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EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND  
AND PRACTICE THE MINISTRY OF BIBLICAL  
COUNSELING AT COASTAL COMMUNITY  
CHURCH, YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Joey Neil Tomlinson  
May 2018

**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND  
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I dedicate this project to Brayden and Henry Jacob.

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## PREFACE

I am humbled and grateful every day to remember that before the foundation of the world, God chose to save sinners. I am among those sinners.

I want to thank two men who have invested in me over the course of this project and whom God has used to shape my thinking in the ministry of biblical counseling. Dr. Stuart Scott, thank you for investing in me. You are so busy, yet you poured over every chapter of this project, and you did so in a timely manner. Thank you for your insight and encouragement to persevere. I knew I wanted you to supervise me the moment you spent an entire day having us learn about Puritan theology and care ministry. Dr. Robert D. Jones, thank you for your thoroughness in your lectures and grading. Thank you for your honest remarks about where we can improve as biblical counselors. Thank you for your encouraging e-mails and the permissions you gave me to utilize much of your material in my project. Also, thank you for the hospitality you and Mrs. Jones extended to me and other students from out of town every time we met together. I'll cherish that time forever.

I am thankful that God has allowed me to serve the same wonderful church body for the last eleven years. It is my love for the Lord and this particular congregation that motivated me to complete this project. Coastal Community Church, I pray that the Lord uses this project to equip and strengthen you for his glory and your edification.

I am also thankful for a few intimate friendships the Lord has used to sanctify me. Shaun Brown, the founding pastor of Coastal Community Church, *my* pastor—you are a true servant. You taught me the importance of being relational and authentic with those we serve. You taught me to never take myself too seriously, and you have demonstrated humility, forgiveness, and perseverance in ministry for me time and time again. Thank you, Scott Shearer, for faithfully teaching me the value of biblical friendship

and hospitality. I have inconvenienced you more than a few times, and you never seem to be bothered by the disruptions. You are not just a friend, you are a part of my family and always will be. Finally, the Lord brought Ryan Davidson into my life at a critical and discouraging time in my faith and ministry. Ryan, you are not only a dear friend and cherished brother, but you are my counselor and the very example I aim to follow as a husband, father, pastor, counselor, student, and friend. Thank you for the example you set for me.

I am thankful that the Lord sovereignly placed me in a home that taught me the importance of cherishing Christ. Dad, thank you for innately demonstrating how to apply Scripture to real life. Thank you for giving the best biblical advice and for always being available to me. Mom, thank you for always listening and for creating a home where the gospel could be cultivated. This project would not have been possible without the faithful shepherding you gave to my brothers and me. Cobie and Isaac, you have had more of an impact on me than you will ever know. You are more than just siblings; you are dear spiritual brothers in Christ. I am grateful to God for your salvation, your ministries, and your families. God has used you as a means of perseverance in my life that I could not possibly capture with mere words.

Finally, and most importantly, I am thankful to God for my wife, Brayden, and our son, Henry Jacob. It is no exaggeration to say that this project would not even exist without Brayden's encouragement, diligence, and dare I say, stubbornness in guarding my schedule. Brayden, you are by far my greatest source of encouragement. You are a daily reminder of God's rich grace and mercy in my life. You have sacrificed much so that I could complete this project and for that I am eternally grateful. I never dreamed of how much God would bless me through you. You are my partner in this wonderful adventure God has given us, and your partnership is only exceeded by your beauty. Henry Jacob, your mother and I pray that you grow to love God and his gospel as we seek to faithfully introduce you to him.

If you have labored through this lengthy preface, you know that I am blessed. You should also know that my hope and prayer is that this project will serve as an introduction to the vast task of equipping believers to provide care and counsel for other believers using God's unchanging Word. The Scriptures really are sufficient.

Soli Deo Gloria

Joey Tomlinson

Yorktown, Virginia

May 2018

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Coastal Community Church (CCC) is a relatively young church body, founded in 2002, in Yorktown, Virginia. Coastal's mission is to develop authentic followers of Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>. Over the last fourteen years, the Lord has allowed Coastal to grow numerically from around a 150-person church to an average weekly attendance of more than 1,500. Because of this rapid growth, Coastal recognized the need to equip its members to use the Bible to counsel one another, particularly within its small group structure. The need for competent biblical counselors is evident at CCC. Equipping small group leaders to teach the Word of God through the practice of biblical counseling is allowing CCC to care for and steward believers God is bringing to our local church so that we may edify believers and teach them obedience.

#### **Context**

CCC is the product of a merger between two Southern Baptist Churches, Tidewater Community Church and Bay Rivers Community Church. CCC's lead pastor is also one of its founders and is a committed shepherd with a long-term commitment to the church. CCC has a missional mindset and supports ministries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia, in addition to mercy ministries in North America. CCC is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and attracts members from diverse Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Coastal broadly accomplishes the mission of developing authentic followers of Jesus by connecting members to corporate worship services and small groups; growing members in sermon-based small groups, and conducting spiritual formation classes; and by encouraging members to serve the Lord and others by giving their time, talent, and resources to a ministry and mission of CCC. Each member is held accountable to maintaining this faithfully by an annual membership renewal conducted by the elders.

denominations. In addition to denomination diversity, CCC is growing in ethnic diversity, which elevates the need for faithful shepherds.

Even amidst its growth and diversity, CCC's small group ministry was an area of particular concern, particularly in the task of developing group leaders. The pressure to meet the demands of ministry superseded the church's process of developing mature followers of Christ that understood how to teach and apply God's Word to every day temptations and struggles in life. In the past, CCC failed to equip small group leaders with the skills and habits necessary to shepherd people faithfully. As recently as two years ago the process of becoming a small group leader was to become a member of CCC and demonstrate the gift of hospitality. Small group leaders were encouraged to function only as facilitators of sermon-based discussions. There was little to no training provided on how to *lead* the group in God-centered discussions or how to demonstrate that the Bible is applicable to life. Additionally, there was no training on how to faithfully shepherd group members.

The consequences for the lack of attention given to leadership development in small group ministry became more and more evident. CCC would constantly give attention to weekly theological and relational conflicts in small group ministry. That ever-increasing conflict was a spotlight on CCC's failure to adequately equip small group leaders to shepherd this ministry. Even more so, the need for church discipline increased over a period of five years. By the time the pastors were made aware of the theological and relational issues, they had reached a critical stage. CCC recognized the need to be preemptive in equipping small group leaders; therefore, we decided to begin by equipping small group leaders in the area of biblical counseling by spending time on important theological categories and how they inform the ministry of counseling. As a result, many members in the congregation are beginning to be counseled and cared for before issues reach a critical stage. Before small group leaders were equipped in the area of biblical counseling, I ran an assessment of the small group leaders and began training them in

theological studies on a monthly basis. Additionally, I adopted a small group leader application document that allowed for a more thorough vetting process for small group leaders. This application document is attached in the appendices,<sup>2</sup> although the specific lessons in theological studies are ongoing and not documented because they are not the scope of this project.

### **Rationale**

This project addressed the significant gap in CCC's small group leadership development by establishing a plan through which small group leaders received specific training in using the Bible to counsel members of their small groups. Through this training, CCC's small group leaders became better equipped to extend soul care throughout the congregation rather than relying on a smaller number of specialized staff pastors and counselors.

CCC accomplished this equipping task by developing an eight-week introductory course on how to utilize the Bible to counsel others. In this course, CCC defined the ministry of biblical counseling, its implications for believers, how theology and counseling intersect, and how to begin to care for people's souls in the small group setting. This introductory class will lead to further in-depth and case-specific educational seminars at CCC in coming years as the ministry and curriculum develops.

This introductory course was launched and implemented within a ministry of the church called, "Spiritual Formation." Spiritual Formation is a one-hour class on various selected topics. Each class lasts a total of eight weeks. This was the rationale behind the duration of the class. The breakdown of the class was two four-week educational seminars with a one week break in between, for a total of eight hours of class time. The total out of class time was sixteen hours at two hours a week over the span of eight weeks. There are seventy small group leaders at CCC. The goal of this project was

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix 13.

to equip at least ten of those small group leaders. CCC is now making the class a requirement for any shepherding ministry in the church.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to train small group leaders at Coastal Community Church in Yorktown, Virginia, to utilize the Bible in counseling group members.

### **Goals**

Several goals guided this project:

1. The first goal was to assess the small group leaders' current understanding of and ability to utilize the Bible in counseling small group members.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to train small group leaders in utilizing the Bible in counseling small group members.
3. The third goal was to develop a beginner's manual for small group leaders based on the lectures so that they could use it as a reference guide to counsel members in the small group setting.
4. The fourth goal was to increase knowledge of the small group leaders by teaching an eight-week class using the curriculum.

### **Research Methodology**

The four goals determined the effectiveness of the strategy conducted in this project. The first goal was to assess the small group leaders' current understanding of and ability to utilize the Bible in counseling small group members. The Biblical Counseling Assessment Form<sup>3</sup> (BCAF) determined the leaders' convictions regarding the sufficiency of Scripture, knowledge of Scripture, and ability to counsel using the Scripture. This goal was successfully met after ten small group leaders completed the BCAF and it

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<sup>3</sup>See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

was analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current understanding and ability the small group leaders have to counsel using the Bible in the small group setting.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to train small group leaders in utilizing the Bible in counseling small group members. This curriculum introduced and began the process of training small group leaders in the area of biblical counseling. An expert panel measured this goal. The panel consisted of CCC's lead pastor, another local pastor skilled in biblical counseling, and a subject matter expert and professor for Liberty University. The panel members utilized the Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation<sup>4</sup> (BCCE) rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum and the results of that evaluation are in chapter 5. This goal was considered successful because a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to develop a beginner's manual for small group leaders based on the lectures so that they could use it as a reference guide to counsel members in the small group setting. This goal was measured by the expert panel identified in goal 2. The panel members used the Biblical Counseling Manual Evaluation (BCME) rubric<sup>5</sup> to evaluate its functionality, communication processes, training elements, and action steps. The results of this evaluation are also examined in chapter 5. This goal was considered successful when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The fourth goal was to increase knowledge of the small group leaders by teaching an eight-week class using the curriculum. This curriculum allowed them to develop a biblical worldview for how to care for members in their small group ministry. Each small group member that completed the curriculum re-took the BCAF. This goal

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 2.

<sup>5</sup>See appendix 3.



was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post-course results. The *t*-test is discussed further in chapter 5. A *t*-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”<sup>6</sup> Since this project involved a single group of the same subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a *t*-test of dependent samples was the appropriate test statistic.<sup>7</sup>

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

These key terms were used in this ministry project:

*Biblical counseling.* Biblical counseling is the loving application of the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture from one believer to another.<sup>8</sup>

David Powlison’s definition of biblical counseling is key:

The Bible is authoritative, relevant, and comprehensively sufficient for counseling. God has spoken truly to every basic issue of human nature and to the problems in living. His Word establishes the goal of counseling, how people can change, the role of the counselor, counseling methods, and so forth. Christians have the only authoritative source for counseling wisdom: the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and wisdom is the only worthy goal of counseling.<sup>9</sup>

There were two delimitations in this research project. The first was that all the participants are members of CCC. Church membership is a prerequisite for small group leadership in order to ensure doctrinal compatibility and sustain accountability. The

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<sup>6</sup>Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>8</sup>More specifically, this form of counseling can be described as the nouthetic method of counseling. The “words *nouthesis* and *noutheteo* are the noun and verb forms in the New Testament from which the term “nouthetic” comes.” Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 41. The word *nouthetic* has been translated to mean admonish or warn or teach. The spirit of nouthetic counseling can be found in 2 Tim 3:16-17. In this passage, the apostle Paul encourages young Timothy to use the Scripture to teach, reprove, correct, and train. The goal is for the man of God to grow in Christlikeness and be equipped for kingdom work.

<sup>9</sup>David Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times,” in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 27.

second delimitation was the number of sessions in which each small group leader participated, which was eight total sessions. The sessions were limited by the Spiritual Formation format introduced in the rationale section. Each session lasted one and a half hours, which brought the total classroom time to twelve. There were two limitations in this research project as well. The accuracy of the assessments was the first limitation. The accuracy of the assessments depended on the honesty and thoroughness of each small group leader. The quality of homework was the second limitation. Each small group leader was responsible for out of class work time that totaled two hours a week for a total of sixteen hours over the course of eight weeks. The amount of time and quality of work varied based on each small group leader's commitment to the training seminar.

### **Conclusion**

Every single Christian is a counselor and every single Christian is a theologian. CCC wanted to ensure that their counseling and theology honor the Lord and further sanctify its members. God, through his Word, has given believers the ability to provide soul care effectively. This project demonstrates how to understand and apply the ministry of biblical counseling in small group settings so that Coastal may develop authentic followers of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2  
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR  
CHRISTIANS PROVIDING SOUL CARE  
BY MEANS OF THE BIBLE

The Scriptures assume the ministry of soul care<sup>1</sup> is taking place within the context of the local church and the Scripture speaks to it extensively. In the early church and many years after, the practice of soul care was rich and vibrant and seen as a means of perseverance in the faith.<sup>2</sup> Today, within typical evangelicalism, the words “soul care” have been replaced with rigid secular counseling that is detached entirely from Scripture and the local church. Additionally, secular counselors have dismissed this idea of soul care and intentionally exchanged it with strict behavioral counseling.<sup>3</sup> Because of this replacement, counseling is no longer viewed as a theological ministry, but a clinical work. It is not practiced by pastors or ministry leaders, but psychologists and psychiatrists that know nothing or little of the Scriptures. Even those who often label their practice as “Christian” often have little theological education and commitments. Furthermore, pastors and ministry leaders at local churches have been trained and conditioned to delegate their responsibility to care for those in the local church to professional counselors with no local church commitment. Therefore, there is a growing disconnect between the pulpit teaching

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<sup>1</sup>Soul care is the outcome of faithful biblical counseling.

<sup>2</sup>Heb 3:12-14 states,  
Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

<sup>3</sup>Freud expressed the desire for “secular pastoral workers.” Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1950), 255. Freud’s aim was to offer an alternative to the work of pastors and counselors in the local church and to eventually replace them altogether.

of the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and the private soul care practice of local churches. Many churches keep counseling centers on a retainer and swiftly send members of their local church to spend countless hours in therapy sessions that pull members away from Christ and the Scriptures.

Pastors and ministry leaders need to reclaim their responsibility to provide soul care for church members. As Heath Lambert explains, pastors and ministry leaders must see that “counseling is ministry, and ministry is counseling.”<sup>4</sup> They must be convinced that soul care *is* counseling. They must be convinced that soul care is a theological ministry that they are equipped for and should practice regularly. Furthermore, pastors and ministry leaders must be committed to developing an equipping ministry in soul care so that members may share in the responsibility in the same way the early church did.

In this chapter, several passages of Scripture provide a biblical and theological framework for understanding the necessity of Scripture-based soul care within the context of the local church. It begins by examining the responsibility pastors must provide biblical counsel for members. Additionally, the Scriptures assume that pastors are equipping other mature believers to provide soul care through biblical counseling. Next, this chapter demonstrates that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to be obedient to God’s commands; therefore, biblical soul care is attainable for the church. Third, this chapter examines some Spirit-filled qualities that should be present in the lives of those committed to soul care in the local church. Fourth, this chapter demonstrates the authoritative and sufficient nature of the Scriptures regarding soul care. Fifth, the chapter examines a section of Scripture to demonstrate the value of using the Scriptures in counseling. Finally, soul care is commended as a means of grace provided by God to encourage believers of sin’s deceitfulness. There is no escaping the responsibility the church has to provide soul care for her members. By the end of this chapter, it is evident that biblical soul care not only

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<sup>4</sup>Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21.

glorifies God, but is truly good for believers and can be accomplished through the ministry of biblical counseling.

### **Pastors Are Called to Counsel and Equip the Church (Acts 20:17-38; Eph 4:1-16)**

#### **Introduction to Acts 20:17-38**

In Acts 20:17-38, Luke records Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders. Commentator and theologian, Darrell L. Bock states, "[Paul's farewell speech] tells churches how to carry on now that they will minister without figures such as Paul present. Paul is concerned with more than evangelism. He seeks healthy churches."<sup>5</sup> In this speech, Paul exhorts the elders on the issue of public and private soul care for the believers God has entrusted to them. If the church at Ephesus would have obeyed Paul's instructions, the church would have prospered spiritually, but modern-day readers know from Paul's epistles to Timothy that the elders did not apply these instructions faithfully. Paul's instructions to this early church should certainly serve as an example for how pastors should model biblical soul care today, because this type of patient soul care produces a healthy local church. Due to the length and repetitive nature of this speech, this section highlights several key takeaways that should be applied to soul care in the local church.

#### **Public and Private Bible Ministry: Acts 20:20-21**

In verses 20-21, Paul writes, "How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" This is a critical part to this passage of Scripture. The apostle Paul is reminding the elders

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<sup>5</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 623.

at Ephesus that he has modeled biblical soul care for them. In the early church, Paul's public ministry in front of the Ephesian elders consisted of him speaking "in cities of significant social status"<sup>6</sup> while his ministry from "house to house" are the "private places of assembly."<sup>7</sup> It is clear that the apostle Paul preached in the synagogue (19:8) and taught at the school of Tyrannus (19:10) regularly and reinforced these public exhortations by instructing households privately. Paul boldly professes repentance and faith in Christ in public regardless of the consequences, and he is consistent in that message in private. There is no competition between Paul's public ministry and private ministry, which is crucial. Many pastors and churches make a competition between the public and private ministry of the Word when the two contradict each other. There is a contradiction even when the private ministry of the Word is non-existent. This was not the case with Paul's ministry and he expects the elders at Ephesus to follow his example. Because Paul expected the church to function in this way, pastors and ministry leaders should import that expectation into today's church.

### **Three Charges to Elders: Acts 20:28**

In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul states, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." Paul gives three specific instructions to the elders at Ephesus. First, he charges them to keep watch over themselves. Commentator Ajith Fernando explains,

We are reminded of Paul's charge to Timothy: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16). The biggest battle the Christian leader has is to ensure that his or her life is in order.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 627.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 540.

Those providing soul care must lead through their own repentance. Pastors are privately caring for the flock by saying, “Put your trust in Christ and imitate me as I follow him. By God’s grace, you can do this. I know this because I am doing it.” Biblical soul care requires both counseling with words and counseling by example.

Second, this passage charges the elders to keep watch over the flock. According to this section in Acts, elders keep watch over their flock by guarding them from “fierce wolves” (v. 29) and men “speaking twisted things” (v. 30). This passage could summarize all the temptations and snares the enemy has set up against believers to cause them to stumble and live unproductive lives. Elders concerned about the state of people’s souls will warn against such dangers publicly and privately. They should do so by exalting Christ and the truthfulness of Scripture and its applicability for the lives of God’s elect.

The final charge in this passage is like that of the last, and that is Paul’s charge to care for the church. He puts a weightiness on the elders to remember that God obtained this precious jewel with his own blood. If pastors/elders committed to soul care gave more consideration to this truth, more time would be spent on the private instruction of God’s Word. Christ died for his church. How then can pastors and elders send people who need help and direction away to institutions that contradict sound doctrine? Elders in local churches must see the seriousness of the role to shepherd those for whom Christ died. Elders will be held accountable for how they shepherded God’s flock (Jas 3:1).

### **Pastors Admonishing: Acts 20:31-32**

The final passage from this pericope in Acts is verses 31-32:

Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

In this section, Paul again calls on the elders to imitate his ministry. He uses the Greek word *nouthetōn*, for *admonish*. Bock writes that Paul’s “goal was to urge faithfulness to

the living God.”<sup>9</sup> As Paul closes his final exhortation to the elders at Ephesus, he reminds them that God is present with them and that his Word builds up (Acts 9:31; Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 8:1; 10:1, 17:1; 1 Thess 5:11; Eph 1:18; 4:12-16, 29) and, as Bock continues, “gives them the inheritance that is the heritage of all who are sanctified.”<sup>10</sup> Paul’s encouragement to the elders at Ephesus should be the mission of every Christ-centered local church today. Pastors and members committed to soul care should urge and plead with fellow believers to cherish Christ and grow in his likeness. This ministry extends far beyond the pulpit. It is an all-encompassing ministry and it will be so until Christ returns.

### **Pastors Equipping: Ephesians 4:1-16**

When examining the Scripture’s position on soul care as an equipping ministry, it is profitable to examine the book of Ephesians. Ephesians contains a God-centered strategy for the local church. A. Skevington Wood writes that in this particular epistle, the apostle Paul “stood aside from the conflict and contemplated God’s overall design for his church and for his world. As he did so, he came to realize as never before the breathtaking scope of God’s strategy in Christ for the fullness of time (Eph. 1:9, 10).”<sup>11</sup> One of these strategies is for the members of the church to care for one another for the purpose of building up one another in Christ. In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul highlights the responsibility undershepherds have to equip church members so that they may care for each other biblically.

In this pericope, Paul turns from a doctrinal conversation about the gospel (Eph 1-3:21) to practical implications of the gospel for believers (4:1-6:24), individually and corporately. The foundation by which God’s church labors for spiritual maturity and unity

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<sup>9</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 631.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 17.



is *Christ*. In chapter 1 Paul communicates that the “Father selected us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit sealed us (1:3-14).”<sup>12</sup> In chapter 2, Paul reminds believers that salvation for unbelievers is by “God’s grace and their placement in the heavenlies in Christ (2:1-10).”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Paul asserts that the “unsearchable riches of Christ” is for the nations and worth persevering despite present sufferings (3:1-21). Ephesians 1-3 demonstrates that Paul’s charge in Ephesians 4 is tethered to the gospel God has provided in Christ Jesus. For the purpose of this section, it is vital to examine three elements of Ephesians 4:1-16. The exposition of this passage is not exhaustive. Therefore, this section analyzes several key verses to demonstrate that soul care is expected in God’s church and pastors are called to equip and encourage members toward obedience and maturity in this area.

### **Identifying Lay Leaders: Ephesians 4:1-2**

In Ephesians 4:1,<sup>14</sup> the apostle Paul charges the church of Ephesus to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Harold Hoehner explains that this calling is not just to “individual believers but also the corporate body of believers”<sup>15</sup> and it is grounded in the gospel of Christ and maintained by four imperatives that follow this charge from the apostle Paul. These imperatives or qualities must be present in the lives of believers who are providing soul care in the local church although they are not limited to those providing soul care. The first is humility (*tapeinophrosýnēs*), which was not normally “considered a virtue by human beings.”<sup>16</sup> The ways of God are

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<sup>12</sup>Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 502.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Further key qualities are addressed later in this chapter under the section on the Holy Spirit, but it is important to limit the discussion to Ephesians in this chapter for clarity’s sake.

<sup>15</sup>Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 505.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

not the ways of man. Biblical humility is God-centered and servant minded. This type of humility reflects the gospel and promotes unity within the local church. This type of humility has a Christ-centered aim to promote the spiritual well-being of a brother or sister in Christ.

The second imperative is gentleness (*praútētos*), which, as Andrew Lincoln writes, involves “courtesy, considerateness, and willingness to waive one’s rights that come from seeking the common good without being concerned for personal reputation or gain.”<sup>17</sup> This type of gentleness captures the spirit of the apostle Paul in Romans 15:1-2 when he states, “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” The “strong” is the spiritually mature brother or sister seeking to build up the “weak” minded believer so that he or she can be edified in Christ.

Third is the virtue of patience (*makrothymías*), which literally means “long temper.”<sup>18</sup> Paul is primarily discussing corporate building up and soul care in this particular section of Scripture. Biblical soul care requires forbearance with one another and requires making allowance when sinned against for the sake of the bigger calling of the gospel proclamation. This text gives a sense that believers are to labor with one another for better or worse; for the long haul. The tediousness of soul care is often where the ministry breaks down in the local church. Properly caring for one another takes time and is often complex and painful. The temptation to refer members who are habitually struggling with sin and struggles is certainly present in every church. However, Paul calls believers to have patience and God gives believers the ministry of soul care to practice the discipline of patience.

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<sup>17</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 236.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

Finally, the apostle Paul says that believers should be “bearing with one another in love” (anéchómenoi allélōn en agápēi). Paul understands the temptation to give up, therefore, this is an “amplification of what is meant by patience.”<sup>19</sup> At the time of Paul’s writing, the church of Ephesus is being encouraged to trust in the superior power of the gospel over all falsehoods (4:25), vices (4:26; 28; 29; 31; 5:3; 4; 10; 17), and demonic powers (6:11-12). During pressures and temptations to give up, Paul exhorts believers to maintain unity through the God-centered soul care of one another.

### **Intentional Equipping: Ephesians 4:11-12**

One tangible way God provides for believers to be obedient to pursuing unity through soul care is by the equipping work of his undershepherds. Pastors not only provide soul care, but the Scriptures are clear that they should equip mature believers for this task too. Ephesians 4:11-12 states, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to *equip the saints for the work of the ministry for building up the body of Christ*” (pròs tôn katartismòn tôn hagíōn eis érgon diakonías, eis oikodomèn tou sómatos tou Christou). The apostles and the prophets laid the foundation (Eph 2:20), promoted the gospel, *and* equipped the early church for the work of the ministry. Today, evangelists and shepherds/teachers work together to equip the saints so that they may practice God-centered soul care.

The evangelist shares the gospel with unbelievers and the shepherd/teacher equips and edifies believers toward spiritual maturity and service. Ephesians 4 is loaded with soul care imperatives (vv.1-7). This type of careful soul care promotes unity within the local church (Eph 4:3-6). In verses 11-12, Paul exhorts shepherds to equip believers in the church so that they may be obedient in building one another up. In addition, Paul *expects* shepherds/teachers to entrust shepherding responsibilities to those within the local church. Equipping is the only biblical and sustainable model for church ministry.

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<sup>19</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 236.

Many pastors and ministry leaders burn out when they fail to equip. A church can never hire enough people to provide adequate soul care for the whole body of Christ. In turn, pastors expand their ministry through equipping lay people with shepherding responsibilities. Some of the responsibility of shepherds related to soul care include giving instruction in sound doctrine and rebuking those who do not (Titus 1:9), reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with patience (2 Tim 4:2), and practicing hospitality (1 Tim 3:2). These responsibilities should be applied by the shepherd in both the public ministry of the Word (preaching and teaching) and the private ministry of the Word (biblical counseling and discipleship). According to Ephesians 4, those in the local church should be taught these responsibilities by an equipped pastor so that they may care for one another also. This is not the only time Paul implores shepherds to equip lay people in the church. F. F. Bruce writes, “Timothy is directed not only to pursue a teaching ministry himself but also to entrust what he has learned ‘to faithful men who will be able to teach others also’ (1 Tim. 4:13; 16; 2 Tim. 2:2).”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is the role of the shepherd of God’s church to encourage and equip believers to care for one another, which is the only sustainable model for soul-care ministry. Soul care ministry cannot flourish in a local church that neglects to equip its members. However, equipping members is not the highest goal for God’s church. There is purpose behind equipping members to practice the ministry of soul care.

### **The Purpose of Equipping: Ephesians 4:13**

The purpose of members being equipped and edified to care for one another is spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus. Bruce explains that spiritual maturity is

marked by “the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God.” The unity of the faith is effectively the same as the unity of the Spirit which the readers have earlier been exhorted to preserve; it is the unity which binds together those who share the common faith in Christ.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 349.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 350.

This common faith that believers share with one another is the basis for their unity with one another. Bruce states, “It is by faith that the people of Christ are united to him, and in being united to him they realize their own unity one with another.”<sup>22</sup> According to Ephesians 4, the shepherd/teacher *must* equip the local church to live and care for one another in response to the gospel until this type of maturity occurs corporately. Individualism is not in view. In fact, an individual faith is “a mark of spiritual immaturity.”<sup>23</sup> The phrase in verse 13, “to mature manhood” (ántra téleion, eis) is singular to emphasize that the local church is “seen as one new man in Christ (Eph. 2:15).”<sup>24</sup> This type of unity is the objective because it has Christ as its highest aim. Paul uses the language, “of the fullness of Christ” (toû plērómatos toû Christou) to demonstrate that perfect spiritual maturity is one that is Christocentric. An equipping soul care ministry in the local church is gospel saturated and will be so until Christ grants perfect unity. Peter T. O’Brien writes, “Those given by Christ as ‘ministers’ (v. 11), along with the ‘saints’ (v. 12), render their service so that God’s people might reach this objective [unity in Christ through spiritual maturity], and they are to continue serving until it is attained.”<sup>25</sup> This objective has eschatological implications. Caring for one another in the local church is expected to occur until Christ returns and the early church understood this.

### **An Example of an Early Church Competent to Counsel (Rom 15:14)**

Spiritual maturity takes place within the context of the local church. This section examines several qualities that the believers in the early Roman church exemplified that caused the apostle Paul to assert that they were competent to counsel one another.

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<sup>22</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 350.

<sup>23</sup>Wood, *Ephesians*, 59.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), 305.

These qualities can and should be modeled today if believers expect to honor the Lord in a modern-day soul care ministry capacity. While other passages can be examined, this text is sufficient to demonstrate some needed character qualities and abilities for spiritually-mature believers counseling other believers toward spiritual maturity in Christ.

### **Romans 15:14**

Believers should exude certain Spirit-filled qualities as they are committed to soul care in the church. These qualities are commended and encouraged by the apostle Paul in Romans. In Romans 15:14, the apostle Paul states, “I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.” Before a believer can provide soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling, he or she must have certain character qualities and abilities. Paul uses the Greek word *agathōsýnēs* for *goodness* and intends to commend the church in Rome for their “uprightness in conduct or, more specifically, kindness and generosity toward others.”<sup>26</sup> Those committed to providing soul care in the local church should pursue this reputation for exalting Christ. A Christian with a poor reputation is not only a contradiction but useless in the ministry of soul care for spiritual maturity. Therefore, a biblical counselor’s conduct and reputation must be well thought of. Paul also uses the phrase, *peplēróménoi pásēs tês gnóseōs* to communicate the thoroughness of the church in Rome’s biblical knowledge. Regarding Rome’s biblical knowledge, Thomas R. Schreiner states, “It is unnecessary to limit ‘knowledge’ to salvation history, edification or even the gospel. No attempt is made to circumscribe the term. Indeed, Paul says they are full of *all* knowledge, suggesting that the word should be understood comprehensively.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, according to this passage, this reputation of goodness toward others and a thorough

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<sup>26</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 888.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 765.

understanding of the Scripture makes the church in Rome “able to instruct one another.” An understanding of the neediness of goodness and knowledge should motivate believers committed to soul care to be intentional in both areas so that their ministries may be practiced in a way that honors the Lord and edifies believers in the local church. By God’s grace, cooperation with the Holy Spirit produces these types of qualities and enables believers to provide soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling.

### **Soul Care Is Possible because God Deposited His Holy Spirit within Christians (John 14:15-31)**

John 14 takes place immediately after The Feast of the Passover (13:1) where John indicates that God has given Christ all things (13:3). Here, Christ washes the disciple’s feet (13:4-5) and explains his desire for them to emulate his humility (13:14-17). Afterward, Jesus tells of Judas’ betrayal (13:21-30) and the need for believers to glorify God by loving one another (13:31-35). John concludes this look into Christ’s last supper with the apostles by recounting Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial of him (13:36-38). In this context, Jesus comforts his believers (14:1-7) and instructs “greater works” (14:12) from his disciples upon his departure. Colin G. Kruse states,

In light of his imminent departure Jesus promised not to leave his disciples desolate, but to come to them again in the person of the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit. The first promise of the Counsellor appears in this passage and is bracketed by two statements by Jesus that those who keep his commands are those who love him (15, 21).<sup>28</sup>

This section demonstrates that Christ expects obedience in all areas of life and has provided believers with his deposited Holy Spirit so that they may be faithful to serve each other as Christ loved and faithfully served the church.

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<sup>28</sup>Colin G. Kruse, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 303.

## Love and Obedience: John 14:15; 21-24

The apostle John quotes Jesus in John 14:15 when he states, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Colin Kruse writes, “Jesus prefaced his promise of the Counsellor with the words *If you love me, you will obey what I command*. Love for Jesus is not sentimental, but is expressed by keeping his commands.”<sup>29</sup> Christian obedience is consumed with a love for Christ, which is at the heart of biblical soul care. Obedience apart from Christ is temporal and legalistic and makes righteousness its highest aim. It seeks to *earn* eternal life as a wage. Those who spend time counseling from the Scriptures should cooperate with the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures by helping counselees develop a love for Christ that manifests itself in obedience to his commandments. Later in John 14:21-24, Christ goes on to say,

In that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

Kruse explains that love for Christ

does involve heartfelt appreciation of him (cf. 21:15-17; Luke 7:36-50) and should express itself in concern for his pleasure (28), but what Jesus himself stressed was that those who love him are those who obey his commands. This means responding to his teaching with obedience and faith.<sup>30</sup>

Love for Christ expressed in obedience is a reciprocal love. It is made possible only because God in Christ first loved believers (1 John 4:19). The case can be made that Jesus is speaking of a believer’s union with him. The life of a believer is so closely identified with Christ that the commands of Christ are *internalized*. Commentator and theologian Leon Morris states,

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<sup>29</sup>Kruse, *John*, 303, emphasis original.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 308.



The man who loves Christ is the one who “has” His commandments and keeps them. To “have” commandments is an unusual expression and does not seem to be exactly paralleled (though cf. 1 John 4:21). The meaning appears to be to make the commandments one’s own, to take them into one’s inner being.<sup>31</sup>

Obedience to God is a distinguishing mark of the love a believer has for Christ according to John 14:21-24. This is such a distinguishing mark that Christ identifies his elect by their love for his commands.

### **Obedience and the Parákletōn: John 14:16-17; 25-31**

Jesus continues in John 14:16-17, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” The context of John 14 is crucial. The disciples are grieved that Christ is departing and Christ is charging them to emulate what he has done in their presence in his absence. This is a tall order. Therefore, the Father sends “another Helper” (Parákletōn). Bill Mounce explains that this word is “often translated as “counselor or advocate.”<sup>32</sup> This Greek word “literally means one who is called to someone’s aid”<sup>33</sup> This “Helper” is the Holy Spirit (v. 25). The Holy Spirit is further described as “the Spirit of truth” (τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας). Morris writes,

It is interesting to see the Spirit associated with truth, for we have just had Jesus describe Himself as “the truth” (v. 6), and those who worship the Father must do so “in truth” (4:23f.). Clearly truth is regarded as very closely associated with the Godhead. This expression probably means “the Spirit who communicates truth.”<sup>34</sup>

The work of the Spirit is significant for the early church and has ramifications for believers committed to soul care today. Believers have an ability to understand the

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<sup>31</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 653.

<sup>32</sup>Bill Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 332.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>34</sup>Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 649-50.

unchanging truth of God's Word because the Spirit has given believers the ability to do so. The Spirit is a gift that John makes clear that the world (*kósmos*) does not possess. Therefore, it is God's will for those providing soul care to remind fellow believers of the power of the Holy Spirit within them to pursue righteousness and holiness in response to what God has accomplished for them in Christ. Jesus expects obedience from believers. Obedience is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit indwells every person God saves.

Later, Jesus goes on to state in John 14:25-31,

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, I am going away, and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

Here, Jesus gives further details to his disciples regarding the Holy Spirit and he says that the Holy Spirit will come in his name. Scholar D. A. Carson states, "If he [the Holy Spirit] is sent in Jesus' name, he is Jesus' emissary (not simply his substitute, contra Brown, 2. 653; Franck, p. 41). Just as Jesus came in his Father's name (5:43; 10:25), i.e. as his Father's emissary, so the Spirit comes in Jesus' name."<sup>35</sup> This truth should have assured the believers of the equality of the Holy Spirit as they understand the equality Christ has with the Father. Understanding that the Holy Spirit *is* God assures believers that Christ has not left them to manage things on their own. Believers are not orphans (John 14:18). God is present with them and dwells within them. Because God dwells in believers, he comforts them during grief (John 14:1; 27) and provides real tangible, permanent help (John 14:16). Jesus further assures the disciples that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things (*didáxei pánta*) and bring to their remembrance all that he has said to them

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<sup>35</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 505.

(hypomnései hymâs pánta hà eîpon hymîn egḗ). Apart from the Spirit's illuminating work, the disciples had a difficult time understanding many of Jesus' teachings and works (John 4:27; 6:7-9; 6:30; 60; 9:2; 11:11-16; 13:8). Commentator Merrill C. Tenney writes, "The function of the Spirit is teaching. He instructs from within and recalls to memory what Jesus taught. The Spirit will, therefore impress the commandments of Jesus on the minds of his disciples and thus prompt them to obedience."<sup>36</sup> The Holy Spirit in this section of Scripture helps the disciples understand the significance of the crucifixion and resurrection and he does so with believers today. Apart from the Spirit of God, it is not possible to comprehend the truth of God's Word, the gospel of grace, or live a life of obedience to the commands of God. By God's grace, believers do not live without the Spirit of God. Therefore, the gospel is knowable, memorable, and the commands of God are doable with the Holy Spirit's help. Soul care cannot be administrated biblically apart from understanding a believer's utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God.

### **God's Word Is Authoritative and Sufficient for Soul Care (2 Tim 3:16-17)**

This chapter has examined the need for pastors to provide soul care within the local church *and* equip members to provide soul care for one another. Furthermore, this chapter has concluded that believers *can* be obedient to Christ's expectation to provide soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is now profitable to examine another resource God has provided for believers: Scripture. Scripture must be reliable, otherwise, there is no anchor of truth. A believer's understanding of God's unchanging nature is tied to the Scripture itself. This section examines why believers can trust and utilize the Bible to provide biblical counseling within the context of the local church.

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<sup>36</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, *John*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 148.

## Second Timothy 3:16-17

By the time 2 Timothy is written, the apostle Paul is in prison in Rome (1:16-17; 2:9) and he knows that his fate is probably death (4:6-8). Therefore, he is writing on the same matters as addressed in 1 Timothy, but in a more urgent way because of his imprisonment and potential execution. Paul's concern is for Timothy to faithfully minister to the church in Ephesus by contending for the truth against false teachers (1 Tim 1:3; 7; 6:3). Fee explains that it is apparent from

2 Timothy 3:6-9, and further supported by 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and 5:3-16 (esp. vv. 11-15), that these teachers had found a most fruitful field among some women, apparently younger widows, who had opened their homes to them and even helped to spread their teachings.<sup>37</sup>

This subscription to false teaching influenced the moral behavior of those within the church of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:8-11; 2:9-15; 3:2-5; 8-13; 4:1-5; 5:15; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-17; 19; 22; 3:2-9; 4:3-4). Much of Paul's ministry is being sabotaged by these false teachers and he writes Timothy to encourage him to persevere in God-centered ministry amidst the confrontations he is facing in Ephesus.

Paul's remedy for combatting false doctrine and immorality is for Timothy to preach<sup>38</sup> the Word (2 Tim 4:2) publicly and privately<sup>39</sup> and to have confidence in it because it is sufficient. Scripture is sufficient because it is the very Word of God. The flagship passage for this claim is documented by the apostle Paul when he reminds Timothy, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). When analyzing soul care in the local church, it is important to understand that God's Word is sufficient for this high calling

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<sup>37</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 8.

<sup>38</sup>The word *kérussó* could be better translated "proclaim" or "herald" and thus extends beyond the pulpit and beyond the pastorate.

<sup>39</sup>Paul would have set this example for Timothy. See Acts 20:17-38 and notes earlier in this chapter.

and believers must be intentional about applying God’s Word to other believers being cared for. In this passage, the apostle Paul does not seem to be teaching young Timothy that God’s Word is “breathed out by God.” Timothy has always been taught this. Many pastors and ministry leaders are already convinced of this. Instead, Paul seems to be pressing Timothy to *apply* this doctrine in the local church context. He is saying, “Because Scripture is breathed out by God, it *is* profitable. Therefore, apply it.”

Commentator, Donald Guthrie agrees with this interpretation:

One explanation is that it is the profitableness not the inspiration which Paul is pressing on Timothy. . . . Timothy is not therefore being informed of the inspiration of Scripture, for this was a doctrine commonly admitted by Jews, but he is being reminded that the basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.<sup>40</sup>

The Greek word for profitable is *ōphélimos* and can be translated as “valuable or useful.”<sup>41</sup> The fact that Paul is urging Timothy to remember the profitableness of the Scriptures demonstrates that Scripture really is practical and tangible for soul care.

Paul goes on to demonstrate the practicality of Scripture by communicating that it is sufficient for teaching (*didaskalian*). Gordon Fee explains that Timothy’s main job is to use the “Scriptures to give sound instruction in the gospel to God’s people (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6, 13, 16; 6:3).”<sup>42</sup> The temptation is to isolate this application to the pulpit only; however, as addressed earlier, pastors must *apply* the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture to all aspects of ministry. If pastors do not see the usefulness of teaching the Scripture in various ministries in the church other than the pulpit, then every other aspect that the Scripture may be used for will be neglected, which is a common disconnect in many churches. Many churches affirm the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and many pastors preach this doctrine passionately from the pulpit, though

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<sup>40</sup>Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2009), 182.

<sup>41</sup>John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, eds., *The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 1654.

<sup>42</sup>Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 279.

these same churches farm out the soul care part of ministry to parachurch (best case scenario) and secular (worst case scenario) organizations. Churches communicate that “Scripture is sufficient and authoritative for preaching and teaching in the pulpit, but if life gets too messy, we need to look outside the Scripture.” A doctrine does not matter if it is not applied. Pastors and churches must repent from a low view of Scripture. Their repentance must manifest in understanding that Scripture really is useful for teaching in the pulpit *and* in the counseling context. Furthermore, pastors must train other ministry leaders to understand the sufficient nature of the Scriptures for soul care.

Once believers understand the usefulness of instructing in many different contexts, every other characteristic Paul mentions in this passage is an extension of that. Paul says the Scriptures are useful for reproof (elegmón). Some translations translate this word as “rebuke.” This certainly means rebuking false doctrine, but also refers to “correcting or setting right . . . conduct.”<sup>43</sup> The Word of God is sufficient and authoritative for calling one to forsake wickedness and pursue Christ. Scripture can be used to inform one’s thinking and conscience so that he or she may please God. Every brother and sister in Christ will forget his or her identity in Christ at some point. When believers forget their identity in Christ, they are on a dangerous path. Scriptures are useful for reminding believers of the serious nature of sin and the life-giving path of pursuing Christ. God’s Word is also profitable for correction (epanóρθōsin), which literally means “restoration to an upright position or a right state.”<sup>44</sup> God’s Word can take the individual that is twisted and broken, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, redeem him. Correction is the positive side of rebuke. Biblical rebuke warns the believer of their wicked path, and correction sets the believer on a Christ-centered path that pleases God.

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<sup>43</sup>George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 449.

<sup>44</sup>Ralph Earle, *2 Timothy*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 410.

God's Word is also profitable "for training in righteousness" (pròs paideían tèn en dikaiosýnēi). A clearer development in this aspect of God's Word can be found in Titus 2:12, where the apostle Paul states, "Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." God's Word, and faithfulness in its application, produces a Christ-centered righteousness in the life of a believer. How could this task be delegated to organizations outside of the local church?

It is imperative to note that the apostle Paul does not end his exhortation to Timothy with the four applications of God's Word. He gives purpose to it and the purpose is similar to the outcome of the Ephesians 4:13 mentioned earlier, that pastors and shepherds should equip, using the Word, "until [all believers] attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The goal is a Christo-centric spiritual maturity. Fee states,

By continually nurturing his own life in the Scriptures that he is to use in his ministry, Timothy will be thoroughly equipped ("able to meet all demands," BAGD) for every good work, which here means not only Christian behavior but the ministry of the gospel as well, and especially points forward to 4:1-5.<sup>45</sup>

Faithfully applying the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture is good for the one applying it in his life and ministry. In applying this doctrine, a believer is thoroughly equipped to please God in life and in ministry.

Although Paul is writing to a specific pastor in a specific church, this charge can and should be imported into modern day soul care. A ministry of soul care is concerned about the theological beliefs and practices of those in the local church. Theological beliefs inform behavior. Those committed to soul care must understand that believers act according to what they believe is true, and sin is deceitful (Heb 3:12-14). It is the role of the pastor and other believers within the context of the local church, to take

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<sup>45</sup>Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 280.

seriously the charge of the apostle Paul by faithfully utilizing the Word of God in both public *and* private ministry.

### **An Old Testament Example of Soul Care That Christians Can Model Today (Ps 42; 43)**

This chapter thus far has demonstrated that there is an assumption that God's Word is being applied in more than just a Sunday morning teaching context. This section demonstrates the hope that knowing God's Word can have on someone who is deeply discouraged and depressed. Many people in the local church are depressed and discouraged. This depression and discouragement is normal because of sin. Personal sin, the sin of someone else, thistles and thorns of life, or the physical broken down body can all be contributing factors in depression and discouragement. The good news is that the Scriptures give hope. This particular psalm is written by David during a particular time of depression.

#### **Psalm 42 and 43**

Regarding Psalm 42 and 43, commentator Gerald H. Wilson explains,

Several factors suggest that these two psalms should be read as a unified composition. (1) Psalm 43 has no heading to separate it from Psalm 42 . . . this may indicate that . . . there was a tradition for reading [these] psalms together. (2) This idea is confirmed by a number of ancient manuscripts of Psalms that do write these two psalms as one. (3) The two psalms share a repeated refrain that appears regularly in a combined composition (42:5, 11; 43:5). (4) [There is a close] parallel between 42:9, where the psalmist cries out to God, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" and the similar passage in 43:2, "Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"<sup>46</sup>

The context of these two psalms are not widely agreed upon by scholars. Plummer writes,

The Syriac says this is a Psalm of David sung when he was an exile, and desired to return to Jerusalem. The Arabic calls it a prayer for the Jews who had fallen, or backslidden. Luther and Hengstenberg think the best insight is gained by duly

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<sup>46</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 668.



regarding God as sometimes hiding his face and then clearly revealing himself in mercy as a light and deliverer.<sup>47</sup>

Whatever the specific context of this passage, it is clear that the psalmist is struggling with deep discouragement either from his present circumstances and/or a feeling that God has abandoned him. The psalmist feels cut off or isolated. There is a longing to return to God's presence in the sanctuary to find comfort. Presently the psalmist's circumstances prevent him from find comfort in corporate worship. Therefore, Psalm 42 and 43 is an "individual lament."<sup>48</sup> While circumstances may not parallel exactly to the psalmist, people in the context of the local church are struggling with adversity and with feelings of abandonment and disconnectedness. Because of the neglect of soul care in the local church, these depressed feelings are managed by the individual in an isolated setting detached from the local church. Often these depressed emotions may be managed by psychiatrists and prescription medications with no thought given to the soul of the struggling individual. This begs the question, "was the Scripture insufficient for the Psalmist to overcome his depressed emotions?" Scriptures offer so much more than prescription drugs for depression, however, helpful some prescription drugs may be. Those committed to soul care have the wonderful opportunity to take the discouraged and downtrodden to these psalms of lament and offer it to them for the purpose of giving them a Christ-centered perspective on their circumstance(s)/feelings.

For ease of use, the biblical counselor can lean into the big picture flow of this psalm in order to help the counselee or discouraged believer easily grasp the central theme of these two psalms. Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate explain that the psalms can be divided "into three sections, each concluded with a refrain: 42:2-6 (a) lament (vv 2-5) (b) refrain (v 6); 42:7-12 (a) lament (vv 7-11) (b) refrain (v 12); and 43:1-5 (a) prayer

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<sup>47</sup>William S. Plummer, *Psalms*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 495.

<sup>48</sup>Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 325.

(vv 1-4) (b) refrain (v 5).”<sup>49</sup> This flow can provide immense encouragement to believers in desperate circumstances and can be used as a template for them to model. The main takeaway from Psalm 42 and 43 should be the God-centered approach the psalmist has in his wrestle with his present circumstances. The Psalmist reminds himself of truth when he declares, “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God” (Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5). There is an eternal perspective in this statement. The psalmist is essentially declaring, “Wait hopefully for God.” There is an evident discipline in the way the psalmist self-counsels by reminding himself of the truthfulness of God’s Word. The psalmist remembers that he serves a living God (v. 2) that is his salvation and hope (42:6; 12; 43:5). Furthermore, he acknowledges that the Lord “commands his steadfast love” (42:8). He calls God his “rock” (42:9), vindicator and defender (43:1), refuge (43:2) and the sender of “light and truth” (43:3). The psalmist also longs to go to God’s “holy hill” (43:3), to his “altar” (43:4). and acknowledges that God is his “exceeding joy” (43:4). These psalms are a battle plan for the discouraged psalmist and it is sufficient to encourage even the most depressed believer. It could certainly be beneficial to make Psalm 42 and 43 an area of study of several sessions of counseling. This psalm could even be assigned to a struggling believer for meditative<sup>50</sup> purposes.

### **God Uses His Local Church to Prevent Christians from Being Deceived by Sin (Heb 3:12-14)**

This chapter clearly identified the expectation God has for local churches to provide soul care for every member through the ministry of biblical counseling. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated that God has provided believers with everything they need to be obedient to this task. This last section is a helpful word on the

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<sup>49</sup>Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 325.

<sup>50</sup>I address the biblical practice of meditation in chap. 3 and distinguish it from the eastern religious approach to meditation.

deceitfulness of sin and how God uses believers who point one another to Christ as a means of perseverance in the faith.

### **The Seriousness of Sin: Hebrews 3:12-14**

The author of Hebrews warns the Hebraic church in Hebrews 3:12-14:

Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

In this section of Scripture, the author is using the rebellious Israelites as an example of what not to do as a believer in Christ (as seen from his usage of P. 95:7-11 in Heb 3:7-11). F. F. Bruce states, “The judgement of the wilderness days befell the Israelites who rejected Moses. But just as Christ is greater in glory than Moses (v. 3), so the loss incurred in rejecting Christ is greater.”<sup>51</sup> Rebellion to the commands God gave Moses resulted in the rebellious Israelites not entering the promised land, but a rejection of Christ will result in eternal damnation.

The author of Hebrews is not saying that one can lose salvation. On the contrary, all of God’s elect will persevere (John 10:28). However, believers today see through a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12) and cannot see the eternal state of professed believers. Good works are an indicator of the genuineness of someone’s profession of faith (Matt 7:17-20; John 15), but only perseverance to the end will reveal the true condition of the soul. It is in this spirit the author of Hebrews gives his warning. How does the author say believers are to flee sin’s deceitfulness? Through one another soul care centered on the person and work of Christ. The aim is a mutual building up of one another in Christ Jesus. William L. Lane suggests, “The avoidance of apostasy demands

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<sup>51</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 99.

not simply individual vigilance but the constant care of each member of the community for one another.”<sup>52</sup> Peter T. O’Brien affirms,

Hebrews makes it plain that God himself gives both promises and warnings to assist his people in their pilgrimage so that they will persevere in faith and reach their final rest. As the congregation and its members heed this injunction to keep on admonishing and encouraging one another, they not only follow the example of the author but also imitate the pattern of God himself speaking to them. They may be confident, then, that he will use their encouraging and exhortatory ministry of his word to help their brothers and sisters avoid the perils of unbelief and disobedience.<sup>53</sup>

It is in the context of the local church that this type of watchfulness over souls occurs. A believer living in intentional isolation is a contradiction and will not persevere in his confession. Therefore, the local church must be intentional and vigilant. Soul care through Sunday morning preaching, teaching, and singing the Word, biblical counseling ministries, small group ministries, and addiction recovery ministries are all great, tangible ways to remind believers of the deceitfulness of sin and the magnitude of the gospel.

Believers must be strategic about exposing themselves to the truthfulness of the gospel.

George Guthrie states,

Practically speaking we must, therefore, expose our lives meaningfully to God’s Word and adjust our thoughts and lifestyles accordingly. This means hearing the Word preached and asking honestly, “What do I need to confess and from what do I need to repent?” and “How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard?”<sup>54</sup>

God has designed perseverance to happen in a corporate, Christ-centered setting. Local churches must be mindful of their purpose in edifying and spurring believers on (Heb 10:24) for the glory of God.

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<sup>52</sup>William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47a (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 87.

<sup>53</sup>O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 148.

<sup>54</sup>George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 145.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated that local churches must have a holistic approach to soul care. This approach includes an equipping ministry concerned about both the public and private administration of the Scripture. In chapters 4 and 5 it will be demonstrated that small group leaders can be targeted for an equipping ministry in the area of soul care. As this project moves forward, it is imperative to remember that this equipping approach to ministry is rooted in church history and commended by the apostles. The application of the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture is the means by which God perseveres his elect and by the power of the Holy Spirit produces spiritually mature disciples for his glory. Providing soul care in this way is the only approach to shepherding biblically and God has given pastors, elders, and ministry leaders everything needed to minister in this way.

## CHAPTER 3

### SOUL CARE THROUGH AN EQUIPPED LAY BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY IS NECESSARY

In chapter 2, several key Scriptures were examined to conclude that it is the responsibility of the local church to provide soul care for her members. Ministers and ministry leaders do this by counseling the Scriptures to members in settings that extend beyond the pulpit ministry and by equipping others to do the same. Ron Allchin and Tim Allchin make this alarming observation about this disconnect between the pulpit ministry and the private ministry of the Word for churches that have no vision for private soul care:

Many churches have a great pulpit ministry, but falter in discipleship because congregants lack encouragement or support to follow through in faithful obedience to the Word. Other churches compromise the authority of the Word by assuming that there is little relevant guidance to be found in the Word to address the challenges of life. However, effective ministry of the Word must go beyond the pulpit, permeating every aspect of daily life for every member.<sup>1</sup>

As observed in chapter 2, this private ministry of soul care *is* an application of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. Through a biblical counseling ministry, soul care allows counselees in local churches to submit to the authority of God’s Word and God uses this ministry to conform followers more into the image of Jesus Christ. In this chapter, a closer examination is given to the ingredients needed to begin equipping lay biblical counselors. As has already become evident, local churches committed to biblical counseling need lay people committed to biblical counseling. Therefore, it is essential to identify spiritually mature members<sup>2</sup> in the local assembly and provide adequate training

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<sup>1</sup>Ron Allchin and Tim Allechin, “Equipping Biblical Counselors for Your Church,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 191.

<sup>2</sup>I chose to utilize small group leaders because they are already on the front lines for providing soul care at my local church.

so that they may labor in providing counsel to church members. This chapter gives a theoretical approach to equipping small group leaders to counsel and care for members in their small group. Chapters 4 and 5 explains the actual application and results of equipping small group leaders in the ministry of biblical counseling. There are many helpful and different ways to approach small group ministry and train small group leaders and this proposal is only *one* of those ways.<sup>3</sup> In order to equip small group leaders to provide biblical counsel and care, this chapter emphasizes the importance of Christocentric living and counseling, the necessity of spiritual disciplines in the task of counseling, and the skillfulness and dedication needed to assist the counselee in applying the Scriptures. This chapter is limited in scope, but these three focal points serve as an overview of necessities in beginning a lay biblical counseling ministry in the small group setting.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Gospel Must Be Central**

The gospel must be central in the life of the counselor and his counseling. Gospel-centric<sup>5</sup> counseling is another way of asking, “Is this person qualified to counsel?” Being gospel-centric in living and counseling is much more than just understanding the gospel, it is an embracing of Christ as the central and sufficient person for *all* of life. In

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<sup>3</sup> Some helpful books on small group ministry and leadership development include Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); and Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). Coastal Community Church has modeled small group discussions based on Osborne’s recommendation to have sermon based small groups. This approach fits the biblical counseling model well because it allows small group leaders to help counselees in their small groups *apply* God’s Word, not merely hear it preached.

<sup>4</sup>While small groups are the setting Coastal chose to equip leaders in biblical counseling, this training can be utilized to train leaders in all different settings in the local church. As this chapter progresses I do not continue to emphasize the small group setting for the purpose of making this project more portable.

<sup>5</sup>While gospel-centric (gospel centered) counseling is discussed at length in this chapter, for clarity’s sake it is beneficial to provide a formal definition. I prefer Robert Kellemen’s definition: “Gospel-centered counseling promotes personal change centered on the Person of Christ through the personal ministry of the Word.” Robert Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 16.

Philippians 3:8, the apostle Paul says, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” The gospel-centric counselor sees his Savior as supremely valuable. This view of Christ is so high and exalted that everything else is as *rubbish* when compared to him. Robert Cheong, Pastor of Care at Sojourn Community Church, writes about the passage in Philippians:

Even though we will never fully understand the infinite power and beauty of our Redeemer and His gospel on this side of heaven we must never stop our quest to experience [the surpassing value of Christ] . . . because the meaning of life and purpose for living are found in Christ and are lived out through our relationship with Him (John 10:10; 14:6; Galatians 2:20).<sup>6</sup>

This sort of devotion to seeing and savoring the beauty and power of the Jesus is not only beneficial to the counselor, but it will leak out into the counseling ministry and this is good. The Holy Spirit uses gospel-centered counseling to change lives.

What specifically can be considered gospel-centered counseling? In other words, what are the key features of gospel-centered counseling? The Biblical Counseling Coalition explains gospel-centered counseling as pointing

people to a person, Jesus our Redeemer, and not to a program, theory, or experience. We place our trust in the transforming power of the Redeemer as the only hope to change people’s hearts, not in any human system of change. People need a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus, not a system of self-salvation, self-management, or self-actualization. Wise counselors seek to lead struggling, hurting, sinning, and confused people to hope, resources, strength, and life that are available only in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Within this macro definition of gospel-centered counseling are some components worth considering that enable the Biblical Counseling Coalition to settle in on this definition.

First and foremost is a generous and kind God. Often times when thinking through the gospel, the temptation is to begin with man’s dilemma of sin. The Bible, however, begins with the generosity of God; often referred to as the *goodness* of God.

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<sup>6</sup>Robert Cheong, “The Centrality of the Gospel,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, ed. James Macdonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 153.

<sup>7</sup>Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Counseling*, 27.



God says to Adam and Eve, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2:16b-17). The natural tendency is to hone in on the forbidden tree, and in doing so believers may fail to see that God offers to Adam and Eve *every other tree in the garden*. God loved Adam and Eve, and he loved giving to them and providing for them, and he could do so without spoiling them. This gift of every other tree in the garden was a promise of provision and life for Adam and Eve. This emphasis is extremely relevant to the struggling counselee. God *knows* his creation intimately. He *cares* for his creation. Counselees often times have a distorted view of God, especially in light of their sin(s) and circumstance(s). The counselee’s perspective is tainted much like Eve’s after her encounter with the serpent. The serpent caused Eve to see God as tyrannical, withholding, legalistic, and unkind. The Scripture teaches otherwise, and biblical counselors would do well to present the kindness and generosity of God to their counselee. It is in fact God’s kindness that leads women and men to repent of sin (Rom 2:4) and counselors should remember that.

Genesis 3:15 is a great text of significance in regard to God’s kindness. After the sin of Adam and Eve, God would have been totally justified in giving them the outcome of their disobedience; death and eternal separation. However, in his kindness and generosity, God preaches the gospel: “I [God] will put enmity between you [serpent] and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring [those in the flesh] and her offspring [those of the Spirit]; he [Jesus] shall bruise your [serpent] head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Just as God preached the gospel to Adam and Eve by directing their attention to the Snake Crusher, so should counselors direct their counselee’s attention to God’s generosity in providing the Snake Crusher who accomplished salvation for his children.

Second is a believer’s union with Christ. There are not enough sermons preached on a believer’s union with Christ; therefore, many counselees that schedule

appointments have no clue as to this doctrine's significance. Puritan Walter Marshall gives a beautiful picture of a believer's union with Christ:

By faith we have the actual enjoyment and possession of Christ Himself, and not only of remission of sin, but of life, and so of holiness. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). We live to God; and yet not we, but Christ lives in us by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:19, 20). He that believes on the Son of God has the Son and everlasting life that is in Him (1 John 5:12, 13; John 3:36). He that hears Christ's word, and believes on Him that sent Christ, has everlasting life and is passed from death to life (John 5:24).<sup>8</sup>

Marshall understood the need for believers to consider their union with Christ as having power not only to accomplish eternal life, but as having power to live in obedience today. This strategy is nothing new. The apostle Paul reminds the worldly church at Corinth that "such were some of you" (1 Cor 6:11). It is when counselees forget their identity, their union with Christ, that they begin to act against their new nature. Walter Marshall and the apostle Paul are saying, "Be who you already are." Counselees living in rebellion are living contrary to their identity in Christ and should be sternly called to forsake immorality and embrace Christ. Those who desire to practice biblical counseling must be committed to teaching the doctrine of a believer's union with Christ in this way. To neglect this doctrine is to commend repentance of sin apart from the gospel and a counselee will not have longevity in that sort of repentance. What does reminding a believer of their union with Christ accomplish? Jay Adams suggests that it is a reminder that

sin is no longer our lord, our master. We are no longer helpless, at its mercy, under its power and authority; Christ has freed believers from enslavement to sin. But more than that, those who trust in Him and receive this emancipation in Christ are brought under a new authority: they are made the slaves of a new lord and master.<sup>9</sup>

Union with Christ is essential. It allows the counselor to hold a believer accountable to the profession he or she claims to cherish. An evidence that one has union with Christ this side of eternity is obedience to the Word of God. Spending time on a believer's union

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<sup>8</sup>Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2013), 24.

<sup>9</sup>Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 180.

with Christ will allow the counselor to also spend time on the needed<sup>10</sup> evidences of a believer's union with Christ. This approach will prove to be a profitable exercise.

Third is the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This has been addressed some in chapter 1, but it is important for counselors to remember that they are *needy* people. It is beneficial to declare that neediness daily. Apart from the Holy Spirit, all counseling is vain and every counselee is hopeless. Therefore, counselors need to pray for the counselee to be convicted by the Holy Spirit so that they may apply the Scripture discussed in counseling. The counselor must also include in his or her gospel-centered counseling approach, a reminder to the counselee regarding the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is much confusion surrounding the person and work of the Holy Spirit, which is one of the reasons why counselors should be committed to discussing the Holy Spirit with their counsees. Pastor Geoffrey Thomas writes about the Holy Spirit:

We know that the Son of God became incarnate, died on the cross, rose from the grave, and ascended to the throne of heaven so that He might pour out His Spirit at Pentecost and continue pouring Him out on the church everywhere. Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, the earlier accomplishments of the Savior would not have profited us. The essential, vital, central element in the life of every congregation is the person and work of the Spirit of God as illuminated and structured and judged by the Spirit-breathed Word.<sup>11</sup>

One cannot communicate the accomplished and applied salvation of Christ without the Holy Spirit. One cannot commend righteous living apart from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Local churches desperately need pastors and ministry leaders that are committed to counseling to be intentional about their own neediness for the Spirit and intentional about their teaching on the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life of the believer and he does so with cooperation from the believer. The apostle Paul talks about this fruit in Galatians 5:22 when he states, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such

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<sup>10</sup>I use the word *needed* in the spirit of Jas 2:14-26.

<sup>11</sup>Geoffrey Thomas, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2011), 2.

things there is no law.” Counselors *should* promote Spirit living in the lives of their counselees and should expect counselee’s obedience to the Word. Jay Adams charges,

The pursuit of fruit in counseling is a top priority. The characteristics listed—“love, joy, peace,” etc.—are all qualities that both counselees and most counselors [Adams is arguing that even some secular counselors desire to see this type of result in their counseling although they would not call it the “fruit of the Spirit”] would deem desirable. They, then, become goals for Christian counselors to pursue in all of their counseling. Because they are—and because goals are so vital—it is essential for every Christian counselor to understand the basic meaning of each term and how it may be pursued. Counselors must become adept at locating such lacks in their counselees, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and in describing each quality in depth. In short, they must understand the Spirit’s fruit thoroughly.<sup>12</sup>

While the top priority is not to produce fruit,<sup>13</sup> as Adams asserts in his quote, the pursuit to forsake sin and cherish Christ more will produce the fruit of the Spirit in the believer. This fruit may be slow and gradual in some people and faster in others as the sovereign Spirit accomplishes the will of God.

Fourth is a hope for the city that is to come. The author of Hebrews, verse 13:14, says, “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.” The author knew this congregation intimately. He knew their struggles, persecutions, temptations and sins, and he comforts them by reminding them of the city that is to come; that celestial city. Believers *can* suffer and endure. Believers *can* flee temptation. Believers *can* persevere through the most difficult seasons of life. Believers *can* do all of this because they seek the city that is to come. A believer’s hope and trust is not in present circumstances, a believer’s hope is this guaranteed inheritance (Eph 1:14) of eternity with the Savior they love and cherish. Counselors *must* counsel their counselees in view of the city that is to come as they seek to provide gospel-centered counseling.

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<sup>12</sup>Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 250.

<sup>13</sup>The scope of Adams’ work here is on a counselee’s obedience, but the label “top priority” can be problematic. If counselors or counselees buy into the idea that fruit is the goal, then they run the risk of replacing one idol with another idol. Seeing Christ as supremely valuable and delighting in Him more is the *chief* goal. The fruit of the Spirit is an outworking of delighting in Christ. Adams’ quote here could be crisper.

These major elements should be present in the life of a counselor and in her or his counseling approach to make the counseling distinctly *gospel-centered*. Pastors and ministry leaders must train their volunteers to counsel the gospel with precision and faithfulness while being an example to the counselee. Most counselees are in crises because they are neglecting the great salvation provided for them in Christ Jesus, and counselors must be passionate, equipped, and ready to counsel them from the gospel.

### **Spiritual Disciplines Should Be Utilized**

In the previous section, the call for a gospel-centered life and counseling approach was emphasized as absolutely necessary for proper soul care within the local church. This section addresses various means by which counselees come to see Christ as supremely valuable. Every counselee is disciplined in some way. They may be disciplined to neglect sleep and family and job responsibilities for the sake of binge-watching their favorite program. They may be disciplined to indulge in pornography in a secretive and crafty manner. They may be disciplined to save enough money to indulge various addictions to alcohol, gambling, shopping, etc. Every person establishes habits or patterns, and these habits or patterns can be sinful and lead to this callousness and distance in relationships *or* the habits or patterns can be godly and lead to conformity to the image of Christ. Most counselees are disciplined in the worst possible ways; therefore, the counselor must help them to put off immoral disciplines and even those disciplines that distract so that they may put on spiritual disciplines that lead to conformity to the image of Christ (Eph 4:22-24). This section highlights several spiritual disciplines that should be commended to counselees as the means by which they may worship and delight in God and his Scripture. This is not an exhaustive list of spiritual disciplines, but some important ones. It is important to emphasize that these are a *means of grace*<sup>14</sup> God

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<sup>14</sup>*Means of grace* should be defined as those things which God uses to distribute grace and conformity to the image of Christ to his elect.

uses in the lives of his people so that they may know him more. Spiritual disciplines are *not* the highest aim for the believer, lest they become Pharisaical. Spiritual disciplines point men and women to something better: Christ. The spiritual disciplines are the pathway of grace to know Christ and become more like him.

First, just as union with Christ should be central in gospel-centered counseling so should abiding with Christ be presented as a discipline to the counselee. Abiding in Christ has in mind this biblically-informed obedience. A counselor must stress to the counselee the urgency to daily abide in Christ and his responsibility to be obedient to the Word as he abides. In John 15:4-5, Jesus says,

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

J. Todd Billings, professor at Western Theological Seminary, writes concerning this passage: “In John’s Gospel, [abiding] with Christ is connected with both faith and obedience . . . a person bears fruit only through union with and abiding in Christ, which means that one bears no fruit apart from that abiding.”<sup>15</sup> Many counseling sessions can grow cold and legalistic or passive and lawless if abiding in Christ is not emphasized appropriately. Furthermore, many Christians are not encouraged to consider and internalize Paul’s words in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

The benefits of abiding in Christ is that it allows the believer to give more consideration to his union with Christ. Union with Christ has already been addressed, but it is crucial to understand that abiding with Christ promotes meditation on union with Christ. There are numerous benefits for a believer to consider his union with Christ, but this chapter will limit the benefits to three. First, it reminds the believer of their right

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<sup>15</sup>J. Todd Billings *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 35-36.

standing before God. A believer's life is so closely identified with the life of Christ that Jesus' person and work is credited to the believer. In exchange, Jesus gets the believer's blasphemies, adulteries, murders, lies, thefts, greed, and everything in between. To consider a believer's union with Christ is to consider the unfair exchange. Remembering one's right standing before God based on the finished work of Christ is healing balm to a disquieted soul.

Second, union with Christ allows counselees to remember they have the ability to consider, understand, digest, and obey God's Word. To take counselees by the hand and help encourage them by reminding them of their union with Christ not only gives them an opportunity to consider their salvation, but it reminds them that they have the capacity to understand and obey God's Word. For counselees to live otherwise is for them to practically believe that the Holy Spirit could raise Christ from the dead, but has no more power left to change them.

Third, helping counselees discipline themselves to consider their union with Christ frequently keeps them from the pitfalls of legalism and antinomianism. Sinclair Ferguson stresses that considering one's union with Christ prevents him from "abstracting God's law from God's person and character."<sup>16</sup> This prevents the counselee from legalism by reminding them that their obedience to God's Word does not increase their righteous standing before God. In Christ, the counselee is already positionally right. A Christian cannot gain an inch on being more positionally right because of merits. Furthermore, this consideration of union with Christ prevents the counselee from antinomianism because they understand that to abide in Christ means that they are to bear fruit and God *expects* obedience. Someone who professes Christ and does not bear fruit is *not* in Christ (John 14:15). Believers have the capacity and obligation to keep God's law

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<sup>16</sup>Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance: Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

because they are in Christ. Therefore, abiding in Christ should lead the counselee to consider his or her union with Christ and there are real tangible benefits to this.

Second, a counselor should emphasize the spiritual discipline of repentance. However, it is important to note that the spiritual discipline of repentance is an exercise that only God's children can express in a way that honors him. In other words, repentance, like faith, is a gift from God to his elect. Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. Puritan pastor Thomas Watson defines repentance as "a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed."<sup>17</sup> Repentance is not a one-time act that occurs only when a believer comes to believe into<sup>18</sup> Christ, but it is a continuous act and discipline for those converted by the gospel of Jesus. Oftentimes, counselees do not see the importance of the ongoing work of repentance. At the height of his spiritual maturity in Romans 7:7-25, the apostle Paul understood the deceitfulness of his own heart and the need to perpetually repent of sin and trust in the finished work of Christ (Rom 8:1-2). Counselors must pray for their counselees to perpetually repent of sin and must consistently counsel counselees to actively repent of sin. Watson goes on to describe the nature of true repentance: "For a further amplification, know that repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients: sight for sin; sorrow for sin; confession of sin; shame for sin; hatred for sin; turning from sin. If anyone is left out it loses its virtue."<sup>19</sup> It would do counselors well to read and apply Thomas Watson's *The Doctrine of Repentance* so that it may be faithfully applied in the counseling setting.

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<sup>17</sup>Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 18.

<sup>18</sup>I use the word *into* based on John's usage of the word *eis* in John 3:16. John quotes Jesus in this text and evidences that Jesus goes out of his way to use bad Greek grammar to communicate an important truth: Christians do not respond to the facts of the gospel by believing Jesus. Christians respond to the facts of the gospel by believing into Jesus' person and his work.

<sup>19</sup>Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 18.



Third is the spiritual discipline of Bible intake. Professor Donald Whitney writes, “No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture.”<sup>20</sup> Many counselees lack a reverent, needy view of the Scripture. Counselors must labor to help counselees see God’s Word as the very food for the soul (Matt 4:4). Men of God used vivid language to describe the Scriptures. Paul said Scripture is “breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16); Isaiah said Scripture accomplishes its purposes (Isa 55:11); Jeremiah said he ate God’s Word and it was a joy and delight to his heart to do so (Jer 15:16); the Hebraic author said Scripture is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12-14); and the Psalmist called God’s Word *perfect* (Ps 19:7-11). Scripture itself attests to it being the believer’s very food because it is the very Word of God. The question should then be anticipated, “What are the benefits of digesting God’s word?” Whitney goes on to answer this question:

In the Bible God tells us about Himself, and especially about Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God [the Son]. The Bible unfolds the Law of God to us and shows us how we’ve all broken it. There we learn how Christ died as a sinless, willing Substitute for breakers of God’s Law and how we must repent and believe in Him to be right with God. In the Bible we learn the ways and will of the Lord. We find in Scripture how to live in a way that is pleasing to God as well as best and most fulfilling for ourselves. None of this eternally essential information can be found anywhere else except the Bible. Therefore if we would know God and be Godly, we must know the Word of God-intimately.<sup>21</sup>

The richness and necessity of Scripture should be obvious to those who wish to counsel believers, and counselors should actually use the Bible in counseling to demonstrate the sufficiency of Scripture. It is important to note that God has given some tangible ways to intake his word. Whitney describes an aspect of Bible intake as hearing the Word, reading the Word and studying the Word.

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<sup>20</sup>Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 28.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

## **Hearing the Word**

Believers should hear the Word of God on the Lord's Day, but they should also hear the Word of God in the counseling session. Paul says in Romans 10:14, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believe? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" The hearing of God's Word is crucial for the counselee. Counselors who do not use the Scripture to counsel should not call themselves biblical counselors.

## **Reading the Word**

Counselees should be taught by their counselors on how to read God's Word so that they may understand and apply it. The psalmist says in Psalm 119:9-10, "How can a you man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!" Counselees must read the Word of God to know the Word of God. Sadly, many counselees are intimidated to read God's Word simply because they began reading and grew discouraged somewhere in Leviticus or Numbers. Simply spending time with the counselee forming a reading strategy and plan will help encourage believers to begin to digest the Scriptures.

## **Studying the Word**

In regard to studying God's Word, a counselor should be a model Bible student for the counselee. A counselor can demonstrate the basics of how to actually do a Bible study simply by doing a Bible study in a counseling session. Opening Romans 7 and 8 and working through it verse-by-verse with a counselee will not only show them how to consider and study verses, but they will walk away with an understanding of the plague of their own heart and the need to rest in the finished work of Christ.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, because counseling ideally happens in the context of the local church, a counselor should

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<sup>22</sup>See appendix 4 for an example of a simple Bible study on this passage that can be utilized in the counseling session.

help the counselee assimilate into a Bible study or small group that can provoke further pursuit of study independent of the counseling sessions.<sup>23</sup> More ways to intake God's Word will be addressed later in this chapter, but these three Bible intake means are the primary ways a believer can have their minds renewed (Rom 12:1-2) for the glory of God.

Another vitally important spiritual discipline is that of *prayer*. Jay Adams writes, "Prayer has a *central* place in Christian counseling, both for the counselor and for the counselee."<sup>24</sup> Sadly this discipline is not only neglected by counselees, but it is often neglected by those providing soul care. Paul commands believers to be devoted to prayer (Col 4:2) and also to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). Jesus even went as far as to demonstrate prayer for his followers (Matt 6:9-13). Prayer is the incredible grace from God whereby men can commune with God in adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. Puritan Walter Gurnall speaks of the benefits of prayer when he exhorts,

Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises [of God from his word] to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent, and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer.<sup>25</sup>

Prayer increases intimacy and perseverance. Counselees need to understand that they serve not the god of the deists, but a God who is intimately and intricately involved in every aspect of their lives (Ps 139). This is a God who reconciled his relationship with man through the death and resurrection of Christ and has made communion with him possible and invites all his children to commune with him through prayer.

Church attendance on the Lord's Day may be a discipline that needs to be instilled in a counselee. Not many books would label this as a spiritual discipline and that is a great tragedy. This could be because church attendance is assumed. However,

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<sup>23</sup>Biblical counselors should always have a list of mentors on hand as well as small groups counselees can assimilate into. God offers his whole church to the struggling counselee. Biblical counselors should not neglect the vast amount of resources God provides.

<sup>24</sup>Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 61.

<sup>25</sup>Walter Gurnall, *The Christian In Complete Armor* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013), 713.

many counselees need to have a change in perspective regarding the Lord's Day and their role in it. The Lord's Day is the gathering of God's church on Sunday for the preaching and singing of the Word, the ordinances, prayer, fellowship, and serving. Counselors should investigate how involved their counselee is in the life of the local church and gauge their perspective on Sunday morning worship. Is Sunday casual for the counselee? Are they habitually late? Do they miss Sunday morning worship often? Are they in fellowship with other believers or do they sneak in and sneak out? Fellowship may need to be defined for the counselee. The Greek word for fellowship (*koinōnia*) is translated in several different forms, such as "participation," "partnership," and "sharing." In *The Crisis of Caring*, Jerry Bridges defines fellowship as the "giving [of] what we have to others."<sup>26</sup> This definition is not the only one Bridges gives, but this perspective should be present in the counselee. Do they have a reverence for the preaching of God's Word? Do they see the faithful preaching of God's Word as a means of grace in their life? How do they view singing God's Word on Sunday? There could be an overemphasis on the music instead of the lyrics or they could see the music portion as an obstacle before the sermon. Do they prepare throughout the week as they anticipate the sermon? These questions can help reveal a counselee's heart posture and give the counselor an opportunity to teach and demonstrate the importance of the Lord's Day worship.<sup>27</sup>

The spiritual discipline of meditation is a long-neglected discipline in the life of many believers. This is mostly due to the hijacking of the definition of meditation by eastern cults. When most people hear of meditation today, they picture someone sitting cross-legged with eyes closed as they attempt to empty their minds of all thoughts and

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<sup>26</sup>Jerry Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring: Recovering the Meaning of True Fellowship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 16.

<sup>27</sup>I am indebted to Walter Chantry, *Call the Sabbath a Delight* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), for his helpful comments regarding the Lord's Day. I often use elements of his book for counselees who have a low view of the Lord's Day.

stressors. This is not the way the Bible defines meditation and not the way the early church nor the Puritans 500 years ago practiced meditation. Meditation should be defined as filling one's mind with truth. Pastor and author David W. Saxton in his thesis for Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary defined meditation as thinking "personally, practically, seriously, and earnestly on how the truth of God's Word should look in life."<sup>28</sup> Meditation is another way a counselor can encourage Bible intake. In today's fast paced culture, meditation on the Scripture is much needed. Since the rise of technology and helpful programs such as Google, everyone has instant answers to any question at their fingertips; in their pockets. There is no need for reflection because one does not have to be patient to wait for an answer. Instant access to answers has only amplified the impatience in the heart. Counselees need to learn what it means to sit and ponder just a few words of Scripture. Counselees need to soak in the truths of Scripture not for information, but for transformation. Meditation is also a good bridge. Meditation is a bridge for prayer and memorization and it is also a bridge for righteous action (Jas 1:22). Working through passages slowly and praying those words to God can be enriching and soul nourishing and can be fuel for the believer to pursue righteousness. Working slowly through a passage for the purpose of memorization can be a strong weapon in spiritual warfare for the counselee too.

These are just a few spiritually profitable disciplines that should be encouraged by those committed to soul care in the local church. These tangible exercises can be employed in the counseling setting for the purpose of promoting godliness (1 Tim 4:7). It is important to remember and remind the counselee that the employment of these spiritual disciplines is not the end goal; the end goal is to further cherish Christ and be changed by him.

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<sup>28</sup>David W. Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015), 2.

## **Biblical Counselors Must Skillfully Apply the Scriptures**

So far in this chapter there has been definition and examination given to gospel-centered living and counseling and there has been examination given to the need to counsel spiritual disciplines to the counselee as the vehicle by which they may commune with God. In this last section, attention is given to the need for the counselor to be skillful in the way he or she applies God's Word to the counselee. Therefore, this section deals with the preparatory study a counselor should be devoted to and the need to counsel the heart of the counselee.

### **Preparatory Study of a Counselor**

Providing soul care through the ministry of biblical counseling is a vitally important role in shepherding. The following passage was addressed some in the previous chapter, but it is beneficial to re-visit it again in this section. Before Paul leaves the elders at Ephesus he speaks of this *quality* of his shepherding work when he states,

You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:18b-21)

There is a diligence and earnestness in this passage from Paul. He served the Lord with humility, tears, and trials and never neglected his shepherding duty of proclaiming repentance and faith in Jesus through the private ministry of the Word. This type of ministry is a difficult. This work is tedious and time consuming. Interestingly, later, Paul commends this type of work to the elders when he states, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (20:28). "Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears" (20:31). And he concludes with, "In all things I have shown you that by *working hard* (emphasis mine) in this way we must help the weak and remember the

words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ (20:35). Paul acknowledges that soul care is hard work and to do it faithfully one must remember the words of the Lord Jesus: this is a *giving* ministry. Biblical counselors must be committed to giving and by good and necessary consequence a part of that giving is preparatory devotion that extends outside of the counseling session.

Jay Adams argues that to see the need for preparatory study a counselor must be convinced that he needs to be a craftsman: “For starters, you must come to the conclusion that God expects you to commit yourself to craftsmanship. In Proverbs 22:29 He asks, ‘Do you see a person skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure persons.’”<sup>29</sup> Later Adams goes on to state,

The ministry of God’s word to people in need is your work, [counselor]. The Hebrew word translated work, means “work task, business, ministry.” There is a lot of interest in politics today, but what one does in the counseling room is more important than what politicians do in the smoke-filled chambers of the world.<sup>30</sup>

Counselors committed to soul care must see that a part of soul care begins even before the counseling session. Just as a pastor is committed to his study before delivering a sermon so should the counselor be committed to study before and or after a session. So, what are the characteristics of a counselor committed to excellency in counseling?

Adams gives five identifiers:

Excellence in counseling means to be quick and able in analyzing a counselee’s problem(s); giving a biblical description of the problem(s); reaching biblical solutions to the problem(s); providing biblical implementation for these solutions; dealing with counselees as individuals.<sup>31</sup>

It is beneficial to quickly analyze each of these characteristics and then conclude with some suggestions on how study should look for the counselor.

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<sup>29</sup>Jay Adams, *Committed to Craftsmanship in Biblical Counseling* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 2000), 7.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 8-9.

A biblical counselor should be able to analyze a counselee's problem, which is the ability to go further than presenting problems (although presenting problems should be addressed compassionately). A skilled biblical counselor should be able to see the heart posture behind the presenting problems that the counselee often fails to see. A skilled biblical counselor can discern heart posture when he listens generously and is disciplined in his data gathering process. A skilled biblical counselor knows the right questions to ask so that he can provide the best biblical soul care possible.

A biblical counselor should also be able to give a biblical description for presenting problems in counselees. If a skilled biblical counselor were to counsel someone with an alcohol addiction, the counselor would move the alcoholic away from seeing their alcoholism as a disease and help them to see it as a sinful addiction that comes from an unbelieving heart (Matt 15:18; Heb 3:12-14). This approach to counseling would help the counselee to move out of the seat of victim and begin to take personal responsibility for their actions in a way that orients their hearts toward God.

Third, a skilled biblical counselor should be able to reach biblical solutions to problems. This approach to counseling is more than mere behavior modification. Biblical solutions aim deeper than the presenting problem(s). This is not to say that the presenting problem is not important, but it is often a symptom of something deeper. Again, the aim of biblical counseling is the heart of the counselee. In *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience*, Jeremy Pierre reminds readers of the biblical solution for any counseling case:

Faith in Christ is the means by which the dynamic heart is restored to do what it was designed for: to worship God in thought, desire, and choice. Faith is how a heart receives the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that righteousness retakes control of the dynamic design, restoring the beauty of its ability to worship God.<sup>32</sup>

Every counselee that enters the office of a counselor needs to be reminded from the Scripture what it looks like to love God with heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27)

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<sup>32</sup>Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, SC: New Growth, 2016), 71.



and a counselor devoted to God and his Word will do this with empathy, tenderness, and patience.

However, it is not enough to give biblical solutions to the problems the counselee faces. A skilled biblical counselor will develop an implementation plan with the counselee in an effort to help him or her savor who God is for them in Christ. What is implementation? Jay Adams defines implementation as “adaption of biblical truth for biblical purposes, in practical ways, according to a biblical derived plan and schedule, together with biblical, or biblically legitimate methods for meeting the schedule, to a specific person in his individual circumstances.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the implementation part of counseling biblically is creating an individualized<sup>34</sup> plan with check points for the counselee that is grounded in the Scripture with non-legalistic methods. The goal of this plan is for the counselee to be conformed more into the image of Christ. This implementation plan comes through homework assignments given by the biblical counselor at the end of each session that can take the form of the spiritual disciplines encouraged earlier in this chapter.

Finally, when approaching counseling, biblical counselors must see their counselees as individuals. There is a temptation for the busy counselor, especially those who are lay counselors with full-time jobs, to treat every counselee and their problem the same way. Rather than listening and praying, opening the Word and responding, the busy counselor can be tempted to reach conclusions quickly and regurgitate rehearsed, clinical answers. Just as pastors should flee sloppiness from the pulpit, so should counselors flee sloppy generic counseling. There are some tangible ways to safeguard

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<sup>33</sup>Jay Adams, *What to Do on Thursday: A Layman's Guide to the Practical Use of the Scriptures* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1995), 103.

<sup>34</sup>An individualized plan is key. Too often those in the biblical counseling world are tempted to approach counseling the Scriptures in a generic way. Every person counseled is someone uniquely created in the image of God and should be approached and counseled as such. This individualized plan takes an enormous amount of listening and patience for the biblical counselor.

one's self from succumbing to this temptation. First, prayer is critical. Counselors, like counselees, are prone to stony, callous hearts. Counselors need a tender, loving, and patient approach to counseling and only the Holy Spirit can give this sort of approach. Therefore, the counselor should be in a posture of repentance and faith<sup>35</sup> as he or she prays for the Holy Spirit's tenderness and sensitivity. Counselors should pray over the study and preparation of the Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to illumine God's Scripture so that it may be used to affect change in the counselee. Counselors should also pray for the counselee as an individual. Pray that his or her heart be changed by the gospel. Pray that the counsel given would be honoring to the Lord. Pray that the Holy Spirit will do a work on the counselee before he or she ever steps foot inside the office. Prayer will ensure that the counseling given is God-centered and that the individual being counseled is loved.

Everything mentioned in this section requires discipline and love for neighbor. Before this section concludes, some practical remarks should be made regarding the actual study of the counselor. In Adam's *What to Do on Thursday: A Layman's Guide to the Practical Use of the Scriptures*, he emphasizes the importance of macro goal setting, micro goal setting, and scheduling.<sup>36</sup> Biblical counselors must be masters of their goals and schedules. It would be beneficial to write these goals and schedules with the particular congregation's needs in mind. The micro goals should help the counselor achieve the macro goals.

Because this chapter's focus is on lay biblical counseling, the assumption is that the biblical counselor has a vocation outside of the local church. Assuming that the lay

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<sup>35</sup>This is certainly an application of Jesus's words in Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

<sup>36</sup>Adams, *What to Do on Thursday*.

person has an 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. job and there are family obligations outside of that, it may be beneficial for the lay counselor to devote two hours each week to study (Tuesdays and Thursdays), Saturday mornings for counsel preparation, and Sundays after corporate worship to counseling. The study should be further equipping him in knowledge of the Scripture. Jay Adams has some helpful commentaries on books of the Bible with the practice of biblical counseling in aim to assist with the study.<sup>37</sup> This Tuesday/Thursday morning time can also be used to study biblical counseling materials. A great place to begin especially in light of counseling in the context of the local church is *Biblical Counseling and the Church*.<sup>38</sup> This book gives a detailed strategy for implementing a biblical counseling lay ministry in the local church and is written by practitioners. These Tuesday/Thursday mornings should start early: 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. can be devoted to communion with God, 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. can be devoted to study, and 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. can be family worship and breakfast before heading out the door for work. Saturday mornings should be reserved for individualized study. Whomever is being counseled on Sunday should be prayed for on Saturday morning and time should be given to the individualized counseling approach. This time could be from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. This type of schedule gives the lay counselor five hours a week in study and preparatory time.

Because Sunday is the Lord's Day, it is an excellent opportunity to worship through the corporate gathering of believers and through serving those believers in the ministry of biblical counseling. The Lord's Day<sup>39</sup> could be the attendance of small group from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., the corporate gathering of believers for worship from 9:30

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<sup>37</sup>Adams has a helpful commentary series for biblical counselors that is a good starting point for counselors seeking to equip themselves on how to counsel the Scripture. The series is called *The Christian Counselor's Commentary*.

<sup>38</sup>Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*.

<sup>39</sup>This schedule is certainly assuming what one's Lord's Day looks like and can be adjusted as needed.

a.m. to 10:30 a.m., and counseling from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. concluding the day with evening worship at 5:00 p.m. This schedule would allow for one hour a week of lay biblical counseling. If this type of schedule were multiplied across only ten spiritually mature leaders in a local church, realistically there would be fifty hours a week devoted to the study and prep of biblical counseling followed by ten hours a week of congregational care through the ministry of biblical counseling. This opportunity is tremendous. The Lord does not need large numbers to make a sizable difference for his glory. He just needs a few disciplined, faithful lay shepherds committed to his Word and each other.

### **Counseling the Heart of a Counselee**

The importance of counseling the heart of a counselee has already been mentioned several times in this chapter, but an extended section is needed in a project aimed to equip lay biblical counselors. The heart (*kardia*) has 158 occurrences in the New Testament and over 800 occurrences in all of Scripture. Universally, *kardia* is the “seat of physical, spiritual and mental life . . . [it is] center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition in the case of the natural man as well as the redeemed man.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, when it is used in Scripture it typically refers to the mind and soul. Connected to the mind and soul contains wishes, desires, vices, and virtues. Understanding the usage of *kardia* should help a counselor and counselee understand passages like Matthew 5:28 when Jesus said, “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Sin is not limited to external, observable behaviors, sin finds its root in man’s heart. Counseling must aim for the heart in order to effect biblical change. Passages like James 4:1-3 bring even greater clarity to the inner man:

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<sup>40</sup>W. Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 403-4.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

The heart is where these passions reside, and these internal sinful passions lead to external observable sins. Biblical counselors must target the inner man so that the seat of passions, the heart, can be addressed.

If biblical counseling aims for the heart, then the counselor should be strategic in the way he or she engages the counselee. For instance, in the process of data gathering, a skilled biblical counselor should listen broadly and assimilate information to discern where a counselee's heart is in relation to their circumstances. Often, the way counsees perceive their presenting problem(s) helps illuminate the heart. Another heart revealing discussion can come from a counselee's desired outcome(s). Good biblical counselors can discern if the counselee's desired outcome(s) is a legitimate desire or ruling desire.<sup>41</sup> Answering these important questions help to reveal if the heart is worshipping the Lord or an idol and can inform the counselor of the appropriate Scriptures to emphasize so that the counselee may repent of their misplaced worship and be conformed more into the image of Jesus.

Discerning, understanding, and counseling the heart of a counselee is the only sure way to get to the root cause of behavior, but biblical counselors should know that it is the difficult path. It is difficult for the counselor and it is difficult for the counselee. Counselors are prone to pragmatism and behavior modification is a very pragmatic, fast-track approach to counseling. As the well-meaning counselor sits and listens to the counselee and his or her issues, the counselor desperately desires to give the counselee some tangible takeaway(s) that will immediately "improve" the life of the counselee.

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<sup>41</sup>I am indebted to both Paul David Tripp and Robert D. Jones for helping me with these categories. Ruling desires is the taking of good, legitimate desires and demanding them. Ruling desires are legitimate desires that take residence within the heart and become demanding gods. For further study on legitimate desires and ruling desires, see Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). See appendix 5 for the throne-staircase chart.

There is a temptation to seek to solve an issue rapidly. This temptation may even be more heightened for the busy counselor. For the lay counselor, this temptation can be heightened because of other life responsibilities.

Counselees will often be impatient with a counselor who practices biblical counseling. By the time a counselee sits down with a biblical counselor the presenting problem is usually at a critical stage. The person is taking on water and wants the water out of their boat or at least a life jacket thrown at them quickly. Many counselees may not see the relevance in wading through the Scriptures and doing God-centered homework and diligently meeting over a longer-term period. It is here that the counselor must persevere in the task of biblical counseling. The counselor must persevere in counseling the heart and resist dealing only with presenting problems.

Other than getting to root causes, what are other benefits of counseling the heart? First, counseling the heart allows the biblical counselor to preach Christ and this is supremely valuable. Puritan Richard Baxter once stated, “If we can but teach Christ to our people, we shall teach them all.”<sup>42</sup> Second, counseling the heart demonstrates that there is indwelling sin. Many counselees believe sins are external. Counseling the heart helps counselees gain perspective on the plague(s) of their heart so that they can repent sooner. Third, counseling the heart allows counselees to see Christ as Lord over their lives and circumstances. The Lord reigns inwardly and outwardly over his children. Fourth, counseling the heart allows counselees to reorient their lives submissively around God and his glory and frees them from the bondage of their circumstances. Counseling the heart prevents a biblical counselor from promoting mere behavior modification. Counseling the heart allows counselors to see the inner man and indwelling sin. There is a heart of stone that needs to become a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26). Biblical counselors must rise above the pragmatic approach of counseling presenting problems alone.

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<sup>42</sup>Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 113.

Behavior-driven counseling is a depressive, enslaving form of counseling that leads counselees into further bondage. Many counselees modify externals and are headed straight for hell. Biblical counselors are concerned about the whole man. Counseling the heart is an invitation for the counselee to see herself or himself biblically and embrace the sufficient Savior.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated the need for faithful lay biblical counselors in the local church. While the scope of this project has small group leaders in mind, this approach to counseling can be adapted in other places in the context of the local church. In this particular area of soul care, the harvest truly is plentiful, but the workers are few (Matt 9:37) due to a lack of equipping by shepherds. In order for pastors and ministry leaders to faithfully shepherd the souls in their charge, a strategic plan must be in place to identify, train, and commission lay biblical counselors. Spiritually mature men and women in the church need to understand that they are competent to counsel. What is it that makes believers competent to counsel? The all-sufficient Christ. May God raise up faithful Christ-centered counselors in his local church committed to his Word.

## CHAPTER 4

### DEVELOPING AND TRAINING SMALL GROUP LEADERS IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING

The need for a vibrant ministry of biblical counseling through small group ministry has become apparent as more and more people join with Coastal Community Church through membership. This local church cannot hire enough pastors or ministry leaders to provide adequate care for each person who desires to be counseled and nor should they. The leadership has recognized the need to train small group leaders adequately in the ministry of biblical counseling and has provided the resources to do so. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process of the curriculum and manual developed to train small group leaders and to give an overview of each lesson taught over the course of eight weeks. This course was an introduction to the ministry of biblical counseling with the goal to do further training seminars that go beyond the scope of this project. Furthermore, the aim of this project was to teach ten small group leaders in this introductory course. CCC is a blank slate in regard to the ministry of biblical counseling and the small group leaders are motivated to be equipped so that they may provide better care for those within the small group ministry context.

The preparation of this curriculum took ten weeks. During those ten weeks, the Biblical Counseling Assessment Form (BCAF), the manual, and the outlines of the lectures were developed. After all of this was organized it was sent to the expert panel on week 6 and revised based on suggested edits by week 9. On week 10, all final drafts were submitted to the expert panel. In weeks 11-18, the resources were implemented through an eight-week introductory course on biblical counseling. Following the completion of this course, weeks 19-20 were utilized to compare the BCAF's submitted to evaluate the effectiveness of the course.



## **Development of Materials Utilized in the Course**

### **Week 1**

The BCAF was developed during week 1.<sup>1</sup> This form was administered before the course began and at the conclusion of the course. It was administered before the course to establish a baseline of knowledge among the small group leaders before the lectures began and administered afterwards to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum taught. The BCAF strategically gauged each small group leader's perspective on counseling *and* the sufficiency of Scripture. During this time, lessons 1 and 2 were also developed.

### **Week 2**

During week 2, lessons 3 and 4 were developed along with the Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation Rubric (BCCE).<sup>2</sup> The BCCE was developed to determine the biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality of the curriculum. The BCCE was e-mailed to the expert panel. Two of the three expert panel members actually sat through the entire course, so not only did they evaluate the curriculum beforehand, but they were able to see it implemented each week and provide helpful feedback both before and after the introductory course. The third member of the expert panel is a local pastor and biblical counselor who made himself very accessible before, during, and after the course.

### **Weeks 3-4**

During weeks 3 and 4, lessons 5 through 8 were developed and all of the lectures were assimilated, edited, and evaluated for biblical faithfulness and clarity.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix 2.

## **Week 5**

During week 5, the biblical counseling manual was designed. Primarily, this manual included fill-in-the-blanks based on each of the eight lectures. In addition to the lecture notes, helpful counseling graphics covered in the lectures were included as well as clear directions on how to further develop as a biblical counselor. The Association of Certified Biblical Counselor's (ACBC) approved book list was included at the end of the manual, as well as topic specific biblical counseling resource books titles. The aim is for this manual to be used as a resource that can be referenced as needed by the small group leaders.

## **Week 6-8**

During weeks 6-8, every resource developed was sent to all three expert panel members. Two of the expert panel members are on staff at CCC. The first is the founding and senior pastor at CCC and is ultimately responsible for its stewardship. His feedback was very positive. His only critique was to utilize more real-world counseling situations throughout the curriculum. He wanted to ensure that the curriculum stayed away from being theoretical to the small group leaders. The second person on the expert panel was a colleague at CCC. In addition to being on staff at CCC, she is also a professor and curriculum developer for Liberty University. She served as an invaluable resource when organizing the curriculum. She gave great feedback on the organization of the content, and voiced the same critique as the senior pastor, which was to include more real-world counseling situations in the curriculum. The final member of the expert panel is a senior pastor at a Reformed Baptist Church in the community. He is finishing his Ph.D. in patristics with special detail given to family ministry. He has practiced biblical counseling at the para-church level and in his own local church for the past fifteen years. His feedback was positive and enthusiastic. No church the size of CCC in the Hampton Roads is practicing biblical counseling, let alone teaching it. Therefore, he was enthusiastic about the impact this project could have on the broader community. His feedback ensured a

solid theological foundation throughout the curriculum and that the small group leaders understand that good doctrine drives good counseling.

### **Week 9**

During week 9, edits to the curriculum and manual were made based on the feedback of the expert panel. To help strengthen the doctrine portion of the Scripture, Lesson 2 emphasized several key doctrines: God, man, sin, redemption, and the eternal security of the believer. In addition, a homework assignment was given in the form of reading. Each small group leader participating in the class was to read Heath Lambert's *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*. Over the course of the eight-week class, this homework would require that participants read six pages a day, six days a week for a total of thirty-six pages weekly. The utilization of these doctrines and the assigned book are explained in fuller detail later in this chapter. Second, three case studies were adapted as exercises to ensure that the small group leaders had an opportunity to apply the material in the counseling context.

### **Week 10**

After making the adjustments and re-submitting the changes to the expert panel, they expressed confidence in presenting the curriculum to the small group leaders in the implementation process.

## **Implementation of Project**

Week 11 was the beginning of implementing this project. A total of 18 small group leaders participated in this introductory course, but only 10 of the 18 were able to attend every single session, complete the homework, and fill out the BCAF before and after the course.

## Week 11

In week 11, the initial BCAF was administered to all in attendance. This happened before the teaching and took the small group leaders around 15 minutes to complete. The small group leaders opted to include their names, so none of the BCAFs were anonymous. The BCAF included general questions regarding their testimony, their membership at CCC, and inquired about their devotional life. In addition to the general questions, each small group leader was required to define biblical counseling, answer if they have ever received biblical counseling, and indicate how often others approach them for counseling.

From there, the BCAF included 26 questions that gauged each person's view on psychology, counseling in the local church, resources for counseling in the local church, the sufficiency of Scripture, and their perspective on being competent to counsel. These questions were given on a six-point system. Point 1 was "strongly disagree," point 2 was "disagree," point 3 was "disagree somewhat," point 4 was "agree somewhat," point 5 was "agree," and point 6 was "strongly agree." After the small group leaders completed the BCAFs, they turned them into a folder marked "pre-course" and stored in a safe place. The participants thought the BCAF was straightforward, but they had to resist the temptation to explain themselves. They did not want to be confined to circle a number, but gave answers to the best of their ability.

Next, I began teaching lesson 1. Lesson 1 was titled, "What Is Biblical Counseling and Why Should the Church Be the Headquarters for Care?" I kept a whiteboard in the classroom so that when we had discussion, I could write the small group leaders' responses on the whiteboard for everyone to see. I began the lesson by asking everyone what comes to mind when they hear the word *counseling*. Without hesitation, people said things like, "people laying on couches," "insurance," "clinical," and "psychology." It was evident from the very beginning how much the small group leaders have been impacted by the broader culture in this particular area. I thanked them for their responses and agreed that those were things that used to come to my mind as

well, and I began to tell them my own journey into the world of biblical counseling, discussing the faulty perspectives that plagued my ministry for the first five years. I then began to discuss how Jay Adams' *How to Help People Change*<sup>3</sup> impacted me forever in this particular area and I used that book as the springboard to introduce biblical counseling by reading several quotes from Adam's book.

I defined biblical counseling for them in five different ways<sup>4</sup> in order to give them a clear and comprehensive perspective on this important ministry. After we finished defining biblical counseling, we examined the Scriptures to see if examples of this type of work in the early church. This examination produced great discussion in the class as they began to see evidence of counseling in Scripture and as we considered together the implications of claiming that the Scriptures are sufficient. From I asked, "where did the church lose her way?" and I leaned heavily into Heath Lambert's *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*.<sup>5</sup> This section led to a weighty discussion of what the church lost when she began to neglect the shepherding duties of counseling and care, and we ended on setting a new trajectory for CCC in order to recapture what was lost.

The small group leaders stayed about 45 minutes after lesson 1 ended. Looking back, this particular lesson impacted them more than any other lesson I would teach. They realized that the church has long neglected a ministry God expects to be carried out. It impacted them because this important ministry was being farmed out to institutions whose origins lay with those who desired to rid the world of belief in God. Lesson 1 set a good foundation to build upon.

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<sup>3</sup>Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

<sup>4</sup>See appendix 7.

<sup>5</sup>Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

## Week 12

On week 12, I taught lesson 2 of the curriculum. The title of this lesson was titled, “How Should We View People and Their Problems?” This lecture was theological in content and was where I implemented most of the changes based on the feedback I received from one of the expert panel members. I began by wading through Romans 1. I gave them a few takeaways from this section in Romans and related it to the ministry of counseling: man’s unrighteousness suppresses the truth about God; what can be known about God is plain therefore every person is without excuse; and every person worships.

First, because unrighteousness suppresses the truth about God, biblical counselors must speak plainly about sin and the need for godly repentance. Plain speaking about sin and repentance is a fundamental practice in biblical counseling. We also spent time discussing how habitual sin prohibits people from having peace with God and fractures everything else. This type of fracture is often medicated away or ignored because counselees fail to see that unrighteousness can be a root problem. Second, the small group leaders were encouraged to hear that everyone who sits across from them in a counseling scenario has everything at their fingertips to know God. Therefore, unbelievers should be evangelized (or pre-counseled as Adams puts it) and believers should be given God-centered counsel. Spending time on Romans 1 increased the small group leaders’ confidence to counsel. This was not the first time they had heard this passage, but it was the first time hearing this passage in the context of caring for others. Finally, we spent time discussing worship, particularly worship disorder. It was during the worship disorder conversation that I introduced Robert D. Jones’ throne-staircase chart.<sup>6</sup> After discussing how each of these takeaways touches the ministry of counseling, we examined sin in four dimensions.<sup>7</sup> My goal was for the small group leaders to see that sin is the root of every issue in which they will counsel. Sin is the root of every issue because it affects

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<sup>6</sup>See appendix 5.

<sup>7</sup>See appendix 8.

everything. First and foremost, all people sin against God; this is the condition of every single person ever created. The Ten Commandments (Exod 20) allow believers to see the blasphemous nature of sin more clearly. The first table (four commandments) deals with sin against God.<sup>8</sup> Second, every single person sins against other people. The second table of the Ten Commandments (back six commandments) confirms this reality of sin. Third, every single person is sinned against. Finally, bodies are breaking down physically because of the effects of sin. God did tell Adam, “For you are dust and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19c). As we discussed sin, I gave different counseling scenarios based on these different dimensions of sin and based on actual counseling cases we have had at CCC. Originally these real-life counseling scenarios were not in my lecture, but based on the feedback of two of the three expert panel members, I added these examples. The exercise was for the small group leaders to identify how sin has touched each person in each scenario and how to effectively and lovingly counsel. It was an effective exercise and I am glad the expert panel encouraged me to include it. It allowed for the small group leaders to really spend time working through the material and to wrestle with how to apply God’s Word to the life of a struggling believer.

Next, we looked at the inseparable connection between a believer’s root and his fruit. The primary passage of Scripture was Matthew 12:33-37. With permission, I utilized some of Robert D. Jones’s visuals and comments regarding root and fruit as I found them to be most helpful for a classroom setting.<sup>9</sup> As we closed that lesson, I

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<sup>8</sup>John Calvin saw the Ten Commandments as two divided tables. John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion 1541 Edition* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 117-8, states,

We must consider the significance of the law’s division into two tables, mention of which is frequently made in Scripture, and deservedly so, as any sensible person may judge. The reason for this is easily grasped, so that there need be no room for doubt. For because the Lord intended to teach all righteousness in his law, he divided it in such a way that he assigned to the first table the duties by which we are to honour his majesty, and to the second the works of love which we owe to our neighbor.

<sup>9</sup>See appendix 5. I especially find Jones’ thorn bushes and hybrid trees teaching helpful here as well as his comments on Jas 4:1-4 and his legitimate/ruling desire questions.

wanted to spend some time discussing several theological categories in addition to the theological category of sin: doctrine of God, man, redemption, and the eternal security of the believer. I wanted the small group leaders to have a solid understanding in each of these critical categories of theology and to see the relevance of each in counseling. I spent time defining each, assigning further reading, and then I broke them up into four groups and each one explained how each doctrine impacted the ministry of counseling. For the doctrine of God, I spend a lot of time on the sovereignty of God,<sup>10</sup> the holiness of God,<sup>11</sup> and the simplicity of God.<sup>12</sup> I spent time on those aspects of God's character because that is what needed to be emphasized in my specific local church. When discussing the doctrine of man, we spent time not only on man's sinfulness, but on the importance of the *imago Dei*. Seeing all men as created in the image of God should produce in a biblical counselor a tenderness and patience to see their counselee reconciled to God. When discussing redemption, the small group leaders were quick to see the relevance of the doctrine of redemption to counseling. They picked up that either (1) they are counseling unbelievers that need the gospel or (2) believers that need to be reminded of the gospel and the need to pursue obedience in response to their new life in Christ. Finally, the small group leaders discussed the eternal security of a believer. Most of them have had experiences with people doubting their salvation. Some doubted their salvation because they were actually unbelievers who needed to be converted, but others struggled because of their former

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<sup>10</sup>Specifically, on sovereignty, I recommended A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961). Pink's book on sovereignty is one of the best introductory books available on the subject. In my experience, counseling sovereignty has not only course corrected worship disorder, but has alleviated anxieties, depressions, and worry from counselees.

<sup>11</sup>For the doctrine of the holiness of God, I recommended R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2000). This doctrine allows a counselee to see the vast difference between them and God and allows them to be reminded of their need for the transforming power of Jesus.

<sup>12</sup>Specifically, from the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith 2:1 statement on "Of God and of the Holy Trinity." God's simplicity is a historic confession that I believe has ramifications for the way we counsel and the way believers worship. To say that God is simple is to assert that he is not made up of parts. Everything that God is, *is* God. God does not change or receive anything that he lacked from creation. God is immutable and can therefore be trusted.



lives. The sins of their past seemed to plague them not because they continued to indulge in them, but because the accuser presented their past to them as a means to discourage them. Discouraged believers can be and should be comforted by the doctrine of eternal security.

### **Week 13**

Some of lesson 3 was a review of identifying root causes of behavior, but I wanted to begin to shift the conversation and move more toward charting strategic plans of Christo-centric growth. I began by building the case that biblical counseling requires preparation, patience, and perseverance. I gave the small group leaders a glimpse of what preparing for counseling can look like, but I restrained myself from going into too much detail because I addressed this again in a later session. I emphasized patience and perseverance because I wanted them to know that the ministry of biblical counseling is tedious, time consuming, and on God's timetable, not ours. However, I also emphasized that it is a ministry worth laboring in. When we began to discuss charting Christo-centric growth, I utilized Robert D. Jones' three-tree model,<sup>13</sup> a visual Jones utilizes to organize and strategically plan Christian growth. Jones adapted and based the three-tree model on David Powlison's six-box diagram,<sup>14</sup> utilized by Powlison to chart Christian growth. Additionally, I utilized a root and fruit chart<sup>15</sup> I designed while listening to Jones' lecture on the subject. The most efficient way I knew to help the small group leaders begin to see how to chart growth for counselees was by posing a counseling scenario and drawing the six-box version of the three-tree model on a white board. I included the case in the notes for the week for the small group leaders to work through and wrestle with out loud. As each small group leader spoke up, I began to fill in the chart based on the comments. I

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<sup>13</sup>See appendix 9.

<sup>14</sup>See appendix 10.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix 6.

was able to challenge some of what they categorized as fruit or root, but overall, I was encouraged by their ability to identify each category appropriately and to effectively chart a plan for the fictitious counselee. This exercise seemed to boost the confidence of the small group leaders.

#### **Week 14**

In week 14 I taught lesson 4 of the curriculum. My goal was to spend the entire time on repentance and faith. I did not want to assume that everyone had the same definition and I wanted to demonstrate that counselors should never assume a counselee understands these two crucial doctrines. I utilized Louis Berkhof's definition of repentance: "Repentance looks to the past and is the change brought to the conscious life of the sinner by which he turns away from sin."<sup>16</sup> Second Corinthians 7:10-11 states,

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

I utilized two graphics to dissect this passage of Scripture for the small group leaders. The first graphic was the Worldly Sorrow Chart.<sup>17</sup> This chart served as a tool to demonstrate how counselees often show certain characteristics that mimic true repentance, but upon further investigation demonstrate a counterfeit repentance. The second graphic was the Godly Sorrow Chart.<sup>18</sup> Like the former chart, this chart illustrated, in a concrete way, qualities of true repentance. In an effort to strengthen the small group leader's understanding of true repentance, I utilized Thomas Watson's six ingredients of genuine repentance from *The Doctrine of Repentance*.<sup>19</sup> I allowed the small group leaders to help

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<sup>16</sup>Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Louisville: GLH, 2017), 132.

<sup>17</sup>See appendix 11.

<sup>18</sup>See appendix 12.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012).

further define Watson's six ingredients, which produced some good cross talk and conversation. By the end of this section of the lecture, the small group leaders gained a comprehensive view of repentance and how to discern true repentance from a counterfeit one in the life of a counselee.

The second section of this lesson focused on faith. I gave a caution to not let the disciplines of repentance and faith become the *highest* aim of the counselee. The highest aim is God's glory. Repentance and faith are the graces he uses so that believers may have union and continual communion with him. I defined faith for the class by utilizing Berkhof's definition, which is the "positive conviction brought about by the Holy Spirit regarding the truth of the gospel and a hearty reliance on the promises of God."<sup>20</sup> I emphasized along with the Puritans that there is an intellectual and emotional element involved in faith as well as an element of the will. The *intellectual* aspect of the will is the ability to comprehend the truth of God's Word in faith as the Holy Spirit illuminates it for the believer. The *emotional* element is a devotional connection as the Spirit stirs the truth of God's Word inside the believer and he or she appropriately responds. Finally, I taught that the element of the will is the *cooperation* of the believer with the Spirit's work, the result being more conformity into the image of Jesus. One of the small group leaders asked if all these elements must be present to be true faith. I responded with how these elements ebb and flow in a believer's life and how counselors need to discern which element(s) to emphasize with counselees.

## **Week 15**

In week 15 I taught lesson 5 of the curriculum. After defining biblical counseling, building a theological framework for how biblical counselors are to view people and their problems, demonstrating the value of proper theology and its effects on counseling, charting Christian growth and defining faith and repentance, I wanted the

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<sup>20</sup>Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 133.

small group leaders to see that they had the resources to provide God-centered care and hope for the members of CCC. My baseline text was Romans 15:14, which was the thrust of Jay Adams' *Competent to Counsel*. Paul commends the Roman church by saying, "I myself am satisfied about you my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another." I spent time on the Greek word *noutheteo* and cross referenced this Greek word to other places Paul used it to demonstrate the expectation that members of the local church counsel one another through admonishing, exhorting, and warning. From there I posed the question, "What are the tools the Lord has given us that allow for Paul to set the expectation that the church should counsel her members?" I did not give a comprehensive list, but I made a practical list based on our local church and we walked through how each resource can be used for God's glory and the edification of his church. The resources discussed were the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the whole church (i.e. small groups, elders, deacons, prayer teams, spiritually mature individuals and couples), the Lord's Day (i.e. preaching, praying, singing, ordinances), benevolence, church discipline, the fact that our counseling is not under the authority of the state, and the fact that we counsel for free. There was a lot of discussion as the small group leaders began to see all the resources the Lord gifted to CCC with fresh eyes. We spent the bulk of the discussion on the Lord's Day. For our local church, the Lord's Day is treated quite casually and not as a means of grace ordained by God. During my discussion time with the small group leaders, we found that many of the people they know that come to CCC are just attenders. They mindlessly come to CCC and mindlessly leave without evidencing any outward change. We discussed how we could help shape the way the people at our church see the proclamation of God's Word. We discussed how the small group leaders could help their small group members anticipate the sermons each week by encouraging them to read the text being preached in the six days leading to Sunday. Our church provides resources to help people prepare for Sundays and we discussed giving them out to people in their

small groups. We also discussed how that, by the time John Calvin died, Geneva held the view that the Word of God rightly divided was the actual word of God proclaimed and how we should commend that perspective to the members for which we care. Singing on the Lord's Day was another discussion. It is not an exaggeration to say that hundreds of people arrive to CCC on Sunday right before the sermon because they do not see the value in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. CCC is looking to remedy this through the pulpit ministry, but this is relevant for the counseling ministry as well. This type of perspective on the Lord's Day comes back to week 1 and the worship dysfunction. The counselee being disengaged with the Lord's Day is a good indicator that God is not being worshipped privately, which can be a profitable discussion for a counselor to have with the counselee.

## **Week 16**

In week 16 I taught lesson 6 and continued the conversation about the resources we have as God's church, and spent the entire time on spiritual disciplines. I utilized many of the spiritual disciplines discussed in chapter 3 of this project. The spiritual disciplines discussed were a believer's union with Christ, repentance as a discipline, Bible intake, prayer, physical and mental attendance on the Lord's day, and meditation. I spent more time on two specific disciplines than others. The first was on counseling believers to consider their union with Christ and how that should drive the exhortation for them to forsake sin and be obedient to God's Word. The second was on the need to elevate the Lord's day in the life of counselees. Based on the previous week, I felt as if this needed to be addressed in further detail. Many counselees never anticipate the Lord's day or see the precious gift as a grace from God. After wading through each of these disciplines, we discussed how we could make each of the disciplines homework assignments for our counselees and we talked about how to model Bible intake and prayer in the counseling session.

## **Week 17**

On week 17 I did not lecture, but I came with a case study for the small group leaders to work through. After giving about fifteen minutes of instruction on the case study, they broke up into groups and worked on it using the six-box version of the three tree diagram for about thirty minutes. At the end of the thirty minutes, each group presented and showcased their ability to distinguish between root and fruit, identify heat and dew, and chart a plan. Some struggled with putting behavioral issues into the root category and this provided for some good clarifications and discussion. Overall the group seemed by the project.

## **Week 18**

Week 18 was the last session. I wanted to spend most of the time talking through everything learned over the course of the eight weeks and how it can apply to everyone in the class. Therefore, each person gave three takeaways from the class and how they plan to apply them in their life and ministry. Every small group leader saw the eight weeks as a valuable investment and were encouraged by what they learned. Additionally, the small group leaders were excited to implement the material in their personal life and in their small group context. I asked them if they would take future classes that are more issue focused and they unanimously they agreed.

After we finished the discussion we worked through Lambert's *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*<sup>21</sup> that I assigned at the beginning of class. Each person gave their impression on the book. It was overwhelmingly positive, and the book proved to be a good introduction. Even some of the small group leaders who were weaker theologically found Lambert's book to be accessible and relevant for the course. However, one large discussion centered around Lambert's chapter on suffering. Several of the small group leaders did not think he did a great job at distinguishing suffering from what suffering

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<sup>21</sup>Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

*produces*. They thought Lambert gave the impression that suffering was good. They believed the chapter could have been crisper and should have focused more on what suffering *produces* rather than suffering itself. They used Job as an example. I listened to their feedback and will go back through that chapter to review for myself.

When we finished discussing the book, I laid out for them future growth opportunities that will span outside the scope of this project. I wanted them to have a clear path toward developing as a lay biblical counselor. Therefore, we walked through how to access Institute for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship (IBCD) lectures and I included a list of books approved by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) along with topic specific book resources in their manual. At the conclusion of the class, each of the small group leaders filled out the BCAF again and I placed them in a folder labeled “post course” and put them in a secure place.

### **Week 19**

Week 19 was spent comparing the pre- and post-course BCAF in an effort to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the course.

### **Week 20**

In week 20 the results of the pre- and post-course BCAF were presented to the expert panel for evaluation and approval.

## **Conclusion**

Implementing this project after investing so much time and energy into reading, researching, and writing was challenging and enjoyable. It was challenging because when teaching an introductory course over the course of only eight weeks, I had to neglect many things I wanted to teach. I had to discern what was priority in an introductory course and what could be postponed for future training seminars. When I initially began to write the curriculum, I began to lose site of the class being an introductory one. Thankfully, the expert panel helped to refocus me and sharpen my lectures. However, even teaching an

introduction course for eight weeks was challenging, I found that I wanted to spend more time fleshing out some of the material that I was teaching the small group leaders and I often felt that they wanted more time as well. The project implementation was enjoyable because of how engaged and responsive the small group leaders were. This was the first time the small group leaders had been trained in this type of format. Because it was new, I was not sure how they would respond and even if they would persevere, but they did. This is an exciting new step at CCC because it is a step toward providing comprehensive care for the members in a way that has been non-existent since CCC's inception.



## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This final chapter is an evaluation of the project. This evaluation will be accomplished in several ways. First, an evaluation is given to the overall purpose of this project. The purpose of this project should be advanced by the curriculum. Second, an evaluation will be given on whether the goals of the project supported the purpose of the project. Third, five strengths were observed at the conclusion of this project and are analyzed in detail. Fourth, six weaknesses are mentioned along with a strategy to modify for future sessions. Finally, both theological and personal reflections are included before the conclusion of this evaluation.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to train small group leaders at Coastal Community Church in Yorktown, Virginia, to utilize the Bible in counseling group members. This project really began in 2015, as the leadership observed a lack of attention given to both leadership development and counsel within CCC. Our local church has always operated lean financially. Therefore, only a handful of qualified pastors and counselors could provide biblical counseling to the members. In addition to the small number of staff, small group recruitment and leadership development was given little attention. One only needed to be a member of CCC and exhibit the gift of hospitality to become a small group leader. Additionally, CCC is a growing church. At the beginning of this project, CCC averaged around 1,000 attendees on a Sunday service. A little over two years later, CCC is now a 1,500+ person church getting ready to launch a campus in a neighboring city in 2018. The need for biblical counseling and the need for spiritually mature small group leaders only continues to increase.

Since the start of this project, the senior pastor requested that I take on a new position at our local church. I am now one of two executive pastors and my job is to oversee the discipleship and counseling ministry. Because of the change in job and the support of the elders, I have been able to shift how CCC recruits and trains small group leaders. In addition to all small group leaders being members, they must now complete a small group leader application,<sup>1</sup> have a one-on-one interview with me or one of the elders, complete an introductory training class on small group ministry, and apprentice for one small group season. This type of process takes a lot more time than CCC is accustomed to, but it has improved the quality of care provided.

Furthermore, small group leadership development involves this project. This curriculum played a crucial role in the development of leaders theologically and in increasing the quality of counsel offered at CCC on a lay level. The lead pastor was not only the expert panel, but he has worked with me closely as I developed this project and has made it a mandatory training for every leader giving spiritual oversight at CCC. The elders, staff, *and* small group leaders must now complete the course to serve in high-level leadership positions at CCC. Because of this change, this introductory class will be a recurring class throughout the year with the hopes that we will develop issue-specific classes that build on this foundational one. The development of this curriculum has serviced the two needs of elevating leadership development *and* lay person care through the ministry of biblical counseling.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The goals of this project were developed to strategically accomplish the purpose of the project. Each goal serviced the other goals and sought to make the introductory course as clear and thorough as possible. Four goals measured the success of this project.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 13.

## **Goal 1**

The first goal was to assess the small group leader's current understanding of and ability to utilize the Bible in counseling small group members. This goal was successfully accomplished through the development of the Biblical Counseling Assessment Form (BCAF)<sup>2</sup>. The Likert scale was used with "1" being "strongly disagree," and "6" being "strongly agree." This goal assessed the small group leaders' view on the sufficiency of Scripture, Bible knowledge around issues related to counseling, and their ability to counsel the members of their small group. This goal was successfully accomplished after ten small group leaders completed the assessment and submitted it before the first lecture in the course.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal was to develop a manual for small group leaders to utilize in conjunction with the curriculum and provide further opportunities for development. Initially this manual was going to be designed as an extension of the curriculum, but as the project progressed, I found it to be more helpful if it worked in tandem with the curriculum. This manual also provided clear next steps for further development. After the first draft of the manual, it was sent to the expert panel.<sup>3</sup> The feedback from the panel was positive with some helpful suggestions on how the manual could be modified. The biblical counseling manual evaluation (BCME)<sup>4</sup> was based on a four-point scale increment. Table 1 demonstrates that the overall score for the manual was a 91, which exceeded the minimum 90 for an acceptable level of quality in the manual. The suggestions given were to ensure I communicated clear action steps for small group leaders on how to implement the materials taught in the small group setting. I

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup>The expert panel was introduced in chap. 1 of this project.

<sup>4</sup>See appendix 3.

implemented this change with the inclusion of strategic case studies throughout the lectures.

Table 1. BCME outcome

Expert Panelist 1	Expert Panelist 2	Expert Panelist 3
91	91	91

### Goal 3

The third goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to train small group leaders in utilizing the Bible in counseling small group members. This curriculum was an introductory course into the ministry of biblical counseling and assumed no knowledge of prior biblical counseling exposure. The curriculum was evaluated by the expert panel for biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. The grading rubric utilized was based on a four-point scale increment. Table 2 demonstrates that the overall score for the biblical counseling curriculum evaluation (BCCE)<sup>5</sup> was 99, which exceeded the minimum 90 for an acceptable level of quality for the curriculum.

Table 2. BCCE outcome

Expert Panelist 1	Expert Panelist 2	Expert Panelist 3
100	96.4	100

The comments I received from the expert panel included a caution not to overwhelm the small group leaders with too much information in a short span of time, ensure doctrinal foundations in the curriculum, and to implement more real-life case studies in the curriculum. I adjusted the curriculum based on the feedback by including a more extended conversation about doctrine and how it informs good, God-centered counseling. I also had the small group leaders divide into groups and build a presentation

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<sup>5</sup>See appendix 2.

centered around crucial doctrines, such as the doctrine of God, man, sin, redemption, and eternal security of the believer that demonstrated their ability to apply good doctrine in counseling relationships. Additionally, I also condensed some of my curriculum. When I first developed the curriculum, I wanted to spend more time on specific issues like anger, adultery, depression and anxiety, but the expert panel's comments were a helpful reminder that this is an *introductory* course. I will address issue specific counseling in later trainings, but this course was designed to begin the conversation about biblical counseling. Finally, I included real life situations to help the small group leaders more clearly apply what they were learning to their ministry.

#### **Goal 4**

The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of the small group leaders by teaching an eight-week class using the developed and approved curriculum. I implemented this part of the project on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. for eight weeks. The class varied in number with an average of fifteen students with a consistent core of ten. The age range of the students was from 22-58 years old. This goal was considered successful when the core group of ten who attended every class took the BCAAF again to determine whether there was a positive statistical change in knowledge. The curriculum did make a positive impact on the knowledge of the small group leaders. The result of the t-test evidenced an increase in knowledge ( $t(9)=3.086, p<.013$ ). The reason this project made a positive impact was because of the small group leader's hunger for the Scripture. The Lord has produced in our leaders a growing hunger to *know* the Scripture and to learn how to apply it to the members of their small group. It did not take much convincing that the Scriptures were sufficient to provide counseling. From the very first lesson, each small group leader became a promoter of biblical counseling. The class is looking forward to further training on how to use the Bible to care for people.

## **Strengths of the Project**

Anticipated and unanticipated strengths were a result of this project. I will begin with the anticipated strengths of the project. First, according to the class, this curriculum really did change the way the small group leaders thought about counseling. Prior to this project, the small group leaders did not have any allegiance to a particular approach to counseling, but they did see counseling as something that takes place primarily at a counseling institution by someone who holds an advanced degree in psychology. At the beginning of class I even asked for images that they associated with the word *counseling* and I received answers like “couch” or “billing insurance” or “Freud.” This confirmed my suspicion that the leaders of our church were more influenced by the broader culture on the task of counseling than by the Scriptures. At the conclusion of this project, there was *universal* agreement that the church should be the primary means of counsel and care for CCC members. There were even testimonies from some of our pastors who took the course that were willing to talk about how the Lord used this curriculum to change their view on shepherding.

Another strength was the rich *discussion* the curriculum provided. I was not sure going into the curriculum how much the class would engage with me or with the material, but from day one they were enthusiastic and eager to engage. We had a lot of relevant discussion based on each week’s lecture and I even had students sum up the previous week’s lecture before we moved to new content each week. The students seemed to grow in their engagement and in their thoughtful remarks. They even began to ask questions that showed me they were wrestling to implement what they were learning in their spheres of influence. The upward momentum of engagement really demonstrated growth over the course of our time together.

The third strength was the breakout groups. Six out of the eight lectures had break out groups. These break out groups were exercises I decided to include after receiving the feedback from the expert panel. In these groups, I put the small group leaders in a position to apply what they were learning. At the end of each break out group,

team leaders had to discuss their team's project outcome. This proved to be one of the biggest strengths of the entire project and I am grateful for the wisdom of my panel in exhorting me to include it. These break out groups also allowed the small group leaders to encourage one another. One small group leader would see one angle in a counseling scenario and another small group leader would see an entirely different angle. These different vantage points helped to give a more comprehensive perspective on how to provide care for those in the counseling case break out projects.

The fourth strength in this project was the room set up. During my time at Southern I took note of how Stuart Scott and Robert D. Jones conducted their lectures and discussions and I attempted to model it. I set up four tables that formed the letter "U" and I stood in the gap with a whiteboard. This made both the lectures and discussions feel more natural. Everyone had an area to take notes, could see one another, speak to one another easily, and could easily see the whiteboard. Scott and Jones were also good at asking thoughtful open-ended questions that required engagement, and I sought to model that as well. Scott and Jones' approach required me to think through not only my lectures, but my questions. Being intentional about my questions also required me to be patient and wait, even if it took a minute of awkward silence.

The unexpected strength of this project was the unity the Lord produced through it. The team of small group leaders that faithfully attended were already a unified group of leaders, but our friendship and comradery only strengthened as we grew as shepherds together. I received thank you e-mails and even a few handwritten notes of encouragement about how enriching the sessions were both curriculum wise and relationally. I think the unintentional balance of discussion and lecture fostered this strength. It will be something I aim to duplicate in future sessions.

## **Weaknesses of the Project and Modifications to Be Made**

While I am delighted by the strengths of this project, I hope to remedy several weaknesses when I teach this curriculum again. The first weakness was the assigned reading. Heath Lambert's *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* proved to be an excellent companion to my lectures, but I did not spend much time discussing the book until the very end. I think having a weekly rhythm to discussing the contents of the book each week would have provided a layer of accountability to the small group leaders and would have connected homework with class time more seamlessly.

Another weakness to the project was my assumption of theological knowledge. I realized after lecture 2 that I needed to ensure I set baseline definitions for every theological category I presented in my curriculum. For future manuals and notes I will include every theological category that I will address with a lay person definition to ensure that each student is on the same page and moving in the same direction.

The third weakness was the time constraint. Doing both a lecture and discussion format class needs more time than 1 ½ hours. Moving forward my aim will be 2 hours. Each week I felt a little rushed at the end, and I think the students did as well. There were two weeks where I just had to end and pick up the following week where I left off, thus cutting into that week's material.

The fourth weakness was some of the organization of the material. For time's sake, I combined identifying root causes of behavior with charting Christian growth. In the future, I would like for these two subjects to be individual lectures. I would also move the section on charting Christian growth to later in the lectures after the class has a good grasp on how to view people, how people change, and the resources at the fingertips of those who counsel in the church. Moving the "charting Christian growth" section further down will allow for a more thorough six-box version of the three-tree model breakout group.



Additionally, I would like to improve the quality of the questions on the Biblical Counseling Assessment Form. After teaching through the curriculum and hearing some of the discussion from the students, I have a better understanding of what questions to ask that can help me gauge a student's knowledge and increase in knowledge better. I would add and have them rate some of the following statements: psychologists have the answers to help people change; psychology and the Scriptures complement one another; counseling is a theological task; the apostles gave instructions to the church to counsel each other; and medication plays no role in helping someone. I would also include the question, "what do you hope to get out of this class?" or "why are you taking this class?" I plan to continue with the BCAF, therefore these questions will be added. In addition to improving the quality of the questions, I would also spend more time on the limitations of an introductory course. I found that many people wanted to get really specific in the class and I realized that I needed to manage expectations for the class a bit better. A thoughtful syllabus would help to manage expectations for future classes.

### **Theological Reflections**

First, I have been reminded that if CCC's theology is not practical, then CCC has an incomplete theology. There has been an increased passion for applied theology in our local church and this biblical counseling curriculum has been one of the catalysts for it and I am deeply humbled by that. I am reminded that our statement of faith and essential doctrine is nothing more than words on a page if not faithfully applied through our philosophy of ministry. James exhorts,

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his nature face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (Jas 1:22-25)

CCC is growing in this wonderful task of *doing* the Word. The Scriptures really do have the power to conform God's church more into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29) and renew

the minds of those who faithfully apply it (Rom 12:1-2). What better way to promote good theology than through a ministry of biblical counseling that compliments the faithful preaching of God's Word?

Second, I am further challenged by Scripture's expectation that God's church counsel one another. This counseling ministry is comprehensive. Just spending time on the Greek word *noutheteō* further cemented this conviction as I taught this word to the small group leaders in the class. Paul commends the local churches he is involved with to admonish, warn, counsel, and rebuke by applying *noutheteō* in his ministry to them (Acts 20:28-31; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 4:14; Col 1:28; 1 Thess 4:12; 2 Thess 3:13). This type of ministry leaves the local church not just with instruction, but with a template for how to implement the instruction given.

### **Personal Reflections**

I have been changed by God through the ministry of biblical counseling. The Lord opened my eyes to this ministry through a book critique I was assigned to do as a young Bible student. The book was called *How to Help People Change* by Jay Adams. I never imagined that a book I was cautioned against would be the very tool God would use to drive me back to the Scriptures and change the course of my life and ministry. I have been on the receiving end of biblical counseling and the giving end of biblical counseling. God has used both ends of the spectrum to convict, humble, and change me. Only God's Word through the power of his Holy Spirit has the ability to produce that type of comprehensive change. My prayer is that this introductory class that Southern Seminary has graciously allowed me to spend time preparing will be used in some way by the Lord to bless people as much as I have been blessed to prepare and teach it for eight weeks. I look forward to re-implementing this class throughout the coming years as I see it as a way to shape the way our local church ministers moving forward.

## Conclusion

I am humbled and grateful to have ministered to the same congregation for the past eleven years of my life. This church remains to be the first and only congregation I have served vocationally and that is a precious gift from God. In a very real sense, this congregation has been patient with me as the Lord has challenged me through them. They have loved me despite my sins, failures, and inexperience as a young pastor. Furthermore, the support and freedom the elders have entrusted to me is beyond words. They have empowered me to implement this ministry of biblical counseling at our local church and it is allowing us to effect change in this large church. I often hear stories of large churches drifting away from applying good theology to the practice of ministry. The drift is usually because the application of good theology is not expedient or pragmatic. Sadly, this drift is a failure to heed the words of James:

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas 3:13-18)

Selfish ambition has been a major thrust behind churches neglecting their calling to shepherd biblically. James clearly states that to have a harvest of righteousness believers must gain and implement “wisdom from above.” The wisdom is “peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” There is nothing pragmatic or expedient about this type of ministry James describes and many times larger churches exchange the wisdom from above for the wisdom that is below (jealousy, selfish ambition=unspiritual, demonic). The wisdom from above is the road less travelled, but it is the road that honors the Lord and edifies his church. As I survey the past eleven years of ministry at Coastal Community Church, I am hopeful. I can honestly say that with each passing year we are *growing*. We are growing spiritually as a leadership team and we are growing in our conviction to ensure that our philosophy promotes our doctrine and

produces a harvest of righteousness that honors the Lord. The new ministry of biblical counseling we are implementing *is* advancing this passion and conviction quicker than we could have ever dreamed, and by God's grace it is allowing us to be better shepherds of those God has entrusted to us.

## APPENDIX 1

### BIBLICAL COUNSELING ASSESSMENT FORM

The following instrument is the Biblical Counseling Assessment (BCAF). Some general questions was followed by a survey with a six point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each members' level of theological understanding and confidence in offering biblical counseling.

## BIBLICAL COUNSELING ASSESSMENT FORM

### Agreement to Participate

Coastal Community Church (CCC) is committed to developing authentic followers of Jesus Christ. One of the ways we fulfill this commitment is by caring for the souls of our congregation. We believe the best way to accomplish this is through small group ministry. This survey for CCC small group leaders will help us assess the church's current competency to counsel one another biblically.

This research is being conducted by Joey Tomlinson for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Soul care is relational therefore, we prefer that you include your name below, rather than completing the survey anonymously. However, if you prefer your responses to be anonymous, please use a four-digit code of your choosing.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (or 4 digit code):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age** \_\_\_\_\_

### General Questions:

1. How many years have you repented of sin and professed Jesus as Lord and Savior?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been a member at Coastal Community Church? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How much time (in hours and/or minutes) a day do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is memorizing Scripture a discipline in your life?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Describe your daily discipline of prayer:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Succinctly define biblical counseling:

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7. Have you ever received any formal biblical counseling? If so, please describe what it was like:

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8. How often do people approach you for help with spiritual (non-physical) problems?

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Seldom
- e. Never

**Directions:** Please mark the response that reflects your agreement with the statements using the following scale:

- SD = strongly disagree
- D = disagree
- DS = disagree somewhat
- AS = agree somewhat
- A = agree
- SA = strongly agree

1.	The Bible expects the local church to counsel one another.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2.	God has provided the tools the local church needs to care for the soul of a fellow believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3.	Prayer has the power to soften people's hearts toward God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4.	I depend upon the Holy Spirit when I care for others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5.	I am confident in my ability to counsel and comfort a believer who is suffering.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	The Bible is authoritative and sufficient to care for believer's spiritual problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I know how to discern and ask questions that reveal a person's heart and motives.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I can clearly communicate the gospel and evangelize the lost.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	The local church plays an important role in counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	If problems are too serious, people should be referred to a Licensed Professional Counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	Only counseling the Bible can bring about genuine change.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	Someone struggling with depression and/or anxiety should be referred to someone other than a small group leader for help.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA



13.	If a friend is entangled in the sin of lust he or she should be referred to a counselor or a pastor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	People are basically good.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	Sin is the ultimate source of people's problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	God never allows his children to suffer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	When we become Christians, God changes us so that we are no longer tempted by this world.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	The Bible speaks directly about anger.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	The Bible speaks directly about depression and anxiety.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	The Bible speaks directly about how to have a successful marriage.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21.	I know the biblical process of church discipline.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22.	I know what the Bible says about making peace with others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23.	I know how to teach and counsel repentance and forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24.	If I have been offended by someone, I should wait until I feel ready before I forgive them.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25.	The main goal of counseling is to help a person become a better person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26.	Our local community would benefit if Coastal offered biblical counseling for free.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

## APPENDIX 2

### BIBLICAL COUNSELING CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following is the Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation (BCCE). This evaluation was sent to an expert panel consisting of three people. The first is a pastor who is an LPC and is pursuing his Ph.D. in first-century family ministry. In addition, he is an expert in the field of biblical counseling and teaches counseling in other countries. The second person on the expert panel is a subject matter expert and professor for Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. The final person on the expert panel is the founding pastor of Coastal Community Church and graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary. This expert panel utilizes a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.

Name of evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation Rubric</b>					
<b>1 = inadequate; 2 = needs editing; 3 = sufficient; 4 = excellent</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The content of the curriculum is theologically and hermeneutically sound.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The curriculum is focused and thorough.					
The curriculum sufficiently gives an overview of biblical counseling.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The curriculum gives an overview of methods of biblical counseling within the small group setting.					
The curriculum utilizes a variety of learning methods, such as lecture, discussion, and homework.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum includes opportunities to practice counseling applications in the small group setting.					
By the conclusion of the course, participants will have a basic understanding of biblical counseling and intro knowledge regarding counseling people in small group faithfully.					

Additional comments regarding the curriculum:

## APPENDIX 3

### BIBLICAL COUNSELING MANUAL EVALUATION

The Biblical Counseling Manual Evaluation (BCME) was sent to the same expert panel described in appendix 2. This expert panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the manual, its communication processes, training elements, and the action steps.

Name of evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Biblical Counseling Manual Evaluation Rubric</b>					
<b>1 = inadequate; 2 = needs editing; 3 = sufficient; 4 = excellent</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Functionality</b>					
The content of the manual is relevant, clear, concise, and easy to apply.					
<b>Communication Processes</b>					
Proper procedures and policies for small group leaders is clearly communicated.					
<b>Training Elements</b>					
The manual corresponds to the lectures.					
The manual provides direction for further training opportunities.					
<b>Action Steps</b>					
The manual includes clear action steps for specific potential issues that may arise in the small group setting.					
The manual communicates clearly how biblical counseling should be applied in the small group setting.					

Additional comments regarding the manual:

APPENDIX 4  
SAMPLE BIBLE STUDY

This appendix is a sample of a Bible study conducted with men struggling with sexual temptation and sin.

## Romans 7:14-25

<sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh,<sup>[c]</sup> sold as a slave to sin.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>15</sup> For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup> So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. <sup>21</sup> So I discover this law:<sup>[e]</sup> When I want to do what is good,<sup>[f]</sup> evil is present with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner self<sup>[g]</sup> I delight in God's law,<sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the parts of my body,<sup>[h]</sup> waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin.

- I. I believe Paul is at the height of his spiritual maturity when he wrote this.
  - a. A spiritual man knows the plague of his own heart. (vv 14-15; 18-20; 24)
  - b. A spiritual man agrees with the Scriptures regarding his sin and sees it primarily as a sin against God. (vv 16; 18-19; 22)
  - c. A spiritual man hates his sin. (vv 15; 18; 19; 24)
  - d. A spiritual man delights in God's Word. (v 22)
  - e. A spiritual man fights sexual sin using the gospel. (vv 24-25)

## Romans 8:1-11

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup> because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you<sup>[b]</sup> free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> What the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering,<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>4</sup> in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Now the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> The mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit<sup>[d]</sup> gives life<sup>[e]</sup> because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through<sup>[f]</sup> his Spirit who lives in you.

- II. God's Word gives us the strength we need to overcome sexual sin and temptation.
- a. A spiritual man believes and is encouraged that God does not condemn him. (vv 1-2)
  - b. A spiritual man is motivated to flee sexual sin because Christ died for it. (vv 3-4)
  - c. A spiritual man knows that those who live habitually sinful lives are not in Christ. (v 5)
  - d. A spiritual man knows that he must have his mind on the Spirit which happens through knowing God's Word. (v 5)
  - e. A spiritual man knows that those who continue in habitual sin will spiritually die. (vv 6-9)
  - f. A spiritual man knows that those who habitually repent and trust in Jesus will spiritually live. (vv 6; 9-11)

#### 8 Practical Action Steps based on Bible Study:

1. Ask God to search your heart and reveal any blind spots you may have regarding sin.
2. Agree with God's Word regarding your sin by confessing your sin to God.
3. Grow in your hatred of sin by seeing it as a vulgar offense toward God and others. For instance, if you look at porn, call it adultery. If you are angry with someone, see it as murder.
4. Renew your mind in the Word of God daily by working through this passage of Scripture. You can even begin to memorize portions of it. Turn some of it to prayers to God by meditating on it.
5. Every morning when you wake up, remind yourself of the gospel message. Even recite it verbally. Every night before you go to sleep, remind yourself of the gospel message. It is important to remember that you are positionally right with God because of Jesus.
6. Thank God for sending Jesus to die for your sins in prayer every day.
7. Remind yourself that habitual sin is a warning sign in your life.
8. Turn away from sin quickly by confessing it, bringing it to light, and resting in the finished work of Jesus.



## APPENDIX 5

### THRONE-STAIRCASE CHART

The figure in this appendix was developed by Robert D. Jones. He utilizes this chart in counseling sessions to demonstrate how legitimate desires can become ruling desires in the throne room of the heart. At the top of the staircase is the throne room of the heart where Christ should be seated. The letters below represent legitimate desires that if left unchecked can begin to climb the staircase and take residence inside the heart. This chart is an excellent way to identify idols. Jones not only uses this chart in counseling sessions, but he also utilizes the chart to train biblical counselors. The chart also appears in chapter 4 of his book, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

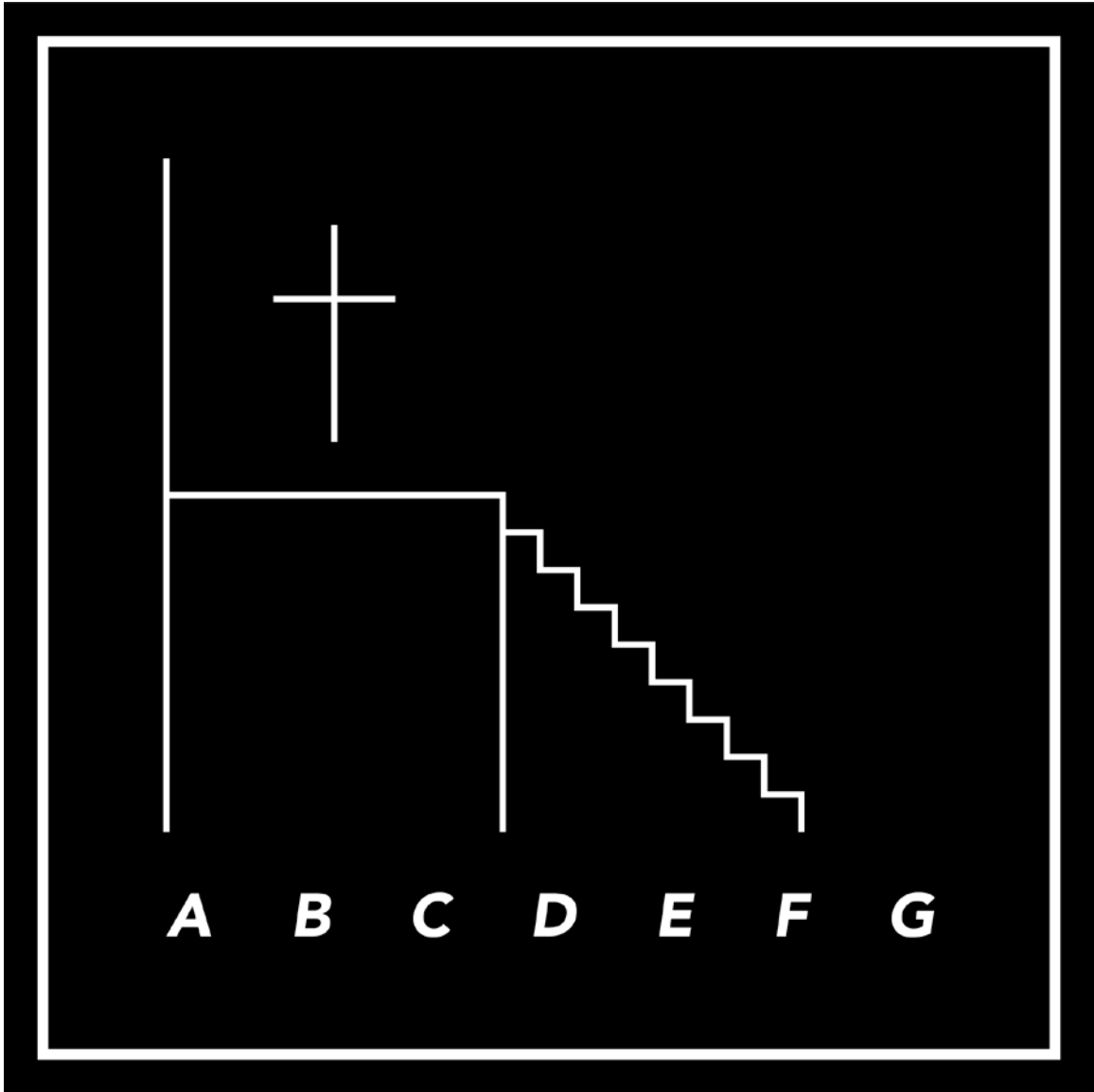


Figure A1. Throne-Staircase chart

## APPENDIX 6

### ROOT/FRUIT CHART

This figure in this appendix was developed to visually demonstrate what drives external behavior and why biblical counseling aims to transform the heart using the Scripture. It has been adapted from a lecture from Robert D. Jones's introduction to biblical counseling course.

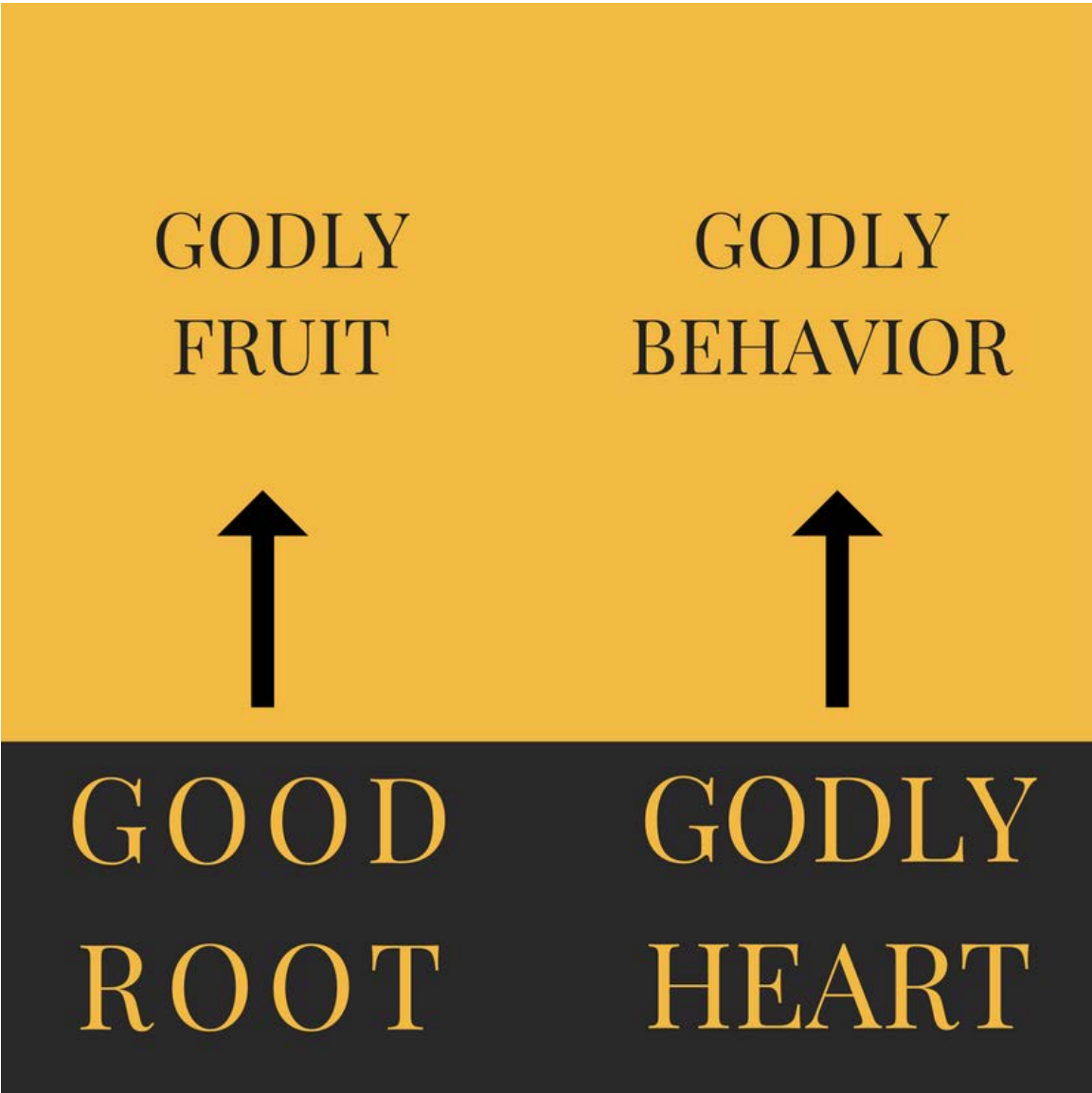


Figure A2. Root/fruit chart

## APPENDIX 7

### BIBLICAL COUNSELING DEFINED 5 WAYS

This appendix is an excerpt from the first lesson in the curriculum. It is five different ways to define biblical counseling.

1. If preaching is the public ministry of the Word of God, Biblical Counseling is the private ministry of the Word of God.
2. It is a one-another ministry.
3. Biblical Counseling is a theological discipline. That is to say that it is theologically informed counseling.
4. Biblical Counseling is a local church ministry of soul care.
5. “The Bible is authoritative, relevant, and comprehensively sufficient for counseling. God has spoken truly to every basic issue of human nature and to the problems in living. His Word establishes the goal of counseling, how people can change, the role of the counselor, counseling methods, and so forth. Christians have the only authoritative source for counseling wisdom: the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and wisdom is the only worthy goal of counseling.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times,” in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 27.

## APPENDIX 8

### SIN IN FOUR DIMENSIONS CHART

This appendix includes a figure that I designed to visually explain how sin is the root of every issue in counseling.

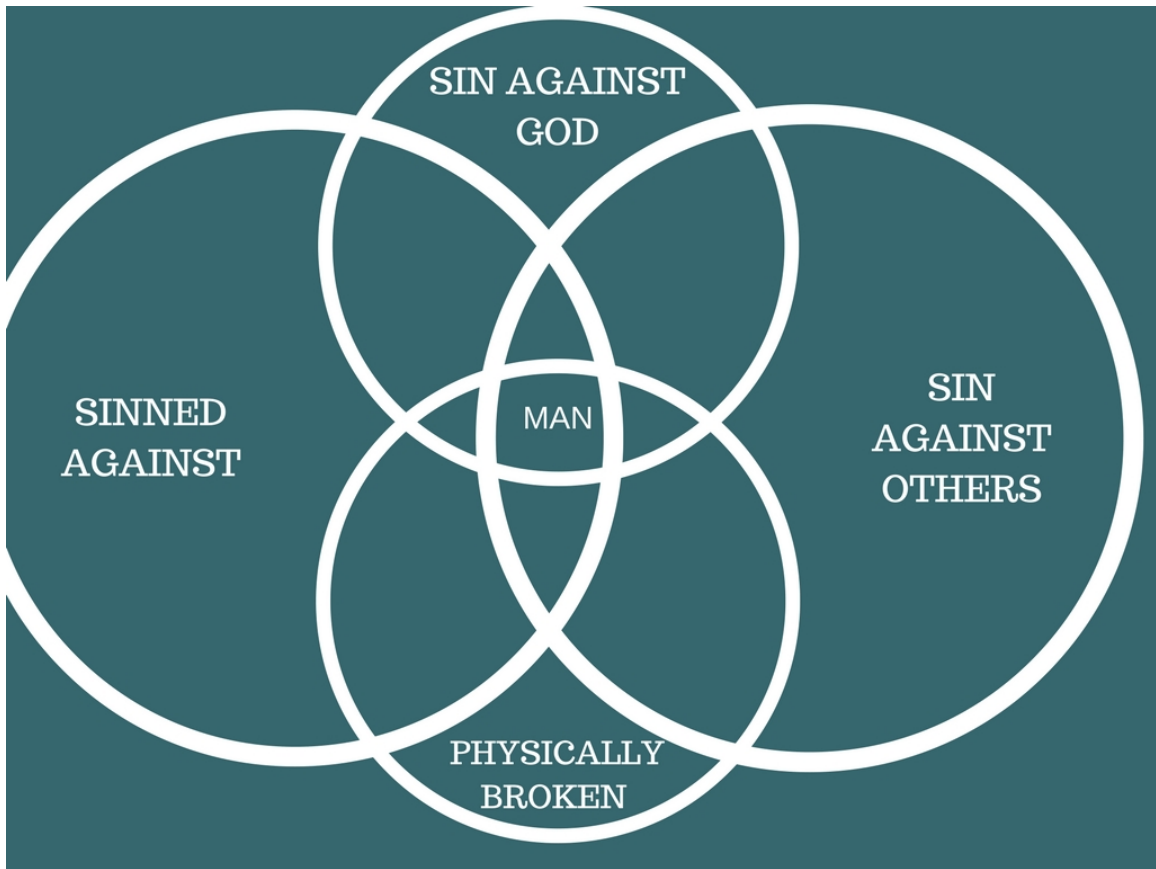


Figure A3. Sin in four dimensions



## APPENDIX 9

### THREE-TREE MODEL

This figure in this appendix is the three-tree model originally Robert D. Jones adapted from David Powlison. I used this figure with Jones's permission.

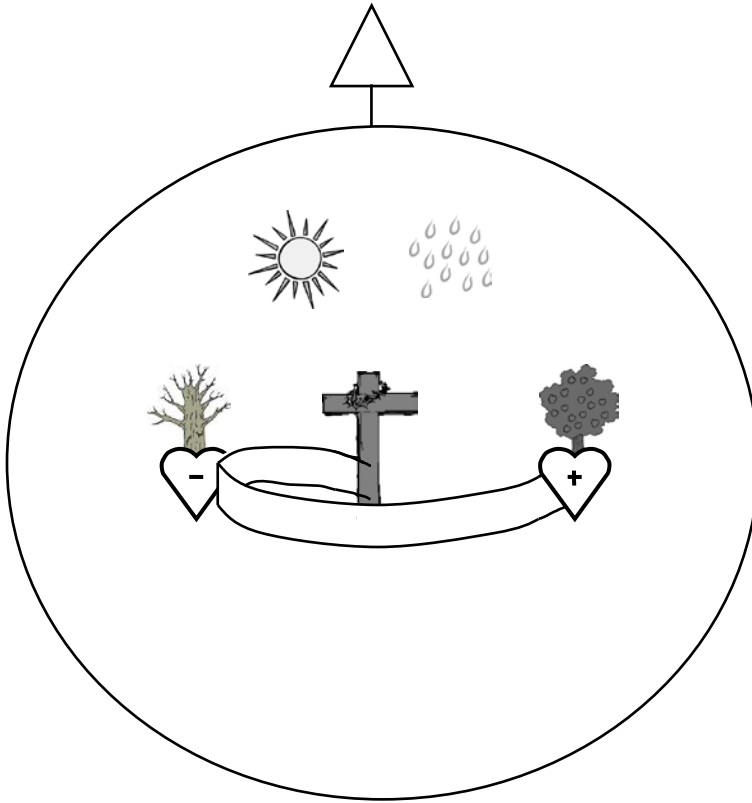
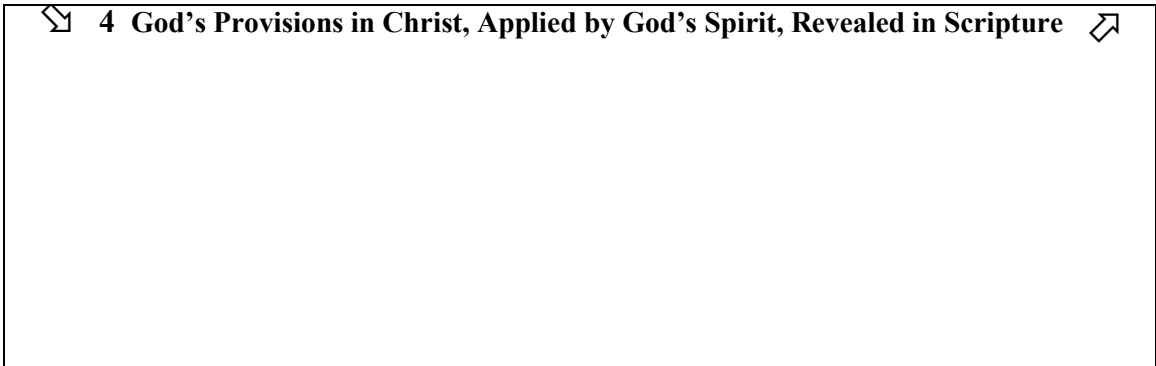
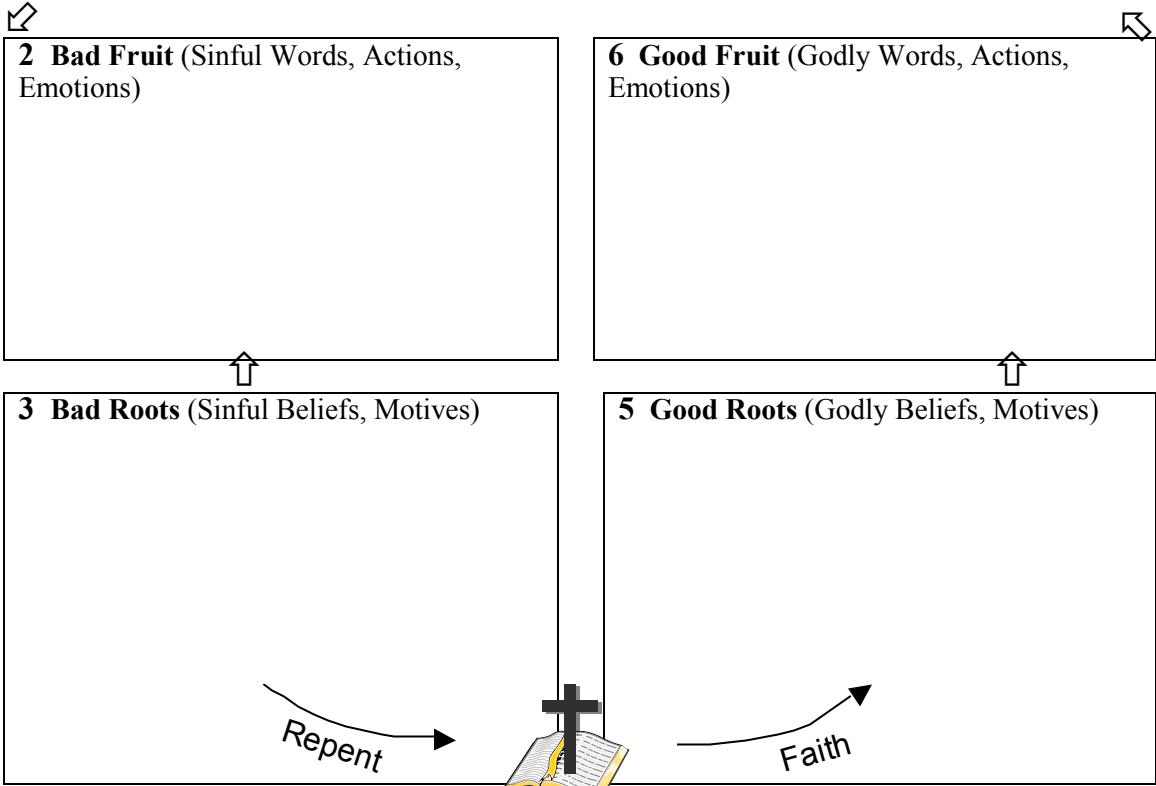
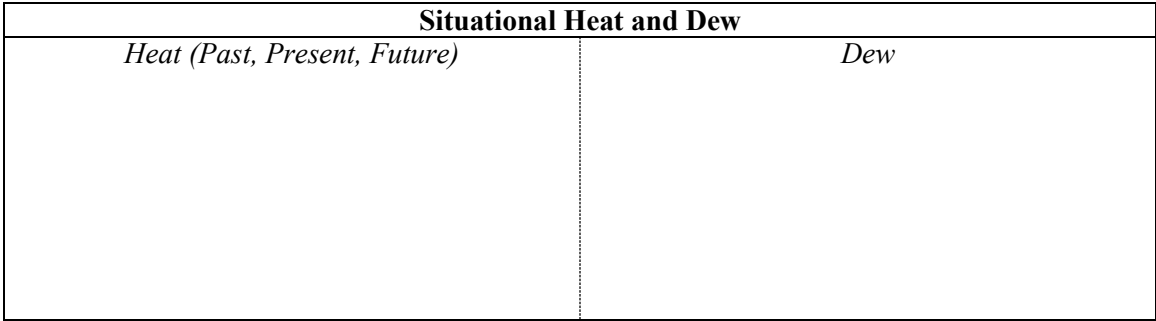


Figure A4. Three-tree model

## APPENDIX 10

### SIX-BOX VERSION OF THE THREE-TREE MODEL

This appendix includes the six-box version of the three-tree model Robert D. Jones adapted from David Powlison. Jones gave me permission to utilize this in my project.



## APPENDIX 11

### WORLDLY SORROW CHART

This appendix includes a figure designed to illustrate the worldly sorrow section of 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. It is used with permission from the Executive Director of the Biblical Counseling Alliance, Joshua Stephens.

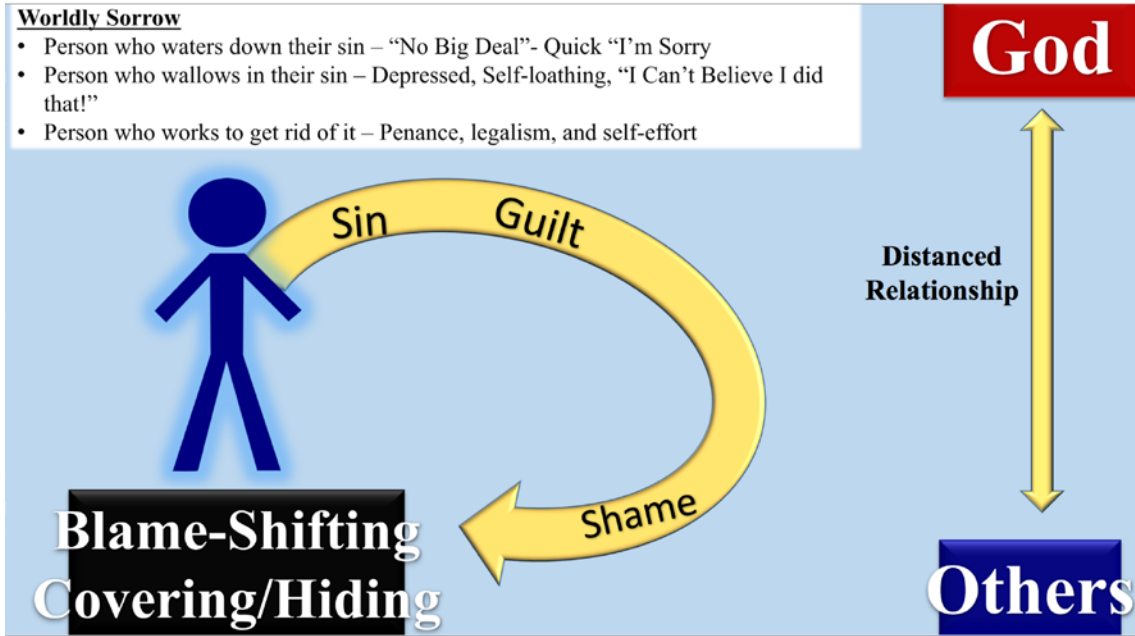


Figure A5. Worldly sorrow chart

APPENDIX 12  
GODLY SORROW CHART

This appendix includes a figure designed to illustrate the godly sorrow section of 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. It is used with permission from the Executive Director of the Biblical Counseling Alliance, Joshua Stephens.

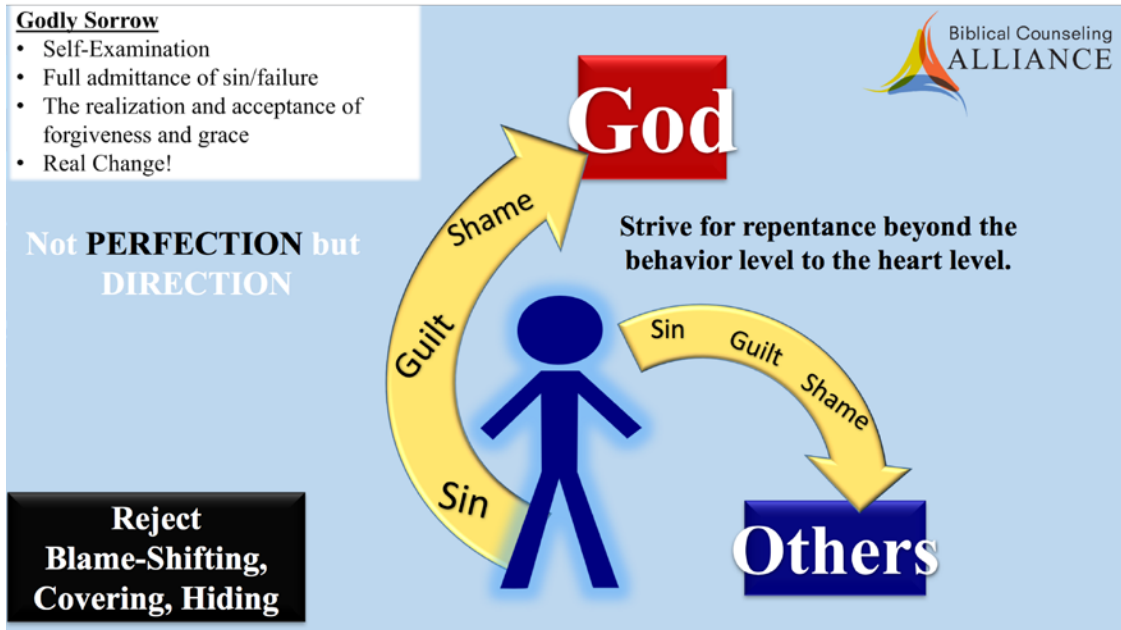


Figure A6. Godly sorrow chart



## APPENDIX 13

### SMALL GROUP LEADER APPLICATION

This appendix is an application I implemented after taking over this area of ministry at our church. It was adapted with permission from Coleman Ford of The Village Church and modified by me. I include it to demonstrate the shift in expectation for those who are committing themselves to shepherd in our ministry. We ask counseling related questions in this questionnaire.

**Small Group Leader Application  
Coastal Community Church**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been a part of a small group anywhere?  Yes  No  
At Coastal?  Yes  No

Have you ever lead a small group anywhere?  Yes  No  
At Coastal?  Yes  No

Are you currently in a group at Coastal?  Yes  No  
Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of CCC?  Yes  No

Are you leading/serving in another area of Coastal?  Yes  No

Please list your church affiliations for the last 5 years and your reasons for leaving.

Do you agree with Coastal's statement of faith? If not please specify where you disagree.  
 Yes  No

Do you affirm the mission and agree to cooperate with the pastors and elders?  
 Yes  No

In the non-essentials, if your opinion differs, will you agree to teach Coastal's position and present your opinion as that, an opinion?  Yes  No

**We would like to get to know *you* a little better.**

What do you consider to be your personal strengths?

What do you consider your personal weaknesses?

What do you believe to be your spiritual gifts?

Describe what your time with the Lord looks like?

What do you think will be your biggest obstacle to being a small group leader?

Why do you want to be a small group leader?

Please share your testimony.

Who have been your primary Christian teachers or influences?

**Give two references not from your immediate family.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

**The following questions are designed to help us serve you better in the area of Biblical knowledge.**

What is the Gospel?

Briefly describe how the church makes disciples and how you hope to lead your small group to this end.

What authority does Scripture have today?

List the three persons of the trinity and their distinct roles.

Do you have any questions about our theological distinctives?

**The following questions are designed to help us serve you better in the area of managing your group:**

How would you minister to a couple in your small group that just miscarried in their pregnancy? What Scripture would you take them to?

After church, you are approached by a person who truly has a broken heart from being convicted of sin. They simply ask you to tell them the Gospel so they may believe and love Jesus. How would you lead them to Christ?

A person in your group approaches you and confesses a long history of significant hidden sin. What are the next steps you would take in walking them through this process? What steps would you take if this person was married? What steps would you take if the spouse turns them in?

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING SMALL GROUP LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE THE MINISTRY OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT COASTAL COMMUNITY CHURCH, YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

Joey Neil Tomlinson, D.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project seeks to demonstrate how to understand and apply the ministry of biblical counseling in small group settings so that Coastal Community Church may develop authentic followers of Jesus Christ. Chapter 1 presents the history and context of Coastal Community Church and demonstrates the need for this project. Chapter 2 demonstrates the biblical mandate pastors and elders have to counsel *and* equip members in the church so that they may care for the souls of others, using multiple passages to defend this claim. Chapter 3 demonstrates the ample resources available to equip the church in the task of soul care. Chapter 4 describes the project in detail, including both an overview of the curriculum and the manual. Chapter 5 evaluates the positive value of the project based on the project's goals. The aim of this project is to biblically care for the souls God entrusts to his local church.

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B.S., Biblical Studies, Liberty University, 2009

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