with whom I share my personal problems/struggles.

Additional Survey for Last Class Session

What is your general impression of this class? Strengths? Weaknesses?

How many classes did you attend? ____

Are you interested in learning more about biblical counseling? ____

Would you like to be better equipped for your own personal ministry involving biblical counseling? ____

Are you interested in formal training in biblical counseling? ____

APPENDIX 2

ADDITIONAL TEXTUAL COMMENTARY

Hebrews 4:12

Sometimes the main thrust of this text is overlooked because readers focus their attention on whether people have two or three parts to their basic being. R. Kent Hughes points out how such debate loses the whole thrust of the passage:

Some have attempted to use this text in the dichotomist/trichotomist debate—to either prove that humans are two parts or three parts. Such attempts do harm to the practical understanding of God’s Word, because all we have here is a poetic statement of God’s Word to pierce the human personality to its very depths. God’s Word can cut through anything and bring conviction.¹

Colossians 1:28-29

Upon closer examination of the context of this passage, one finds that the apostle Paul contrasts Christ to the false teachings of certain Jewish and gnostic teachers. He deals with such things as asceticism (Col 2:16, 21), the observation of days in connection with rituals (Col 2:16), special visions (Col 2:18), and the worship of angels (Col 2:18, 20). It is the privilege of the biblical counselor to engage in the procedure described by Paul, passing on “all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ) found in Christ in order that people may be “complete” or “perfect” in Christ (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ). In terms of behavior, Paul is referring to spiritual maturity or Christlikeness. W. H. Griffith Thomas states that the purpose of ministering the gospel to others “is first suggested by the word ‘perfect,’ which means here, as often elsewhere, maturity, ripeness, both of character and

¹R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews*, Preaching the Word, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 121.

of experience.”² He explicitly notes,

Perfection never means sinlessness but almost always the condition of the mature in contrast with the immature believer. From the moment of conversion we are to make progress, until we all arrive at the full ripeness of our position in Christ (Eph. 4:13).³

The reality of becoming more consistent in Christlikeness is a goal achievable by every believer. Such thinking flies in the face of many false teachers. In his description of the situation in Paul’s day, William Barclay notes,

That God wanted every man, that every man could be presented to God, would have seemed incredible and even blasphemous to a Jew. *The Gnostic* would never have agreed that every man could be warned and taught, and presented complete to God. As we have seen, he believed that the knowledge necessary for salvation was so involved and elaborate and difficult that it must be the possession of the spiritual aristocracy and of the chosen few.⁴

Often, it seems, in the arena of counseling, there appears to be almost a “gnostic” approach. Professional counselors are frequently viewed as a kind of “aristocracy.” Christians may well think of themselves as “hopeless” and devoid of the “knowledge” necessary to deal with trials and difficulties in their lives. Yet, this passage (in conjunction with those previously mentioned) clearly points to an encouraging reality that is attainable by any believer. Every person in Christ has the Word and the Holy Spirit available to help them and guide them in life. Believers must remember who they are in Christ, and not merely view themselves in comparison with (or dependent upon) worldly accomplishments. Barclay writes,

There are gifts a man will never possess; there are privileges a man will never enjoy; there are heights of this world’s attainment which a man will never scale; but to

²W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1986), 68.

³Ibid.

⁴William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, The Daily Bible Studies Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 152.

every man there is open the good news of the gospel, and the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and the transforming power which can bring holiness into life.⁵

Eadie points out the same encouraging news for Christians in light of this text:

The apostle felt an undying interest in every man, whatever his character or creed—every man, whatever his race or lineage—every man, whatever his colour or language—every man, whatever his class or station; every living man on earth shared in his sympathies, had a place in his prayers, and so far as the sphere of his personal teaching extended, might receive the impress of his counsels, and the benefit of his instructions.⁶

Moule notes that perhaps the repetition of “every man” three times has a double reference:

Perhaps this solemn emphasis has a double reference; (a) as Lightfoot, to the universality of the Gospel, whose “counsel of perfection” are not (as the false teachers would have it, in *their* “Gospel”) for a privileged inner circle of votaries but for every one without exception who comes to Jesus Christ; and (b) to the fact that in this universality the individual is never lost or merged in the community; each soul, each life, as if there were no other, is to be “perfect in Christ.”⁷

That individuality and responsibility of every man is described well by

Thomas:

Notwithstanding our surroundings each one of us lives in a little world of his own; for, whatever else we do with others, we think alone, we breathe alone, we die alone, and we shall awake on the other side alone. And so God’s truth come to man alone, dealing with him as an individual, as well as one of a number, “warning every man, and teaching every man.”⁸

The task or goal set before the biblical counselor in Colossians 1:28-29 also indicates that the counselor is working in conjunction with divine power. Christians are dependent on Christ’s power to accomplish this (v. 29), not on mere human effort.

Lightfoot summarizes the goal and effort as presented in this passage:

This Christ we, the Apostles and Evangelists, proclaim without distinction and without reserve. We know no restriction either of persons or topics. We admonish every man and instruct every man. We initiate every man in all the mysteries of

⁵Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 153.

⁶John Eadie, *Colossians* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1981), 103-4.

⁷H. C. G. Moule, *Studies in Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 93.

⁸Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, 67.

wisdom. It is our single aim to present every man fully and perfectly taught in Christ. For this end I train myself in the discipline of self-denial; for this end I commit myself to the arena of suffering and toil, putting forth in the conflict all that energy which He inspires, and with works in me so powerfully.⁹

Thomas comments,

This is surely the ultimate goal of the Christian worker, and for this he lives and labors. Happy the man thus privileged, for it must be the highest possible joy to stand before the throne of God at last and say: “Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given me!”¹⁰

Ephesians 4:17-24

As indicated in the aforementioned definition of biblical counseling, biblical counselors are working with men and women who know Christ as Lord and Savior. Biblical counseling is not applicable to non-believers, except in some pre-conversion counseling designed to point out their need for Christ. Ephesians 4:17-24 describes the shift that occurs in a person’s life when he or she places their faith in Jesus Christ. Pre-conversion thinking and lifestyles have been supplanted by a new perspective on life by divine intervention into the believer’s life. By understanding the work of Christ in his life, the Christian is launched on his changed way of thinking and living. And, as Paul points out, this new direction is not completed upon salvation, but is something that takes place throughout one’s earthly journey.

Paul opens this section in a rather striking way, stating, “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord” (Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ). Leon Morris points out that Paul’s use of *I say* coupled with *I affirm* is “a solemn and unusual introduction. . . . And his ‘in the Lord’ makes it plain that this is not simply a sample of the wisdom of Saul of Tarsus, but an injunction that has the backing of Christ behind it.”¹¹ In short, what he is about to say, he speaks in unison with Christ Himself.

⁹J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 169.

¹⁰Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, 69.

¹¹Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand

The wonderful news for believers is that a new way of life has supplanted the old. Hoehner describes the expected change that is now possible, a change which all believers are capable of making based on their new relationship with Jesus Christ:

μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ, “that you now no longer walk just as the Gentiles also walk.” The infinitive used as an imperative in the indirect command μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, “that you no longer walk (cf. Acts 21:2, 21; 23:12), is an apposition to τοῦτο, “this.” The adverb μηκέτι, “no longer,” implies that the Ephesians at one time did walk as the Gentiles. Certainly, many, if not most, of the believers in Ephesus were Gentiles and had a lifestyle that is described in these verse (17-19).¹²

Clearly, this text emphasizes changes that are not merely superficial, but, instead, fundamental to one’s life. Just knowing the culture out of which these believers arose demonstrates the need for substantive change. Anders bluntly depicts the social environment of Ephesus:

Ephesus was a leading city of commerce and culture in the Roman Empire, the home of the pagan temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Worship of Diana involved the worst immorality of degraded pagan religion. That influence made Ephesus a wretched hive of scum and villainy, a wicked place indeed. Temple prostitution, graft, crime, immorality, idolatry, and every conceivable form of sin abounded.¹³

The pre-Christian way of life for these Ephesian believers used to flow out of “futility” or “emptiness” (ματαιότητα) of their mind. Hendriksen writes that Paul is emphasizing an important issue here, “namely, that all those endeavors which the Gentiles put forth in order to attain happiness end in disappointment. Their life is one long series of mocked expectations.”¹⁴ Hence, Paul describes their former way of life, as aptly noted by Foulkes, “in a series of devastating phrases.”¹⁵ They were “being

Rapids: Baker, 1994).

¹²Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 582.

¹³Max Anders, *Ephesians*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 153.

¹⁴William Hendriksen, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 209.

¹⁵Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10

darkened (ἐσκοτωμένοι) in their understanding.”

In reference to their “darkened” or “blinded” mind, Wuest writes, “The perfect tense speaks of a process completed in past time having present results. Paul uses the perfect tense here to show the finished and permanent result of the blinding of the mind by sin.”¹⁶

Their darkened state of mind is connected to being “excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.” John MacArthur points out, “The cause of their darkness, ignorance and separation from God is the hardness of their hearts” toward God.¹⁷

Hence, they were “callous,” that is, insensitive about moral and/or spiritual matters. Such darkness leads many to a giving themselves over to “sensuality” (ἀσέλγεια), which means “licentiousness, debauchery.”¹⁸ Barclay describes the condition as “shameless wantonness,” where “the man in whom there is *aselgeia* does not care who sees his shame so long as he gets what he wants.”¹⁹ In this state, Paul says that they “practice every kind of impurity with greediness” (ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ). Kent writes,

“With greediness” is not added as a separate and coordinate sin (that is, covetousness), but describes the manner in which these sins of uncleanness were indulged. There were practiced greedily, no one sin serving to satiate the sinner but merely making him desire more.”²⁰

(Grand Rapids: William B. Eermans, 1993), 134.

¹⁶Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 106.

¹⁷John A. MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 169.

¹⁸Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 114.

¹⁹William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 181.

²⁰Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 78.

Paul describes a downward spiral in this passage, wherein Moule notes that “the pursuit of evil becomes in time a business, a trade (ἐργασία), followed up with all the keen and unscrupulous pertinacity of the selfish hunter after gold.”²¹ Eadie comments, “Self was the prevailing power—the gathering in of all possible objects and enjoyments on oneself was the absorbing occupation.”²² Ironside summarizes the former state of these believers:

Men and women have come under the influence of the awful deadening power of sin, and their hearts are hardened, they are blinded, and they do not understand the real state of affairs, they do not understand their own condition, the condition of the country or of the world around them. Sin has a terrible, hardening, blinding, deadening, effect upon people.²³

Such is the heart condition of a person before Christ comes into one’s life.

MacArthur states,

That some people may not reach the extremes Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:17-19 is due only to the protective shield of God’s common grace that He showers both on the righteous and the unrighteous (see Matt. 5:45) and to the preserving influence of the Holy Spirit (Job 34:14-15) and of the church (Matt. 5:13).²⁴

However, no matter how debased a person’s lifestyle was prior to placing their trust in Christ, there is hope. And that hope is found in the new relationship with Christ, which biblical counselors are able to point out and help the counselee make the life change necessary.

Paul says, “But you did not learn Christ in this way,” (ὁμοίως δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν), indicating an emphatic contrast with their former way of life prior to their conversion. With reference to Paul’s thought of learning Christ, Hodge explains,

²¹Handley C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies* (Edinburgh: Pickering & Inglis, 1975), 212.

²²John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 334.

²³H. A. Ironside, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1981), 210.

²⁴MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 172.

As we are said to learn a thing, but never “to learn” a person, the expression ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστὸν is without example. But as the Scriptures speak of preaching Christ, which does not mean merely to preach his doctrines, but to preach Christ himself, to set him forth as the object of supreme love and confidence, so “to learn Christ” does not mean merely to learn his doctrines, but to attain the knowledge of Christ as the Son of God—God in our nature, the Holy One of God, the Saviour from sin, who to know is holiness and life. Anyone who has thus learned Christ cannot live in darkness and sin.²⁵

Furthermore, Paul notes that these believers had “heard Him and have been taught in Him” (αὐτὸν ἤκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε). Bruce declares, “Christ Himself is the Christians’ Teacher, even if the teaching is given through the lips of His followers; to receive the teaching is in the truest sense to hear Him.”²⁶ This is the essence of discipleship, which shares a great deal in common with biblical counseling.

R. Kent Hughes combines the believer’s interaction with Christ in his changed perspective by noting that Christ was the “subject” of their instruction (as indicated by the words, “to know Christ”); He was the “teacher” through those who faithfully convey His teaching; and, Jesus was the “atmosphere” in which the instruction takes place [i.e., “for the Ephesians ‘were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus’ (v. 21b). Everything was ‘in’ Jesus.”]²⁷ Hughes then, exclaims, “What a dynamic instruction!”²⁸ Such is the kind of instruction that occurs throughout the process of biblical counseling.

The motif of change is inherent in one’s new life in Christ. Strauss writes, “To be ‘in Christ’ means that the believer is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), in a new order of things, with a new standard for living. This calls for a laying aside of the old ways and a

²⁵Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 185.

²⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1975), 93.

²⁷R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 142-43.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 143.

putting on of the new.”²⁹ Paul uses three infinitives to describe this metamorphosis: “Lay aside” (ἀποθέσθαι), “be renewed” (ἀνανεοῦσθαι), and “put on” (ἐνδύσασθαι).

Commentators are divided as to the grammatical function of these infinitives. Some see them functioning as imperatives. Others think these infinitives of indirect discourse function as indicatives in direct discourse or as complementary infinitives to ἐδιδάχθητε. Hoehner presents a good discussion of the reasoning behind both positions.³⁰ His conclusion is that the second view is to be preferred because it “makes better sense of the passage grammatically and contextually.”³¹

MacArthur concurs, stating, “These three infinitives describe the saving truth in Jesus and are not imperatives directed to Christians. They are done at the point of conversion, and are mentioned here only as a reminder of the reality of that experience.”³² “Laying aside” in conjunction with “put on” pictures a transformation that takes place in a believer’s life. Chafer elaborates,

The change that has been wrought in them—not by mere reformation, but by divine transformation—is no less than that the former manner of life, which has been so vividly described, and the *old man*, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, “is put off.” That this is not a command for these saints to do something which was not yet accomplished is seen when two other passages are examined along with this.³³

Chafer then connects this passage with Romans 6:6 and Colossians 3:9 with reference to the “old man,” and he makes a distinction between the “old self/man” and “the flesh”: “The old man now ‘put off’ is not identical with the flesh which, without

²⁹Lehman Strauss, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957), 182.

³⁰Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 598-602.

³¹Ibid., 602

³²MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 175-76.

³³Lewis Sperry Chafer, *The Ephesian Letter* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1959), 139.

question, is to abide with each believer to the end of his earthly pilgrimage (Gal. 5:16, 17)³⁴ The bringing about the visible nature of the change in the believer is akin to changing clothes pictorially. Hoehner further describes the outworking of the change wrought, “In the present context it has the idea of putting off and laying aside clothes with the contrast in verse 24 or putting on the new person.”³⁵ Wuest clarifies the nature of the “new self” that Paul mentions: “The word ‘new’ is *kainos*, not new in point of time, which would be *neos*, but new in point of quality, new in quality as opposed to the old in the sense of outworn, marred though age, which latter designations refer to the old man.”³⁶

The laying aside of the old way of life and the putting on the one’s new way in Christ is accomplished through being “renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Concerning the word, “spirit,” Wuest notes, “The word ‘spirit’ refers to the individual’s human spirit, that part of him which gives him God-consciousness, that makes him a moral agent.”³⁷

This new self is given to the believer by God Himself. Chafer elaborates,

The *new man* is that which is wrought by the regenerating power of the Spirit—“a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15)—and being born of God, cannot participate in the former evil which is the tendency of the flesh and which was the practice of *the old man*. The new man, being thus begotten of God is said to be ‘created in righteousness and true holiness.’ The righteousness referred to is that imputed righteousness which Christ is and which He is made to those who believe (2 Cor. 5:21) , and, likewise, true holiness is theirs on the ground of their new position in Christ (Heb. 10:14).³⁸

Hoehner summarizes,

The new person has been identified as one who is characterized by a righteousness that has its source in truth. The new person is directly opposite of the old person

³⁴Chafer, *The Ephesian Letter*, 139-40.

³⁵Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 603.

³⁶Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 111.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Chafer, *The Ephesian Letter*, 140.

whose desires and lifestyle have their source in deception . . . believers have put on the new person. This occurred when they laid off the old person at the time of their conversion.³⁹

Yet, the one-time event that forms the basis for real change in a person's life (i.e., his regeneration) is not the end of the change process. Sanctification is ongoing, as the believer "changes clothes" in practical ways in his life. MacArthur explains the ongoing nature of the transition, which begins at the believer's new birth:

When a person becomes a Christian, God initially renews his mind, giving it a completely new spiritual and moral capability—a capability that the most brilliant and educated mind apart from Christ can never achieve (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-16). This renewal continues through the believer's life as he is obedient to the Word and will of God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). The process is not a one-time accomplishment but the continual work of the Spirit in the child of God (Titus 3:5).⁴⁰

With respect to "being renewed," Hoehner states, "The present tense suggests that the renewal of the mind is a repeated process throughout the believer's life, which is in contrast to the inceptive act involved in putting off the old person (v. 22) and putting on the new person (v. 24)."⁴¹ Naturally, as Wuest points out, "This renewal is, of course, accomplished by the Holy Spirit."⁴²

Hoehner writes,

Only the Spirit of God can ultimately change our lives. As the Spirit of God quickens the human spirit, then believers are being renewed by that spirit which is in the mind. In conjunction with the other Pauline passages listed above, the spirit of a person is being constantly renewed. The present tense suggests that it is a repeated or continual process, constantly reminding us of what we are in Christ. It receives the truth and will of God and appropriates it in our lives. This renewing will transform our lives in very practical ways.⁴³

Clearly, this text offers significant support for biblical counseling. Aside from the effects of demonstrable organic illness, a Christian can experience dramatic changes

³⁹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 613.

⁴⁰MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 177-78.

⁴¹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 607.

⁴²Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 110.

⁴³Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 608-9.

in his ways of thinking and acting based upon his union with Christ. No case is hopeless, no case is beyond the touch of Christ in terms of significant change.

Psalm 19:7-14

James Boice finds a similarity between this section of Psalm 19 and Peter's elevation of Scripture above the apostle's personal experience of the transfiguration (2 Pet 1:15-21). The common thread of both passages is that they extol the written Word as the pinnacle of God's revelation to people. Boice comments,

The revelation of God in nature is glorious, just as the visible transfiguration of Jesus and the heavenly voice were glorious. But glorious as it is, it cannot compare to the written revelation. It is that "more certain" or "more sure" revelation that concerns David in the second half of this psalm.⁴⁴

The excellencies of God's Word are declared in this passage, with verse 7 opening with a declaration that "the law of the Lord is perfect." Leupold notes that David does not use the term "law" in the Pauline sense:

Quite appropriately he ascribes this law to the Lord (*Yahweh*), the covenant God of Israel, who has revealed Himself in it. Furthermore, it must be equally obvious that David does not use the term law in the Pauline New Testament sense. Though the root meaning of *torah* is "instruction," it is noted immediately that the term is here almost the equivalent of what we commonly call the Word of the Lord.⁴⁵

Perowne agrees, stating that "law" and "testimony" are "the collective terms embracing the whole body of 'statutes,' 'judgments,' etc. afterwards mentioned."⁴⁶ With respect to verses 7-9, Leupold describes the fixed pattern seen in the text, which is "first a distinctive name for the law; then an appropriate adjective; then a beneficial effect or some other encomium."⁴⁷ Each distinctive name for God's Word carries a particular

⁴⁴James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 1:169.

⁴⁵H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 181.

⁴⁶J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 225.

⁴⁷Leupold, *The Psalms*, 181.

emphasis of David's thought. For instance, Kidner notes that "law" is "the comprehensive term for God's revealed will," whereas "testimony" is its "aspect as truth attested by God Himself."⁴⁸ Likewise, Perowne notes the distinguishing idea in connection with "testimony," saying that as testimony, God's Word is "bearing witness of God's character both in His good will toward those who obey Him, and in His displeasure against transgressors, especially in the latter sense."⁴⁹

While one might find overlap in the exact meaning of each term, probably the best way to understand them is, as Kidner comments, that each word David employs in reference to Scripture is a facet of revelation, none of which are "sharply distinguished, yet each has a certain character of its own."⁵⁰ For example, Kidner believes that "precepts" and "commandments" carry the idea of "precision and authority with which God addresses us," while "judgments" are "the judicial decisions He has recorded about various human situations."⁵¹ At first glance, "the fear of the Lord" of verse 9 might not seem to fit the pattern of verses 7 and 8, but Leupold discusses the significance of "fear," as well as that of "judgments" ("verdicts"). Accordingly, He states,

"Fear" is strictly not a synonym for law, but rather emphasizes a reaction that it calls forth, namely, a wholesome reverence for the will of the Lawgiver, emphasizing that no one who deals with the law dare regard it merely as an abstraction or in a spirit of absolute objectivity but should rather feel the need of his submitting to it. It may also be described as "verdicts" in that God's law does pronounce a verdict on many difficult issues and so speaks with final authority.⁵²

The superlative names attached to Scripture validate its use in biblical counseling, and the adjectives modifying God's Word provide enhanced value for the

⁴⁸Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 14a (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 99.

⁴⁹Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 225.

⁵⁰Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 99.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Leupold, *The Psalms*, 181.

Bible in counseling. David calls God’s Word “perfect,” that is, as Leupold notes, perfect “in the sense of being all-sided so as to cover completely all aspects of life.”⁵³ His Word is “sure.” Plummer states, His Word is thus “reliable, durable, faithful, trustworthy, standing fast, to be believed. *Sure*, in Hebrew a participle of the verb, from which the adverb amen is formed. There is no doubt about a thing, if God once says it.”⁵⁴

David says that God’s written Word makes “wise the simple.” Leupold explains, “That is to say, imparting true heavenly wisdom to all who will keep their soul open to its effects.”⁵⁵ “Simple” is not a derogatory term; it merely means “untaught.” Goldingay comments, “Etymologically, the untaught (*peti*) is the open person, one whose mind has not yet been occupied by insight and is therefore in a vulnerable, dangerous position.”⁵⁶ Perowne points out that the word used here is *patere*, “to be open,” as opposed to the “foolish” so often encountered in Proverbs. He states that David refers to “he who is ready to become a fool, that he may be wise, who has the true child-like spirit (Matt. 11:25, 1 Cor. 1:27) which best fits him to become a disciple in the school of God.”⁵⁷ Boice adds, “The one who is open enough to God’s instructions to do that will become wise. On the other hand, the one who thinks himself too wise to adhere to God’s wisdom will show himself to be a fool.”⁵⁸

The “rightness” of God’s Word (v. 8) also brings joy to the heart of a person. “*Right*,” declares Boice, “means straight as opposed to being crooked and is linked to the

⁵³Leupold, *The Psalms*, 182.

⁵⁴W. S. Plummer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 257.

⁵⁵Leupold, *The Psalms*, 182.

⁵⁶John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 292.

⁵⁷Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 225.

⁵⁸Boice, *Psalms*, 1:172.

idea of righteousness. Verse 8 teaches that walking in a straight path or in an upright manner brings joy.”⁵⁹ Hearing and applying God’s truth, then, results in “rejoicing the heart.” From the perspective of biblical counseling, that does not mean that obedience will always be easy. As Plummer points out with respect to God’s precepts, “They rejoice the heart of all right-minded persons. No good man counts any commandment of God grievous, even though it enjoins new and difficult duties, or forbids customary sins.”⁶⁰

In verse 8, David also connects the purity of God’s Word to that fact that one’s eyes are “enlightened.” It is the same idea as is expressed in Psalm 119:105, in that God is able to guide paths of believers clearly through His Word. Boice believes that this metaphor “carries the idea of purging darkness out of us and thus enabling us to see clearly and without distortion.”⁶¹ For the counselor dealing with life issues, this is a critically important aspect of Scripture to bear in mind! In contrast to worldly thinking, Scripture has the effect, Spurgeon says, of “purging away by its own purity the earthly grossness which mars the intellectual discernment: whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, Scripture is a skillful oculist, and makes the eye clear and bright.”⁶²

Responding to the incomparable value of God’s Word in one’s life, little wonder that David exclaims that it is “more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold.” In connection with David’s enthusiastic assessment, Plummer quotes John Calvin: “The sense is, that we do not esteem the law as it deserves, if we do not prefer it to all the riches of the world.”⁶³ Indeed, God’s Word is “sweeter also than honey and the drippings

⁵⁹Boice, *Psalms*, 1:172.

⁶⁰Plummer, *Psalms*, 257.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 173.

⁶²C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1980), 273.

⁶³Plummer, *Psalms*, 259.

of the honeycomb.” Spurgeon aptly comments,

The pleasures arising from a right understanding of the divine testimonies are of the most delightful order; earthly enjoyments are utterly contemptible, if compared with them. The sweetest joys, yea, the sweetest of the sweetest falls to his portion who has God’s truth to be his heritage.⁶⁴

David concludes this Psalm (vv. 11-14) by connecting God’s truth to his own life. He declares the practical impact of God’s Word upon his own life. He has been “warned” (v. 11) concerning life’s pitfalls, and he has experienced the “reward” following God’s truth. Plummer reminds that David is speaking primarily of “rewards of grace” that flow from adhering to God’s Word.⁶⁵ David has been able to “discern his errors” and “hidden faults,” sin entanglements or habits that otherwise might escape his notice. Plummer again quotes John Calvin on this matter:

All the sins to the commission of which men give themselves loose reins, not being duly sensible of the evil that is in them, and being deceived by the allurements of the flesh, are justly included under the Hebrew word here used by David, which signifies *faults* or *ignorances*.⁶⁶

Furthermore, David says that God’s truth has kept him back from “presumptuous sins” that potentially might rule over him (v. 13). Concerning such sin, Leupold comments,

There is another less insidious but, perhaps more damaging type of sin, the “presumptuous” that one might commit in defiance of the Lord. He, therefore, prays that God may guard him from such, for if one once begins to slip into them, they may, like all other sins, “rule over” a man. Only so, by God’s enlightenment wrought through His law and by His protecting grace, can a man be kept “blameless and be absolved of manifold transgressions.”⁶⁷

Similarly, Boice calls attention to David’s words:

He is aware of sin’s subtle nature and complexity, dividing it into categories: errors, which are wrongs innocently committed; hidden faults, that is, faults unknown to himself because so deeply ingrained in his personality, certainly not hidden to God;

⁶⁴Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 274.

⁶⁵Plummer, *Psalms*, 259.

⁶⁶Ibid., 259-60.

⁶⁷Leupold, *The Psalms*, 183.

and willful sins, which are sins of deliberate presumption. The latter are probably equivalent to “great transgression” in verse 13.⁶⁸

Like the writer of Hebrews 12:4, David describes the value of Scripture within his heart in verse 12. Perowne says of verse 12, “Things hidden, i.e. not only from others, but from our own hearts, through inobservance, through a too ready forgetfulness of them when observed, through the habit of self-deception, or even through their being willfully cherished.”⁶⁹

David ends this Psalm in dramatic fashion. Leupold states that he closes this Psalm “with a humble plea that that which his mouth has uttered and his heart devoutly meditated on may be well pleasing in His sight, who is his ‘rock’ on which he builds and his ‘redeemer’ who delivers him in his many needs.” Indeed, with respect to David’s concluding words, Ironside notes,

How aptly it fits the lips of every servant of Christ, yea, of every believer, but of every one in particular who seeks in any way to publicly serve God. . . . And if the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable to the Lord they must be in accordance with the Word.⁷⁰

As well as any other Scripture, Psalm 19 describes the solid foundation biblical counselors have in their use of God’s Word. It’s a psalm that brings much needed hope to a counselee, a hope not escaping the notice of Erling Olsen:

You may never have gone through one of the recognized halls of learning—much less graduated! You may not have a single degree behind your name. You may be even a simpleton; yet, if you desire wisdom, the only sure way to its attainment is by a study of the Word of God, and by obedience to the testimony of the Lord.⁷¹

The hope that biblical counselors are able to offer to others is largely due to the comprehensiveness and surety of God’s written Word. Reflecting upon the totality of

⁶⁸Boice, *Psalms*, 1:174.

⁶⁹Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 226.

⁷⁰H. A. Ironside, *Studies on Book One of the Psalms* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1973), 124.

⁷¹Erling C. Olsen, *Meditations in the Book of Psalms* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1979), 116.

Psalm 19, Kidner writes, “The practical purpose of revelation, to bring God’s will to bear on the hearer and evoke intelligent reverence, well-founded trust, detailed obedience.”⁷²

Proverbs

Derek Kidner points out that the purpose of the book of Proverbs is stated in 1:2-4:

To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naïve, to the youth knowledge and discretion. . . . The overall purpose of the book then is to emphasize the blessings and benefits which accrue to all of life by a disciplined mind and a spiritually-oriented way of life, and conversely, to warn of the dangers of following the dictates of the lower nature.⁷³

Charles Bridges, in his classic work on Proverbs, concurs, stating,

What this invaluable Book impresses upon their minds is, the importance of deep-seated principles of the heart; the responsibility of conduct in every step of life; the danger of trifling deviations for expediency’s sake; the value of self-discipline; the habit of bringing everything to the Word of God. . . . This practical godliness—so far from wearing a forbidding look, or being associated with gloom or sadness—casts a smile over a world of sorrow, is a sunbeam of comfort in suffering, and ever a principle of peace and steadfastness.⁷⁴

When using the Psalms and Proverbs in counseling situations, it is helpful to keep the broad distinctions between the books in mind. Ellisen comments,

As the Psalms obviously deal with man’s worship and relations with God, Proverbs deals with his walk and relations with men. The Psalms primarily address God while the Proverbs address the sons and daughters of men. Proverbs is a uniquely the ethical book of the Old Testament, applying biblical principles of righteous living. It instructs those that would be wise that their actions are to be directed by God’s written word in the Law and His spiritual word to the active conscience, which is seen as “the lamp of the Lord” (20:27). The progressive movement from Psalms to Proverbs, as organized canon, nicely suggests the right order of godly living—right relations with God are always primary;⁷⁵ but right relations with men must always follow. Each is essential to the other.

⁷²Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 99.

⁷³Ibid., 70.

⁷⁴Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), xiv-xv.

⁷⁵Stanley A. Ellisen, *Knowing God’s Word* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 150.

Perhaps at first glance, believers miss the value of some Proverbs because of cultural connections to Solomon's day. Yet, this need not be the case, because the truths expressed are just as valuable today as they were to the original readers or hearers of these proverbs. Atkinson is one of many Old Testament scholars who make note of this:

There may very well be details of life and experience depicted in the book of Proverbs which are so far from everyday life and experience at the dawn of the third millennium that we wonder why we are reading this now. But we shall see that beneath the sayings and the riddles there are values embedded—Wisdom's values—which are as fresh and powerful today as ever. In our task as Christians coming to know God, we will need to think out what expression such values need to have in our lives, if we, in our day, are to live in line with that same wisdom which underlies Proverbs and is most clearly seen in Jesus Christ.⁷⁶

⁷⁶David Atkinson, *The Message of Proverbs* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 28.

APPENDIX 3

EBC COUNSELING MINISTRIES FORMS

Consent and Agreement

I/we desire to receive counseling and ministry from Emmanuel Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, Washington. I/we make the following acknowledgements and agreements and give the following consents:

1. The counseling will be by a counselor who is trained in biblical counseling and who may or may not have other certifications or degrees.
2. A basic principle of biblical counseling is that the Bible is sufficient to understand how to live a God-pleasing life.
3. The counseling that I/we receive will be based upon scriptural principles rather than principles of psychology or psychiatry.
4. The counseling I/we will receive will be based on the conclusions that the Bible is inerrant and authoritative, and contains God's answers to the issues of life, conduct, and relationships.
5. The counseling that I/we receive will reflect the counselor's understanding of the Bible and how the principles of Scripture apply to the problems, questions, and issues involved.
6. Because EBC is also training others in biblical counseling, trainees may be present in the counseling sessions, and they will abide by the confidentiality statement articulated below (# 8).
7. If a dispute arises concerning the counseling of Emmanuel Baptist, or between a counselee and the counselor involved, there shall be no lawsuit initiated and the claim cannot be filed in any state or federal civil court. Instead, the dispute must be resolved in the following manner:

The parties understand that the Bible commands them to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). If all parties agree, the dispute can be submitted to the binding arbitration decision of agreed-upon local pastors and/or church leaders who would decide and judge between the parties, applying the principles of 1 Corinthians 6 and Matthew 18, as well as any other applicable Scriptures. The parties understand that Christian dispute resolution methods shall be the sole remedy for any such dispute or claim. The parties further agree that if they fail to agree to submit the dispute or claim to local pastors and/or church leaders, then they hereby agree that any such claim or dispute arising from or related to the counseling at and by EBC or with a counselor shall be settled by legally

binding Christian arbitration, in accordance with the “Rules and Procedure for Christian Conciliation” of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries, located in Billings Montana.

8. Counseling at Emmanuel Baptist Church, including statements during counseling, shall remain confidential, with the following qualifications and exceptions:
 - a. Counselors shall be free to discuss counseling sessions and cases with other EBC counselors and the pastors of Emmanuel Baptist Church (Mount Vernon, WA) in order to gain the benefit of additional insight and input.
 - b. Counselors and pastors shall be entitled to seek a confidential legal opinion or advice from an attorney when it is deemed appropriate and helpful.
 - c. If any EBC policy concerning the reporting of child abuse or child neglect, or the reporting of elder abuse or elder neglect, mandates a report to Child Protective Services or other authorities in compliance with the laws of the State of Washington, then such report will be made.
 - d. If a suicide risk is indicated, the counselors or pastors may seek necessary help and make whatever reports or disclosures as they deem to be proper and necessary.
 - e. If a counselee indicates an intention to commit a crime, such intention may be reported and disclosed to the proper authorities.
 - f. If the counselee is a member of a local church other than Emmanuel Baptist Church, and if the pastors of EBC deem it necessary or helpful to communicate information or facts to the pastor of the counselee’s local church, they may do so.

I/we have read and understand the above provisions, and I/we hereby acknowledge and agree to all the above terms, including the waiver of seeking redress (lawsuit) in the civil court systems, and agreeing that any and all disputes be resolved through Christian resolution as detailed above.

(1) Counselee Signature

Date: _____

(1) Counselee Printed Name

(2) Counselee Signature

Date: _____

(2) Counselee Printed Name

(3) Counselee Signature

Date: _____

(3) Counselee Printed Name

Emmanuel Baptist Church

By: _____
Signature

Date: _____

Printed Name

Title/Position

Personal Data Information Form

This form must be completed in full prior to the first counseling session. All information is confidential.

IDENTIFICATION DATA

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: (Cell) _____ Home _____ Work _____

Sex: (M) _____ (F) _____ Birthdate _____ Age _____

Referred here by _____

HEALTH INFORMATION

Rate your health: Very Good _____ Good _____ Average _____

Declining _____ Other _____

Height: _____ Your approximate weight: _____

Any weight changes recently? _____

List all important past or present illnesses/injuries/handicaps: _____

Date of last medical examination: _____ Report: _____

Your physician: _____

Physician's address: _____

Physician's phone: _____

Are you presently taking medication? Yes _____ No _____

List medications: _____

Have you ever been arrested? Yes _____ No _____

Are you willing to sign a release or information form so that your counselor may write for social, psychiatric, or medical reports? Yes _____ No _____

Have you recently suffered the loss of someone who was close to you? Yes _____ No _____

EDUCATION

Last year you completed: _____ (Grade)

Other training (list type and years): _____

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY INFORMATION

Marital status: Single _____ Engaged _____ Married _____ Separated _____

Divorced _____ Widowed _____

Name of spouse: _____

Address: _____

Occupation of spouse: _____

Phone: (Cell) _____ (Home) _____ (Work) _____

Spouse's age: _____ Education: _____

Spouse's religion: _____

Is your spouse willing to come for counseling? Yes _____ No _____ Uncertain _____

Have you ever been separated? No _____ Yes/when? _____

Have either of you ever filed for divorce? No _____ Yes/when? _____

Date of marriage: _____

Your ages when married: Husband _____ Wife _____

How long did you know your spouse before marriage? _____

Length of steady dating with spouse: _____

Length of engagement: _____

Give brief information about any previous marriages: _____

Information about children:

Name	Age	Sex	Living?	Education	Marital Status	PM?*
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

*PM = check column if from a previous marriage

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Denomination preference: _____

Member of: _____ (church)

How often do you attend per month, including weekdays/evenings? _____

Do you participate in a small group? Yes _____ No _____

Which church did you attend as a child? _____

Religious background of spouse: _____

Do you consider yourself to be a religious person? Yes _____ No _____ Uncertain _____

Do you believe in God? Yes _____ No _____

Do you believe Satan exists? Yes _____ No _____

Have you ever "dabbled" with the "occult?" Yes _____ No _____

Do you pray to God? Never _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____

Would you say that you are a Christian? Yes _____ No _____ Uncertain _____

Would you say that you are in the process of becoming a Christian? Yes _____ No _____

How often do you read the Bible? Never _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____

Do you have regular devotions? Yes _____ No _____ Not sure what is meant _____

Explain any recent changes in your religious life:

Briefly answer the following questions:

1. What is the problem as you see it?
2. In what way(s) have you contributed to the problem?
3. What have you already tried to do in order to resolve the problem?
4. As you see yourself, what kind of person are you? Describe yourself.
5. What, if anything, do you fear?
6. What can we do? (What are your expectations in coming here?)
7. Is there any other information that we should know?

Spiritual Convictions Questionnaire

Finish the following sentences:

1. God is
2. Jesus Christ is (describe who you think He is, what He has done, what He is doing now, what place He has in your life, what He means to you, etc.)
3. My relationship to God and His Son Jesus Christ is (describe the kind of relationship you have with God and how important that relationship is—be specific.)
4. A Christian is
5. I know that I am (or am not) a Christian because
6. The Bible is (describe what you think it is, what it means to you, what place it has in your life, how you use it, etc.)
7. Sin is
8. My chief sins are
9. When I sin, I (describe how you handle sin, what you feel when you sin, what you do after you sin)
10. I feel guilty when

11. I pray (when, how, why, what for, etc.)

12. My chief goals in life are

13. I want (or do not want) to attend and be involved in church (answer the questions “how” and “why”)

14. I believe fellowship with other Christians is (define what it is, what it involves, how important it is, and how it can be developed)

15. I am promoting my spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of my partner by

16. My partner and I differ in spiritual matters (when, how, over what, etc.)

17. The changes I would like to make in my own spiritual life are

18. The changes I would like my partner to make spiritually are

Data Gathering—Sentence Completion

Complete the following sentences:

1. I am

2. I like

3. I am happy

4. I am unhappy

5. God is

6. A happy home

7. I want

8. I dislike

9. When I sin

10. Jesus Christ is

11. I have

12. When someone criticizes me

13. When I don't get my own way

14. I resent

15. I feel guilty

16. I would like to change

17. The Bible

18. I pray

19. I belong

20. I become angry

21. My greatest failures are

22. My chief sins are

23. I can

24. I can't

Case Report Form

Counselee: _____

Date: _____

Session #: _____

Counselor: _____

Session Length: _____

1. Significant background information:
2. Summary of reasons they came for counseling (presentation problem):
3. What changes were made by the counselee(s) since last session (as a result of applying last session's counsel and performing last session's homework)?
4. What main problems were discussed in this session?
5. What unbiblical habits of thinking and/or behaving are you seeing in the counselee (pre-conditioning)?
6. What idols and/or heart issues are emerging? ("I must _____.")

7. What biblical solutions were presented in this session (tie in with # 4)?

8. What homework was given and how did it specifically apply to the problems (tie in with # 4)?

9. If someone ask the counselee right after the session, “What did you learn that you needed to change,” what would you want him to say?

10. How was hope or encouragement given in this session?

11. How is the overall counseling progressing? What issues have been sufficiently addressed by you and changed by the counselee?

12. What are your goals for future sessions?

If the session is not moving, review Jay’s “50 Failure Factors” in *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*.

APPENDIX 4

THE ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED BIBLICAL COUNSELORS MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

I am in agreement with the Constitution, By-laws, Standards of Conduct, Policies and Procedures, and the Doctrinal Statement of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (which can be obtained on our website at www.biblicalcounseling.com) and hereby affirm my commitment to the sufficiency of the Scriptures in counseling as follows:

Biblical counselors affirm the value and usefulness of the entirety of God's revelation, including general and special revelation. General revelation is a display of the goodness and power of God in the things he has made. The divine self-disclosure in general revelation leads to condemnation, rather than salvation (Rom 1:18-32).

Special revelation is recorded exclusively and completely in the Scriptures. It is an inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient rule for all of life and faith. Because counseling concerns matters of life and faith before God, Scripture is an inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient rule for the presuppositions, principles, and practices of counseling (2 Pet 1:3-21).

We deny that the findings of secular psychology make any essential contribution to biblical counseling.

God's goodness allows that secular psychology may provide accurate research and make observations that are helpful in understanding counseling issues. Because unbelievers suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness the efforts of secular psychology at interpreting these observations lead to misunderstanding. Because their observations are distorted by a secular apprehension of life their efforts at counseling ministry will be in competition with biblical counseling. They cannot be integrated with the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

APPENDIX 5

INVITATION TO HOME-GROUP LEADERS

Since you are a home-group facilitator, I have a special request. I want to encourage you to prayerfully consider attending the class I am teaching at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*.

I am convinced that the principles we cover in this class will have a significant impact on the dynamics of your home-group and, as a result, on the body life of our church.

Even if you consider your home-group to be “perfect,” I still would appeal to you to join our class, if, for no other reason, to keep us all on the same page. I honestly believe that our whole church needs to show improvement in the carrying out of the “one anothers” found in Scripture. As a home-group facilitator, you have a God-give opportunity to help others grow in this area by both teaching and modeling this lifestyle.

Introduction to Biblical Counseling is not attempt to make everyone a “trained biblical counselor”—it is designed to equip you to increase your reliance and trust in Scripture under all circumstances, and to pass that information along in a natural way with your home-group.

My hope is that all home-group facilitators and co-facilitators will be a part of this class. You already have demonstrated a heart and a love for others by serving as a facilitator, and my desire is to assist you in that task.

After you have spent some time praying and considering this request, please let me know of your decision by replying to this email. It would help me to know how many facilitators will be attending.

Thanks, and, if you have any questions, please give me a call. You can reach me at the church at ##### or my cell, #####.

In Him,

Pastor Herb

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING HOME-GROUP LEADERS FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, MOUNT VERNON, WASHINGTON

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

Using Scripture to counsel people within the church is not a new phenomenon, but in recent decades “biblical” counseling has become a source of controversy within the overall Christian community. Since the leadership of Emmanuel Baptist Church committed to implement a biblical counseling ministry, they believed that one of the most effective ways to reach the congregation with an understanding of such a ministry was through home-group leaders. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to equip the home-group leaders of Emmanuel Baptist Church with a functional understanding of biblical counseling and its dynamics within the church body with a view to implementing those dynamics among their individual home-groups.

Chapter 1 presents five specific goals that were associated with this project, along with a description of the ministry context of EBC. The rationale behind this project was presented in light of that context. Chapter 2 offers a biblical and theological basis for pursuing a biblical counseling ministry within a local church

Some basic practical issues related to implementing a biblical counseling ministry within a local church are addressed in chapter 3. Solutions to various challenges were sought from other churches that have successful counseling ministries. In addition, suggestions from leaders in the biblical counseling movement were presented.

Chapter 4 describes the procedures associated with this project during the

fifteen weeks of its duration. These procedures involved a thirteen-week class for home-group leaders, a week of data analysis from surveys taken among class attendees, and a week of reflection upon strengths and weaknesses of the project..

Findings of this project are presented in chapter 5. In general, the results were encouraging in that the class attendees gained new insights about biblical counseling and expressed more confidence in using the Bible in connection with personal counseling. Also, future plans with respect to continuing training and ministry implementation at EBC are described in chapter 5.

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