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EQUIPPING SEMINARY STUDENTS FOR BIBLICAL
COUNSELING CERTIFICATION AT INTER-CITY
BAPTIST CHURCH IN ALLEN PARK,
MICHIGAN

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the Faculty of
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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING SEMINARY STUDENTS FOR BIBLICAL
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MICHIGAN

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To Jennifer,

My loyal support, my devoted friend, my great love.

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PREFACE

God knows my actions, my words, my thoughts, and my motives. He sees more defilement in me than I see in myself. Yet He does not despise me. Instead, He has designed a way for me to have a relationship with Him through Christ. I have no greater joy than to know that God is my Father. This project and degree would not be possible apart from Him.

I thank God for Dr. David Doran, whom I call pastor. He is consistently used by God to shape my character and thinking.

I am grateful for Dr. Joe Harrod and his invaluable advice and direction throughout my project, especially at the beginning. I am so thankful for Dr. Stuart Scott and his priceless input and patience with me. This project is exponentially better because of his wisdom and leadership.

I want to express my gratitude to God for Jeremy Conn, who helped me think through my project both from a macro- and a micro-level. It was a great joy to go through the program with him (except for one semester, when he ditched me for Dr. Jones' class).

I am grateful to God for my siblings and their families. There are few people in the world that I love more than them. Josh was especially helpful to our family during this time. He designed and led a major remodeling project at our house in the fall of 2018.

Finally, I am grateful to God for my family. There is no one on earth that I love more than them. Of the twenty-one years Jennifer and I have been married, I have spent seventeen of them in school. Although her name will not be on any of the diplomas, I know that I did not earn them alone. Thank you, Jennifer. This diploma belongs to you as

much as me. You did not write any papers for me or read any books, but you have given up time and energy to care for me and our children so that I could focus on ministry and school. You have immeasurably supported me throughout our marriage, and you have spent countless hours bearing the burdens of ministry with me and counseling alongside of me. You are the best. I am also so thankful to be the father of Jonathan, Julia, and Josie. I thank God for them every day, and pray that God will keep them in His love.

Jacob Zachary Elwart

Allen Park, Michigan

May 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Inter-City Baptist Church (ICBC) is “to make and mature disciples who are becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ.” This purpose has been championed at ICBC for decades and follows the pattern the Lord laid out for all churches (Matt 28:18–20). Biblical counseling at ICBC involves the private ministry of the Word to believers who need to mature in the faith. Training seminary students to counsel biblically accomplishes two goals: (1) seminary students will learn how to use the Word to counsel others; (2) the counselees will be strengthened spiritually.

Context

Inter-City Baptist Church formed in 1951 out of a merger of First Baptist Church of Allen Park and First Baptist Church of Melvindale, a neighboring city. Under the leadership of its founding pastor, the church added a number of ministries, including a Christian day school (1966), a Bible Institute (1974), and a seminary (1976). After forty years of ministry, he retired and was succeeded by the current pastor, who has led the church for the past thirty-one years. With over 600 in attendance each week and nearly 700 members, the church has remained faithful to its commitment to the Great Commission since its establishment. Presently, the church is led by five pastors, including myself. I have served as the pastor of discipleship ministries for the past three years. In addition to overseeing the counseling ministry, I am responsible for discipling members and strengthening marriages and families.

Training young men for ministry has been a hallmark at ICBC for the last four decades. Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (DBTS), a ministry of ICBC, is integrally

involved in accomplishing the church's mission to train men in this way. Equipping men for vocational ministry, DBTS provides a quality theological education, offering a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology degree. The seminary is committed to five core values: (1) committed to the local church; (2) grounded in the Scripture; (3) excellent in execution; (4) gracious in engagement; and (5) global in impact.¹ In any given year, between six and twenty seminary students are also members of ICBC. Additionally, all full-time seminary staff are members at ICBC. This close relationship between the church and the seminary provides a unique opportunity for ICBC to disciple these men. The church carries a significant portion of the financial load of the seminary, and has done so from the beginning. The local church provides the context for encouraging and mentoring pastors.

Of the seminary students who were members of ICBC at the start of this project, several were pursuing training in biblical counseling. Biblical counseling demands a knowledge of the Word and an ability to study the Word. Inter-City Baptist Church gladly engages in this ministry of training. However, it is possible that a student could graduate from seminary, leave the church, and still be ill-equipped to handle a counseling case. The reason for this deficiency is that the seminary had no clear structure for adequately equipping students for counseling biblically. While the seminary offered courses in biblical counseling, and even a concentration in biblical counseling, it had no clear strategy to train young men to counsel well. Further, while ICBC supported DBTS, the church did not have a focused process to certify seminary students in biblical counseling. In order to accomplish this goal, the seminary would have had to offer focused biblical counseling courses, whose content would be synchronized with a certifying agency's training requirements. If the church wanted to further equip young men in biblical counseling, it would have had to provide supervised counseling

¹ "Missions and Values," Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, last modified December 14, 2018, <http://www.dbts.edu/mission-and-values/>.

opportunities within the local church. The process of training future pastors for counseling did not adequately equip them for future ministry.

Rationale

Because of the concerns described above, four related questions arose regarding ICBC’s responsibility to equip seminary students for biblical counseling: (1) who was responsible to counsel believers; (2) why did future pastors need training in biblical counseling; (3) what did seminary students need to know about biblical counseling; and (4) how could the seminary support the work of the church in equipping young men to counsel biblically?

The first question to consider was, “Who was responsible to counsel believers?” The Scriptures teach that the church bears the responsibility to train godly and gifted believers to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11–16). This project sought to serve ICBC by clarifying the church’s role in training DBTS students.

The second question to consider was, “Why did future pastors need training in biblical counseling?” Because biblical counseling largely takes place behind closed doors, certification benefits future pastors by equipping them with the necessary resources to apply the Bible well in a private setting. Certification utilizes godly, gifted, and experienced men who can teach the truth of biblical counseling to the men who will be engaged in it. This project responded to this need by developing a one-semester curriculum in the area of biblical counseling. The goal of developing the curriculum was to teach this course at DBTS, and then to evaluate its value to the students. The coursework for this seminary class coincided with a portion of the course requirements for Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) certification.

The third question regarding ICBC’s responsibility was, “What did seminary students need to know regarding biblical counseling?” In order to develop competent biblical counselors, ICBC has focused on teaching the fundamentals of theology and

biblical counseling. Training pastors to counsel well sought to help students to apply their theology to specific counseling cases, and began to equip students with the resources and tools necessary to handle even the most difficult cases. The Scriptures are sufficient to shape the heart.

From this theological and theoretical foundation, this project sought to answer the fourth question, “How could the seminary support the work of the church in equipping young men to counsel biblically?” Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary advances the mission of ICBC by fulfilling the church’s responsibility to train men for ministry. This ministry of training men was designed to continually prepare men for ministry. The Scriptures demand that church is responsible to train disciples who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2; Eph 4:7–16). One benefit of this project was that ICBC members who are equipped in biblical counseling would be better able to promote and cultivate spiritual transformation in others through their biblical counseling ministry.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip seminary students for biblical counseling certification at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan.

Goals

In order to accomplish the purpose of this ministry project, I needed to accomplish the following goals. These goals included a progression of thought from conceptual to strategic to practical, which was enumerated as such:

1. The first goal of this project was to assess the students’ current knowledge in biblical counseling.
2. The second goal of this project was to design a twelve-week curriculum that fulfills ACBC training requirements, and that equips students for the ACBC exams.
3. The third goal of this project was to track the progress of students’ participation in class through assigned reading and class hours.

4. The fourth goal of this project was to measure the progress of students in biblical counseling by enlisting an ACBC representative to grade the students' exam questions in a way that mimicked the scoring patterns of ACBC.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess the students' current knowledge in biblical counseling. This goal was measured by administering the Biblical Counseling Assessment (BCA)² to fifteen DBTS students. This survey began with several general questions followed by thirty-five questions using a six-point Likert scale. The purpose of the instrument was to assess seminary students' present level of theological understanding and confidence in offering biblical counseling. The BCA was pilot-tested by a select group of recent DBTS alumni in order to determine any deficiencies, as well as the average amount of time that the survey would take to complete. If the pilot group revealed any question to be unclear, the question would be modified before conducting the survey. If the average time to take the survey exceeded fifteen minutes by the pilot group, the survey would have been modified to meet that threshold. The BCA was delivered via email, and administered via Survey Monkey. Students who did not fill out the survey were reminded after seven days. This goal was considered successfully met if fifteen students completed the BCA and the inventory had been analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the Biblical Counseling knowledge base among DBTS students. Survey results informed the development of curriculum, by revealing which areas of curriculum need to be addressed more carefully, and which areas can be skimmed. Even though a draft of the curriculum was completed prior to the distribution of the survey, the curriculum was refined within the first week of the receipt of the surveys.

The second goal of this project was to design a twelve-week curriculum that partially fulfills ACBC training center requirements, and that equips students for the

² 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. See appendix 1.

ACBC exams. The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors requires training centers to cover specific topics over a specified amount of time,³ and that 50 percent of the course curriculum be original material. This goal was measured by an expert panel that included one pastor, one seminary professor, and one ACBC representative who utilized a rubric⁴ to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. The pastor had over twenty years of pastoral experience, as well as experience in teaching on both a university and a seminary level. The seminary professor had been teaching for over thirty years, and had over thirty years of pastoral experience as well. The ACBC representative was a fellow and had decades of pastoral experience. Because the curriculum was designed to train future ministers of the gospel, pastoral experience was critical to the curriculum evaluation process.

The curriculum included twelve lessons that corresponded to twelve weeks of class. A draft of the curriculum was developed in manuscript form. The twelve lessons were broken down into four sections. Three lessons at a time were delivered to the expert panel via email with an expected turnaround time of two weeks. The evaluation rubric was delivered to the expert panel along with the final three lessons. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 85 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 85 percent benchmark had not been initially met, the material would have been revised until it met the standard. This curriculum was taught at DBTS, and coincided with ACBC requirements for the student's certification.

The third goal of this project was to track the progress of students' participation in class through assigned reading and class hours. This goal was measured by evaluating the number of pages that the students read, as well as the number of hours that the students are in class. The students' grades would be affected by their class

³ See appendix 3 for details.

⁴ See appendix 2.

attendance. Any student who missed a class was asked to make up the class by watching the video recording. Part of the students' grade was also determined by the students' completion of the assigned reading. The reading was divided into four parts and was due at four different times throughout the semester. This goal was considered successfully completed when 80 percent of the class completed at least 90 percent of the course's assigned reading, and 80 percent of the class attended at least 90 percent of the classes.

The fourth goal of this project was to measure the progress of students in biblical counseling by enlisting an ACBC representative who graded the students' exam questions in a way that mimicked the scoring patterns of ACBC. This goal was measured by an ACBC grader who utilized a rubric to evaluate the level of competency for each student. The ACBC representative expected to return the graded exams within two weeks. This goal was considered successfully met when each student scored at a sufficient or above level on the evaluation rubric.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

Biblical counseling. Biblical counseling may be defined as ministering the Bible to help people with their problems.⁵ The goal of a biblical counselor is to help a counselee apply the Bible to his or her specific struggle, so that God is glorified, and the individual is sanctified.

Certification. Certification is a process by which ACBC ensures doctrinal integrity and promotes excellence in biblical counseling. Because formal counseling takes place behind closed doors, counselors need to be trained and equipped by people more gifted and experienced than they. For the purpose of this project, certification will refer to ACBC.⁶

⁵ This definition is informed by Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 13.

⁶ See "Home Page," Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, accessed July 17, 2019.

One limitation applied to this project. The effectiveness of the training was limited by the attendance of students. If the participants had not attended at least 90 percent of the training sessions, it would have been difficult to measure how beneficial the training had been. To mitigate this limitation, each teaching session was recorded and made available for students.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project was confined to a nineteen-week timeframe, which included pre-assessment, curriculum development, curriculum instruction, and post-assessment. This gave adequate time to prepare the curriculum, to teach the curriculum, and to conduct the post-assessment rubric after sessions are completed. While students learned the basic principles of biblical counseling, additional training and supervision may be necessary in order to implement the principles well. Second, this project was confined to students at DBTS.

Conclusion

Pastors must be equipped to handle challenges that individuals in their churches face. Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary has focused on training men for the public ministry of the Word including how to study the Scriptures, how to preach, and how to manage the church well. The nature of pastoral ministry also demands that pastors be trained for the private ministry of the Word.

<http://www.biblicalcounseling.com>.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR EQUIPPING SEMINARY STUDENTS FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING CERTIFICATION AT INTER-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to equip seminary students for biblical counseling certification at Inter-City Baptist Church. Chapter 1 described how ICBC historically equipped young men for ministry and it identified some key questions that the church must address regarding training young men. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the biblical and theological basis for equipping young men for biblical counseling certification. The thesis of this chapter is that the Scriptures provide a clear mandate for the church to train future pastors for interpersonal discipling.

This chapter therefore examines three biblical texts that establish a conceptual foundation for biblical counseling. First, a discussion of Colossians 1:28–29 demonstrates that pastors must disciple and equip church members for spiritual growth. Specifically, pastors must be skilled in using the Scriptures to shape people’s beliefs, affections, and desires. Second, an examination of Ephesians 4:7–16 will support the thesis by showing Paul’s expectation for leaders to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Third, an exegesis of 2 Peter 1:2–11 will show that the Scriptures, as mediated through preaching and teaching, are sufficient for interpersonal discipling.

Pastors Must Disciple Members for Spiritual Growth (Col 1:28–29)

The Colossian church was not planted by the Apostle Paul, but Paul had learned that they were becoming syncretistic, mixing the gospel with pagan belief. Paul

wrote Colossians to encourage the believers in the faith, and to remind them about the source and sustaining power of God in their pursuit of holiness.¹ This letter was written to show that Christ’s sufficiency secures salvation from beginning to end; therefore, believers experience real spiritual change when they fix their eyes on Him.²

In the opening section of his letter, Paul argues that the source of spiritual change comes from God through Christ. God had to work to turn sinners from corrupt strangers and enemies into beloved children who are at peace with Him. He did this through the ministry of reconciliation, so that they would be a trophy of His grace. While a believer’s final salvation is dependent upon God, it is at the same time conditioned on a Christian’s perseverance (1:23). Paul wants the Colossian church to know that he suffers for their sake (1:24), and that he manages God’s mystery by laboring to proclaim Christ to every believer. Amazingly, Paul had never been to Colossae, nor did he know the believers there. He could have reasoned that those believers were not his responsibility, but instead he took responsibility for them, and wanted to see them grow in Christ to full maturity.

Discipling Aims for Full Maturity

Paul’s task of proclaiming Christ was not finished when people were converted to saving faith. Initial salvation was merely the beginning of the work that God intended to do in the believers’ lives. The end goal of Paul’s ministry of proclamation was to “present every man complete in Christ” (1:28). The word “complete” comes from the

¹ Believers must live a life that is consistent with their confession of faith. They must abandon a life of idolatry and participate in building up the community of God’s people. David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 31. Murray Harris wrote that Paul’s purpose in writing this letter “was to provide the Christian antidote to error in doctrine and practice.” Murray Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 5.

² David Pao states it this way in his commentary: “Paul reminds believers that to worship Christ, who is the Lord of the cosmos, is to live a life that is consistent with our confession.” Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 31.

Greek word τέλειον, which means “make complete,” or “render mature.”³ Paul would not be satisfied until every believer reached full maturity.⁴ Paul desired what God desired—to present them “before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (1:22).

With this end goal in view, Paul shepherded believers toward spiritual maturity. Paul understood that the quality of his ministry would be tested by the quality and maturity of those whom God entrusted to him. Either he would be joyful if they were genuine and worthy believers, or he would be ashamed if they were not.⁵

This maturity for which Paul strove in the lives of believers was not an abstract idea. Through his proclamation, Paul intended to present everyone mature in Christ.⁶ God is not working in believers some vague notion of spiritual growth, but working toward an eschatological era.⁷ Paul’s eternal focus to present believers mature compelled him to exhort believers to persevere in the faith. Paul’s aim at full maturity was not aimed at only a few people. He remained committed to proclaiming Christ to every believer, so that each one would persevere in the faith.

Discipling Aims at Every Believer

Each soul must be brought to saving faith. Salvation does not happen corporately. Salvation happens individually. Sanctification works very similarly. While sanctification flourishes in the soil of community, the process of sanctification must take root in each individual believer. Paul recognized this truth and emphasized it in his letter

³ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 73.

⁴ Peter O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 90. Although Peter O’Brien has responded to charges of plagiarism, this commentary still retains significant value within the body of available literature.

⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 88.

⁶ Paul describes a person who is mature in faith (see Col 1:23a) and in the knowledge of God’s will (see Col 1:9c). Paul describes “someone who has attained mature adulthood and is no longer misled by false doctrine.” Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 73.

⁷ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 133.

to Colossae.

Paul used the term *πάντα* three times in 1:28–29 to highlight the reality that no part of Christian teaching is to be reserved for the spiritual elite.⁸ This term cannot refer to everyone who lived at that time. Paul would not be able to reach every individual. He could be referring to the idea of proclaiming Christ to every kind of person, but more likely, he is referring to every person he encounters.⁹

The scope of Paul’s ministry demanded that no professing believer would be left behind. The Scriptures teach that Christ will judge everyone in the final day (Heb 9:27). Everyone will have to give an account for his or her works. Anyone whose works does not reflect genuine spiritual life will be cast into an eternal hell. As an appointed apostle to the Gentiles, Paul recognized his responsibility to proclaim the whole counsel of God (Col 1:25–27; Acts 20:27). The other part of his responsibility was to ensure that every professing believer embraced this message and responded with faith and obedience.

Discipling Demands Proclamation

The means to achieving full maturity in spiritual growth came through Paul’s proclamation of Christ. The “Him” that Paul proclaims in verse 28 points back to Christ, who is the hope of glory (Col 1:27).¹⁰ He is the object of Paul’s proclamation.¹¹ However, Paul recognizes that he was not alone in proclaiming Christ. Because he was not alone in his proclamation, he transitions to the first person-plural pronoun, “We proclaim Him.” Paul likely includes Epaphras and the others who were charged with preaching the message of Christ. This proclamation of Christ included two things: “admonishing” and

⁸ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 87.

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 160.

¹⁰ The word “ὅν” is an accusative masculine singular of the relative pronoun “ὅς.” Harris writes, “It is accusative because within the relative clause it is the object, although its antecedent is nominative,” pointing to Χριστός in v. 27. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 72.

¹¹ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 131.

“teaching.”

Harris observes that the Greek word *νουθετοῦντες* means “to admonish,”¹² which requires that pastors focus on warning believers who might be tempted to stray. Admonishment includes correction of either action or thinking.¹³ In some cases, a believer’s wrong action or thinking could arise from ignorance. In that case, the pastor must kindly and carefully guide them to following Christ. In many cases, a believer’s wrong action or thinking arises from obstinacy. In this case, the pastor must rebuke and call the person to repentance.

“Teaching,” which comes from the Greek word *διδάσκοντες*, involves intensive teaching.¹⁴ This does not include simply a summary of all the main themes in the Bible, although it is certainly not less than that. Paul made it a goal to teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Jesus commanded in Matthew 28, that disciples are to teach others everything that He has commanded.

While the main responsibility for this warning and teaching belongs to pastors, each believer has some level of responsibility to teach others.¹⁵ Consider the command in Colossians 3:16, where Paul says that believers must teach and admonish one another with singing. In Paul’s letter to the church in Thessalonica, he commands all believers to “admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (5:14). Discipling demands the proclamation of Christ and His Word.

¹² Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 72.

¹³ O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 87.

¹⁴ O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*.

¹⁵ Jesus commissioned all disciples to make disciples in Matt 28:18–20. However, church leaders bear the largest weight of responsibility. For example, all members are not responsible to baptize believers. The NT pattern seems to point to pastors baptizing. In a similar way, much discipling is accomplished through preaching and teaching, tasks given to pastors. Paul writes to believers in Rome that they are both able and responsible to admonish each other (Rom 15:14).

Discipling Demands Hard Work

Even though Paul believed strongly in the sovereignty of God, and that He would finish the work that He started in believers (Phil 1:6), he still recognized that he must work. In Colossians 1:29, Paul writes that he toils in order to present everyone mature in Christ. The Greek word *κοπιῶ*, translated “labor,” means “to work to the point of exhaustion.”¹⁶ The work of the discipler demands tenuous labor. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul compares himself to the other apostles, saying that he “worked harder than them all.” This was not a point of boasting for Paul. He simply was making the point that discipling required hard work. Despite Paul’s hard work, he recognized that God worked through his work.

Discipling Demands Divine Dependent Work

Paul acknowledged that God worked through him. In 1:29, he wrote that he strenuously labored to bring people to full spiritual maturity. He immediately follows that statement with this: “striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” Paul describes his striving as God’s energy working within him. So one could ask the question, “Where is God powerfully at work?” Paul answers that God’s work is wherever he is energetically at work.¹⁷ In other words, Paul’s work was God’s work.

Paul makes a similar acknowledgement of God’s work in 1 Corinthians 15:10, where he precedes his statement about working harder than the other apostles with a recognition that all of it was because of God’s grace, “by the grace of God.” Additionally, he follows his statement of hard work in that text with a clarification, “yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” Paul clearly owned the work that he engaged in, but he also recognized that it was dependent work. God was working through him.

The means to God’s power in Paul’s proclamation in Colossians 1 are not so

¹⁶ O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 90.

¹⁷ O’Brien, 91.

much through believing as it is through working. When believers toil and strive at a God-given task, they receive God-given energy.¹⁸ God’s work in believers does not exclude their strenuous labor, it requires it. Paul’s work “merely meant that his labors and struggles would not be futile because God was empowering him. The message of Christ the Reconciler would succeed because God Himself supplied the power to sustain His messengers.”¹⁹

Colossians 1:28–29 Applied to Equipping Seminary Students for Certification

Because the Christian life culminates in full spiritual maturity at glorification, and because God has given tools to pastors to proclaim Christ leading believers to spiritual growth, pastors must be skilled in shaping people for spiritual growth. Specifically, pastors must be able to shape people’s beliefs, affections, and choices. The skill of shaping believers and shepherding them to maturity does not happen by accident. Pastors must be trained for this task.

Inter-City Baptist Church has a unique opportunity to provide some tools to young men in preparation for pastoral work through the ministry of DBTS. Each man entrusted to the church’s care must be brought to maturity, so that they can help bring others to maturity, when God entrusts them with souls to shepherd. One of the ways that ICBC can provide tools to future pastors for shepherding is by teaching them to counsel biblically. Biblical counseling brings the preaching ministry of proclaiming Christ to a personal level. It allows for a person to speak truth to a believer who is working through a particular challenge.

Proclaiming Christ includes the difficult task of warning and teaching. Pastors are called to do the sometimes uncomfortable task of challenging a brother to turn back to

¹⁸ O’Brien.

¹⁹ Homer Kent, *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians & Philemon* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2006), 63.

Christ, or correcting incorrect beliefs. Pastors must guide believers on the path of righteousness and perseverance by teaching the whole counsel of God, and warning them about dangers along the way. A pastor's job continues as long as he remains in the office given by God. As long as the Master is away, pastors must be reaching people with the gospel, making the glories of the gospel known, and then working to mature them in the gospel.

Pastors Must Equip Saints for the Work of the Ministry (Eph 4:7–16)

Because the church in Ephesus lived in the midst of a wicked city, Paul wrote to encourage them about God's eternal plan, and to show them how they are part of that plan. According to this letter, God purposed to eternally magnify Jesus Christ by highlighting the grace given to the church. Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to appreciate the height of their calling.

In chapter 1, Paul showed that God has a purpose for the church. In chapters 2–3, he showed how God is fulfilling that purpose, and how He desires for the Ephesians to understand that purpose. In the final three chapters, he calls his readers to fulfill God's purpose by walking worthy of their calling.

In chapter 4, Paul wants the church to know that God has equipped them to magnify Jesus through their holy lives. The first six verses of the chapter remind the readers of their membership in the body of Christ, where they must preserve the unity that the Spirit established. This unity does not eliminate distinction, for Christ has given each person gifts for the strengthening of the body, so that the entire church can reach maturity. In this next section (vv. 7–16), the Holy Spirit teaches believers that genuine growth comes by means of mutual edification.

Christ Gives Spiritual Leaders to the Church (vv. 7–10)

The unity that the Spirit creates in the church does not eliminate the variety of

spiritual gifts. Christ has gifted the church with various leaders. To prove this point, Paul alludes to Psalm 68, a song of ascent. In alluding to the psalm, the readers are reminded that Christ gained victory over sin and death. However, those are not the only spoils of Christ's victory; another spoil is the gifts of godly leaders about whom He will write in verses 11–13. While the Spirit has united believers together into one body, Christ has gifted the body in diverse ways. This diversity results in believers displaying His glory to all the earth.²⁰

Spiritual Leaders Bless the Church by Maturing Saints (vv. 11–13)

One of the unique gifts that Christ has given to the church is the gift of spiritual leaders. Paul lists them in Ephesians 4 according to three categories: founders; planters; and cultivators. While he does not describe these leaders, the immediate and broader context shape their meaning.

The types of leaders. The first type of leaders that God gifted to the early church were the founders, ἀποστόλους and προφήτας (“apostles and prophets”).²¹ The founders were responsible to establish Christ’s church in its earliest stages. Paul refers to them as apostles and prophets.²² They laid the foundation for the church by preaching the gospel, speaking on behalf of God, establishing local assemblies, and writing Scripture.

The planters are the evangelists. An evangelist is not someone who simply proclaims the gospel from city to city. More likely, he was an itinerant missionary, like

²⁰ Having recalled the theme of Christ’s universal victory over evil, Paul now transitions to show how the gifts that the victorious Christ gives to the church aid it in growing into unity with Himself, and therefore, filling all things. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 273.

²¹ Peter T. O’Brien states that the apostles and prophets were foundational roles that served as authoritative representatives of Christ for the initial stages of the church. Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 298; see also Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 390.

²² Thielman agrees that the apostles and prophets were given by God to lay the foundation for the early church (Thielman, *Ephesians*, 273).

the Apostle Paul.²³ He would go from one strategic location to another to announce the gospel, establish an assembly, establish leaders, and teach the basics of the Christian life. The evangelist would leave, and a pastor would come shortly thereafter to provide further growth and stability.

The cultivators are the pastors (*ποιμένας*) and teachers (*διδασκάλους*). Paul is likely referring to one person: pastor/teacher.²⁴ The pattern for listing each type of leader begins with “some as . . .” The pastor/teacher has a guiding and teaching function.

These offices are laid out in progression. What does the church need in order to be established? The apostles and prophets must lay the foundation, but then after the foundation is laid, only evangelists and pastor/teachers are needed. The church requires ongoing ministry. It needs to be shepherded (i.e., pastored). Certainly Christ has given more gifts to the church than just the founders, planters, and cultivators. He also has given deacons, and other members (vv. 15–16). But Paul’s point is that Christ’s gift of spiritual leaders was given to the church to teach and preach the gospel.

The responsibility of leaders. Pastor/teachers have three main responsibilities as spelled out by Paul’s three parallel statements in verse 12: maturing the saints; ministering the Word; and edifying the body. The word *καταρπισμὸν*, translated “equipping,” is used only here in the entire NT.²⁵ However, its cognate is used to mean “perfecting, gathering, uniting, and ordering.” In the context, the word has the idea of “perfecting” or “maturing.” Paul teaches that shepherds are responsible to mature the

²³ S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 335. God equipped them to take the gospel from place to place. For example, Philip and Timothy are called evangelists in Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 274–75; see also Best, *Ephesians*, 390.

²⁴ Pastors and teachers are linked by a single definite article in the Greek, suggesting a close association of functions between two kinds of ministry in one congregation. Most likely it describes overlapping functions of the office of the pastor. All pastors teach, but not all teachers are also pastors. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 300.

²⁵ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 277.

saints. Although this building up is also a task of each member of the body (see v. 16), the ministers have a distinctive and particularly significant role to play in it.²⁶

Second, pastors are responsible to minister the Word. When Paul uses the phrase “for the work of service,” he is referring to the ministry of the pastor. Just as the service of a carpenter is carpentry, so the ministry of the pastor is the Word.²⁷ Third, pastors are responsible to edify the body of Christ, “to the building up of the body of Christ.”²⁸ While all three responsibilities are distinct and necessary, they are also in some way connected to one of the pastor’s main responsibilities: the ministry of the Word. In other words, all of a pastor’s ministry must be informed by the Scriptures. This does not mean that a pastor sits in his office all day, only interacting with the saints when he preaches. This does mean that all of the pastor’s responsibilities in the ministry must be informed by the Scriptures. This ministry includes both the public ministry of the Word (i.e., preaching and teaching) and the private ministry of the Word (i.e., discipleship and counseling).

The goal of leaders. The Spirit gives the goal of spiritual leaders, to lead the congregation to spiritual maturity (v. 13). The pastor must lead the people to a level of maturity that is in keeping with what Christ demands and deserves.²⁹ Christ is the Head, and He demands a body that works in conjunction with His desires.

²⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 255.

²⁷ T. Daid Gordon, “Equipping Ministry in Ephesians 4?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 1 (March 1994): 75. Consider Acts 6:4, “We will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the Word.” Paul tells Timothy to “give attention . . . public reading of Scripture, exhorting, teaching . . . Do not neglect the gift that is in you. Put these things into practice, devote yourselves to them.” The ministry of the Word is the ministry of the pastor. He must give himself to this task.

²⁸ Thielman argues that each of these phrases build on each other. God has given these offices (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers) to equip the congregation for the ministry work, so that together they build up the body of Christ. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 279–80.

²⁹ The three prepositional phrases in verse 13, “to the unity of the faith . . . of the knowledge of the Son . . . to a mature man,” all point to one main theme. The goal is complete maturity in Christ. Best, *Ephesians*, 403.

This maturity does not simply refer to some minimal growth standard. The word “mature” (*τέλειον*), comes from the same Greek word that was found in Colossians 1:28 (“complete in Christ”). This maturity looks forward to full perfection on the last day, and therefore no Christian will reach the goal in this lifetime. Each person must be in the ongoing process of continual growth (i.e., progressive sanctification).³⁰ Since the Christian’s growth and maturity is never complete in this lifetime, neither is the pastor’s job to lead them to greater spiritual growth.³¹ What then does this spiritual maturity look like?

Mature Saints Strengthen the Church through Mutual Edification (vv. 14–16)

Spiritual maturity in the body of Christ looks like every member strengthening each other through mutual edification. Pastors who minister the Word well will lead the flock of God away from the threats of dangerous doctrines (v. 14). When the church’s gifted teachers use their gifts to equip members for ministry work, the church progresses toward maturity. The church also steadily moves away from immaturity, with its fragmentation and susceptibility to cunning theological trickery.³²

Where spiritual maturity resides, mutual edification thrives. Instead of being tossed back and forth by various false doctrines, mature saints reinforce the truth that they know, by speaking it with love to other believers (v. 15).³³ Immature Christians do not seek the spiritual wellbeing of others. They sometimes speak the truth without love

³⁰ Particularly, believers must exercise their gifts that Christ has given them to build up the church to unity. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 283.

³¹ Ministers play an important role in bringing the church to unity and maturity. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 257.

³² Thielman, *Ephesians*, 284. Immaturity is extremely dangerous for a Christian, which is why Christ has gifted to the church ministers to prevent immature believers from falling prey to false teaching and being led away into instability and error. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 259.

³³ Verse 15 gives the positive counterpart to being tossed around by various doctrines. Instead, believers speak truth to one another in love. Best, *Ephesians*, 406.

(i.e., pounding another person over the head with truth) or they seek to love apart from the truth (i.e., they try to show compassion, and in the process avoid speaking the truth). If the church will grow into all aspects into the Head, even Christ, she must learn to speak the truth to one another in love. This mutual edification results in greater spiritual growth and greater conformity to Christ, the head.³⁴

Each member contributes to the body, according to the gifts that Christ has given to them (v. 16). While the pastor is responsible to lead people into spiritual maturity, he is only the conduit. Christ is the source. Paul made this point earlier (2:20–21), writing that Christ is the One in whom the whole body grows.³⁵ This mobilization of servants to use their gifts results in the strengthening the body in truth and love.

Ephesians 4:7–16 Applied to Equipping Seminary Students for Certification

Part of discipling for spiritual growth includes the responsibility of believers in the congregation to do the work of the ministry. The pastor is also responsible for working, but his function is centered on equipping believers in the church to do the work of the ministry. The Christian church seems to be in a troubled state, and part of the reason stems from the congregation's unwise selection of pastors. Churches tend to hire good managers instead of good Bible expositors. Churches do not necessarily need gifted orators who are able to motivate people with the eloquence of words. The church does not need a guy who has a couple of years' worth of sermons who will use them at one church and then move on to another to use them there. The church needs pastors who are gifted in understanding the Word of God, and who are able to teach it as if God were

³⁴ The organic growth of the body of Christ comes from believers who are actively speaking the truth to one another in love. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 285.

³⁵ This verse brings to a culmination vv. 11–16. The church is to grow toward Christlikeness through mutual edification, being regularly equipped by the pastors that God has given to them. Best, *Ephesians*, 409. Christ is powerful to equip the church to keep false teaching out, to maintain unity, and to reach full maturity. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 288.

speaking Himself. Churches need to respond to the preached Word with humility and faith, but not only that. Churches must also respond to the private ministry of the Word in the same way. The church needs pastors who set their minds to constantly exposing the truth of Scripture to the people of God publically and privately, so that they can see what God desires, and learn how to put God's desires into practice.

The Scriptures Are Sufficient for Interpersonal Discipling (2 Pet 1:2–11)

God initiates spiritual maturity in the life of the believer. However, God's initiation does not mean that believers and church leaders are inactive or passive in the work of spiritual growth. In 2 Peter 1:2–11, the apostle shows God's activity and the believer's activity in God's calling. God does the calling; believers are to make that calling certain by actively pursuing spiritual maturity. The means by which God causes this growth is through the Scriptures. Spiritual leaders have in the Scriptures, therefore, everything that they need for interpersonal discipling. Whether through personal Bible reading and study, or through the mode of preaching, or through interpersonal discipling, the Scriptures are God's provision for the spiritual maturity of those whom He has called.

In the first three chapters of Peter's letter, he warns believers about the danger of false teachers and their influence on them. Because of the temptation to wrongdoing that will come to follow the false teachers, Peter challenges believers to work hard at spiritual growth by developing a stable Christian character.³⁶ Reliance on God's grace is the means of godly living.

In the opening chapter, the apostle begins with a greeting. He then launches immediately into the topic at hand, beginning with God's provision for spiritual maturity, which includes the grace that is mediated through the Scriptures. He then moves to

³⁶ David Strange, *An Exegetical Summary of 2 Peter* (Dallas: SIL International, 2003), 17.

discuss the believer's responsibility, and concludes with an impassioned plea for believers to pursue spiritual maturity at any cost.

God's Provision for Spiritual Maturity (vv. 2–4)

God supplies the necessary grace for spiritual growth, which comes by means of the Scriptures. In the opening verses, Paul describes and explains God's provision for spiritual growth. The provisions include God's grace and God's Word. Both provisions are connected to each other, in that one of the ways that God's grace is mediated to believers is through God's Word.

The Necessity of God's Grace. Believers have no excuse for living an ungodly life. God provides the grace and peace that are necessary to live a godly life. This grace leaves them with no deficiency. He has given everything that they need (v. 3). Whatever He has called them to do, He has also supplied the grace that is necessary to do it. For example, a believer who has become entrapped in the pleasures of sexual sin is not without hope. God has supplied the grace that is necessary to repent and return to Him. This message brings great hope for disciples and disciplers. No problem in the Christian life proves to be too big for God to handle. His grace is sufficient.

God supplies grace and peace to believers. However, this grace and peace is not promised to everyone. Peter qualifies the promise with the phrase, "to you." Peter wrote to believers, and promised them that God would supply the grace and peace. The grace and peace comes by means of "the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Peter makes a direct correlation between a believer's knowledge of the Godhead and the grace and peace that is multiplied to believers. This correlation is explored further in verse 3.

The necessity of God's Word. Not only does God provide the grace necessary to live a godly life, He also provides His written revelation. God has given everything

that they need for life and godliness. The word *πάντα*, means “everything,” or “all things.”³⁷ God holds nothing back from the believer.

Because Peter focuses on spiritual growth in this passage, it would be appropriate to say that Christians change through the grace of God, as they focus on the Word. The “everything” that God supplies does not just magically fall into the laps of believers. Peter writes that what God supplies must be found in knowledge of the God who called them. Believers have no excuse to be stagnant in their spiritual growth. Eternal life belongs to them, and God has provided what they need to persevere until that end.³⁸

Peter uses the word *ἐπιγνώσις*, meaning “knowledge,” in verses 2–3.³⁹ Peter uses this word four times in his second epistle. Each time, he describes the deep and abiding, intimate knowledge of the Lord. The question that naturally follows is, How does a person attain this knowledge that leads to spiritual maturity?

The author of Hebrews begins his letter by teaching that the means of God’s special revelation has changed over time. The letter begins in 1:1–2 by teaching that God had spoken in many times and in many ways, but now (i.e., during the later stages of the apostolic period) He has spoken through His Son. The author goes on to say that the Son is the exact representation of Father. At the time of the writing of Hebrews, the Son had already ascended into heaven.

How can believers receive the revelation of God if Christ is not on earth bodily? The answer comes from the teachings of Jesus Himself. In Luke 24:27, He tells the disciples of Emmaus that the Scriptures speak of Him. In John 5:46, Jesus said that

³⁷ Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 181.

³⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003), 293.

³⁹ Gene Green suggests that the “knowledge” Peter has in mind in 2 Pet 1:3 is the same personal knowledge touched on in v. 2, which results in salvation. Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 183. The focus is on the object of the readers’ knowledge, namely, the One who called them. Strange, *2 Peter*, 21.

Moses wrote of Him. Philip told Nathanael in John 1:45 that Jesus of Nazareth is the One about whom Moses and the Prophets wrote. The knowledge of the Son comes through the Scriptures. God's special revelation now comes through the believers' learning of Christ in the Scriptures. God has called believers to salvation (i.e., effective call), and He has also given them what they need for eternal life, and the perseverance that leads to eternal life. Good biblical counseling demands that believers know the Son through the Scriptures. Peter wants his readers to be confident in this reality.

The necessity of God's promises. Since believers are prone to sin, how are they supposed to live a life that is pleasing to God? Peter gives the answer in verse 4: through God's great promises. The blessings of God's promises come "by these." The word, "these" refers back to the glory and excellence of Christ. In other words, Christ has made these promises available to believers.⁴⁰

These great promises result in believers sharing in the divine nature. Peter does not mean that believers become part of deity, or that they become little gods. Rather, believers become like God. They share in the qualities of His holy character. Believers are now able to start on the path toward holiness.⁴¹ Regarding the divine nature, Douglas Moo writes, "We do not know what these qualities [that come from partaking of the divine nature], but apparently, they help us to escape the corruption that is in the world by lust."⁴²

The grace of God that believers need to grow to spiritual maturity comes from God, and is multiplied to them. This grace comes through the knowledge of God the Father and God the Son. The knowledge of God is mediated through the Scriptures,

⁴⁰ Douglas Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, New International Version Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). 43.

⁴¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 294.

⁴² Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 43.

which grant believers the great and precious promises that they need to share in the qualities necessary for spiritual growth. Peter wants believers to know that God is the source of spiritual maturity.

The Believer's Responsibility in Spiritual Maturity (vv. 5–9)

While a godly life is rooted in and dependent on God's grace, believers are not able to be complacent and still expect that spiritual change will happen. The Scriptures are sufficient to lead the Christian to godliness, and God receives the glory when believers grow and change. However, believers still have a responsibility to pursue spiritual maturity. In other words, a person in Christ lacks nothing that is necessary for spiritual growth. Believers must practice what is true about them because of their position in Christ. God will not obey for believers.⁴³ The expectation for holy sweat falls on believers.⁴⁴ This is where Peter turns in verses 5 and following: believers must make every effort to cultivate spiritual growth.

Making every effort to grow (vv. 5–7). Peter transitions from God's equipping in spiritual growth to the believer's responsibility ("Now for this very reason"). Because spiritual growth requires the believer's work, he must make every effort to add the list of virtues. The word *παρεισενέγκαντες*, translated as "applying" (NASB) and "make every effort" (NIV and ESV), means "to work to the point of exhaustion or to do one's best."⁴⁵ Grace precedes effort, but grace does not eliminate the

⁴³ Stuart Scott, *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2013), 38.

⁴⁴ Thomas Watson, *Discourses on Important and Interesting Subjects: Being the Select Works of Thomas Watson*, (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, & Co., 1829), 1:352.

⁴⁵ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. *παρεισενέγκαντες*, 774. In this context, it has the idea of supplying lavishly or generously, providing more than just what is needed. It focuses on the great efforts that Christians must make to ensure their faith in Christ. Strange, 2 Peter, 30. The word *παρεισενέγκαντες* literally means "bringing alongside of" and pictures the diligence to bring alongside what God has already done, as described in 2 Pet 1:3–4. D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press), 51–

need for strenuous labor.⁴⁶ This grace-fueled effort does not earn a person their salvation. Rather, this effort gives evidence that salvation exists.

The virtues that Peter lists in these verses probably do not describe a chronological progression of spiritual growth. It is hard to see how goodness precedes knowledge. One could argue that knowledge precedes goodness.⁴⁷ Peter wants his readers to know that these qualities must be represented in a believer's life in increasing measure. While this list is likely not sequential, the fact that the list begins with faith and culminates in love seems to be important. Faith is the starting point for all of these qualities, and love is the goal. Jesus summarized all of the commands into two: love for the Lord God, and love for neighbors (Luke 10:27).⁴⁸

Peter's list is not sequential, but it is also not exhaustive. The Holy Spirit gives believers other lists of spiritual qualities, and these other lists include other virtues that are missing from Peter's list. For example, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23 include the virtues of joy, peace, kindness, and gentleness, which Peter does not mention.⁴⁹

Guarding against stagnation (vv. 8–9). Peter follows his list of godly virtues with a demand for them to be cultivated. In verse 5, he said that believers must work hard to add them. In verse 8, he writes that those who are not growing in these fruit of the Spirit have no indication that they are believers. If believers do not pursue perfection in these areas, they will be ineffective and unfruitful. One commentator puts it this way:

52.

⁴⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 298.

⁴⁷ Schreiner, 297.

⁴⁸ Technically, Jesus affirmed the lawyer's summary of the Law, by saying, "Do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28).

⁴⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 297–98.

“Lack of spiritual growth is a sign of spiritual death.”⁵⁰ For this reason, believers must make every effort to add these qualities to their lives.

Those who lack the qualities in verses 5–7 are described as “useless” and “unfruitful” in verse 8, and “blind” and “short-sighted.”⁵¹ Unbelievers never move past the foundational aspects of the gospel. Believers depend on God’s grace, and must work hard to cultivate spiritual growth. Those who make no effort to grow in grace are going back on their commitment to Jesus, which could be the beginning of apostasy.⁵²

God’s Appeal for Spiritual Maturity (vv. 10–11)

In verse 10, believers are called to make their calling and choosing sure. They make their calling sure by doing. They do not earn their salvation by doing, but salvation is guaranteed to result in good works (Eph 2:10). This transformation process that leads a believer to do good works is the process of sanctification. Commenting on verses 10–11, Mark Dever writes that “God calls us through grace alone, yet the purity of our lives is an evidence of the reality of our calling.”⁵³ He goes on to suggest that if one is a Christian,

You *have* faith. You *are* good. You *have* knowledge. You *exhibit* self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love. And your life will bear these qualities in increasing measure. If you are not a Christian, you attempt to exhibit any one of these qualities will not make a Christian....Salvation is by grace. But once you have been saved by the grace of God, you will begin to look like someone who is saved.⁵⁴

Believers must engage in spiritual growth. God promises that as long as they are cultivating spiritual growth, they will never stumble. The word *πταίσητε*, translated

⁵⁰ Michael Green, *2 Peter & Jude*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 81.

⁵¹ Those who lack these qualities are blind or diseased in the eye. They are further described in the next part of 2 Pet 1:8, “forgetting the purification from his former sins.” Gene Green, *2 Peter*, 198.

⁵² Gene Green, 82.

⁵³ Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 462.

⁵⁴ Dever, 462–63.

“stumble,” means to sin against God.⁵⁵ However, Peter cannot be guaranteeing that believers will never sin again (1 John 1:8). Instead, he is warning believers against an ultimate stumbling, namely apostasy.⁵⁶ Peter does not want his readers to finally forsake God. Believers will avoid a disastrous grief when they continually pursue spiritual maturity through the godly qualities listed. Peter completes his teaching in this section with a promise of eternal life along with its attendant blessings and circumstances (v. 11).

God has provided believers with everything that they need for life and godliness. He has multiplied grace and peace to them through the knowledge of Christ in the Word. He has equipped them and called them to spiritual growth in godly virtues in increasing measure. He has warned them of spiritual stagnation, and He has promised eternal life to those who start down this path and remain on it.

Second Peter 1:2–11 Applied to Equipping Seminary Students for Certification

Biblical counseling serves as one aspect of a church’s culture of discipleship. Biblical counseling can be defined as using the Bible to help people with their problems.⁵⁷ Christians help Christians to grow in the faith. A culture of discipleship is evident in a church when the normal practice of members is to regularly engage in spiritual conversations that produce mutual growth in godliness. While producing a culture of discipleship in one’s church should be a desire of all men who are training for pastoral ministry, it is especially useful for those who will be heavily engaged in

⁵⁵ This person will never come to the kind of eternal ruin that the heretics and their disciples face. Michael Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 202.

⁵⁶ They will never fall away from the faith so as to forfeit final salvation. Strange, *2 Peter*, 43.

⁵⁷ Heath Lambert defines biblical counseling as “a conversation where one party with questions, problems, and trouble seek assistance from someone they believe has answers, solutions, and help.” Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 13. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju define biblical counseling as “the ministry of the Word by which Christians help others understand how their hearts are actively responding to God amid their specific life circumstances, and how faith in Christ Jesus changes those responses.” Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 133.

counseling ministry.

The Christian life culminates in conformity to the image of Christ. God has equipped spiritual leaders in the church to model maturity and to lead people toward spiritual growth. Because of this reality, ICBC must seek to equip young men who are training for ministry toward individual spiritual maturity and toward helping others to do the same. In other words, ICBC must reproduce a discipling ministry.

This ministry should warn young men about the danger of stagnation and spiritual complacency (2 Pet 1:10–11). Even the most seasoned churchgoer is susceptible to spiritual short-sightedness if he does not actively pursue the divine qualities of holiness that Peter lists (2 Pet 1:5–7). Future pastors must learn how to actively participate with the Spirit in Christian growth, so that they can sustain a healthy Christian life, and so that they can help others toward spiritual maturity.

This task of equipping future church leaders requires the right handling of the Scriptures, as well as helping these men individually. The Scriptures are the means by which a person comes to know Christ (2 Pet 1:3). The Scriptures are the means by which a person grows in Christ (2 Cor 3:18). The Spirit works through the Word. Spiritual growth is accomplished through the Word. God’s Word is sufficient for all of life’s problems (2 Pet 1:3–4). Therefore, no additional resources are absolutely necessary. Many additional resources can be helpful, if they point the reader toward the source of life and godliness, but only the Word is necessary.

When a person comes to a pastor for spiritual help, the Bible will provide the answer. The Bible does not contain all that God knows, or all that a person can know about a given topic, but all that God wants people to know about any given topic. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is critical to the practice of biblical counseling.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Wayne Grudem describes the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: “Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

Since the Scriptures are sufficient to tell believers all that they need to know about a given topic, the Bible must be at the center of how people change. Genuine spiritual change happens only when a person gazes on the Word of God. All spiritual growth is connected to the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul teaches that if believers are going to be “transformed” from one level of glory to another, then they must gaze on the Word with an unveiled face. Believers who have been and who are being illumined by the Holy Spirit must engage in the task of investigation. They must look at the Word, meditate on it, interpret it properly, and then apply it to their lives. Only then will real transformation come (“from one level of glory to another”).

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is important for counseling because it gives confidence that everything that God wants believers to know about a situation is revealed for them in His Word. Believers do not have to wait for a still, small voice (they might be waiting a long time). All the answers that God wants believers to know about a counselee’s problems are in His Word, either directly or indirectly by means of commands and principles. More could be said, but God has said all that He wanted to say, and therefore it is enough.

CHAPTER 3

THE METHODOLOGY FOR EQUIPPING SEMINARY STUDENTS FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING CERTIFICATION AT INTER-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH

Introduction

This project was designed to equip seminary students for biblical counseling certification at ICBC. Chapter 1 described how ICBC has historically equipped young men for ministry and it identified some key questions that the church must address regarding training young men. Chapter 2 established the biblical and theological basis for equipping young men for biblical counseling certification. This chapter shows the methodological foundation for equipping seminary students to help people change. The thesis for this chapter is that equipping seminary students for biblical counseling requires a God-centered operational methodology that promotes genuine change.

This chapter identifies and explains five primary components to leading toward biblical change. First, utilizing an operational methodology will help a biblical counselor lead counselees to biblical change. Biblical counselors must model reliance on God through the Word and encourage their counselees to do the same. Second, relying on God through the means of grace is necessary for genuine change. Biblical counselors must humbly and patiently rely on God through the Word, prayer, and Christ's church. Third, understanding the counselee's spiritual state is necessary for determining direction. Spiritual change begins with a relationship with Christ. An unbeliever will not grow spiritually. Therefore, biblical counselors must be able to evaluate their counselee's relationship with Christ. Fourth, advancing progressive sanctification demands a level of expertise by the biblical counselor. God desires that believers are changed into the image

of Christ. Therefore, biblical counselors must be equipped to know how to lead believers to Christlikeness. Fifth, understanding the nature of the human heart requires skill by the biblical counselor. Because external conformity proves to be inadequate for real change, biblical counselors must know how to evaluate the human heart by means of the Word, and then lead counselees to the appropriate change.

A God-Centered Operational Methodology

Counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside another believer in order to apply the Bible in a way that leads the individual to grow in spiritual maturity.¹ In short, biblical counseling is using the Bible to help people with the problems that they face. In order to help people with their problems, counselors must have a plan for stimulating biblical change. An operational methodology helps accomplish this purpose. An appropriate operational methodology includes a realistic goal, a basic plan, and a definite application.

A Realistic Goal

An operational methodology begins with the end in view. Not seeking to create dependency on the counselor, biblical counseling focuses on encouraging dependency on God. The counselor inspires spiritual maturity, in which the counselee can face his or her problems according to God's prescription.

The counselor should explain from the outset what can and cannot be accomplished in a counseling relationship. For example, the counseling relationship cannot guarantee the elimination of all temptations, nor can the counselor guarantee elimination of all future stumbling. On the other hand, the biblical counselor can promise what the Scriptures promise. He can promise grace to those who humble themselves. He

¹ Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2016), 20.

can promise change to those who work and rely on God's means of change.

A Basic Plan

In addition to a realistic goal, an operational methodology also should include a basic plan. If the goal is grace and spiritual change, then how will the counselee get there? Counselees benefit from having a basic plan that leads them toward genuine change. First, a basic plan must begin with an identification of the counselee's spiritual condition. Second, a basic plan must include an identification of the problems that the counselee is facing. Third, a basic plan must connect the counselee's problems with specific sins (if necessary) in the Scriptures.² The benefit of connecting a person's problems to sins mentioned in the Bible is that the Bible has the answer for sin issues. Fourth, a basic plan should include an exhortation of thinking God's thoughts after Him. The counselee must renew his mind, making plans to put off sin and put on acts of righteousness (Eph 4:22–24). Fifth, a basic plan should call the counselee to action. The counselor can lay out the basic plan in the first session. However, the entire process of investigation, interpretation, explanation, and application will take time to unpack.³

² Of course, a person could be an innocent sufferer. In that case, the counselor must identify the problem and how to respond biblically.

³ The methodology given in this paper borrows from several approaches by various biblical counselors. However, many solid approaches to biblical counseling will suffice. David Powlison in his book, *How Does Sanctification Work?* suggests that counselors tend to oversimplify sanctification, seeking to promote one single truth or foolproof technique that will guarantee change. David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 23. Jeremy Pierre agrees that oversimplification in counseling is a problem. He argues that the human experience is complex. Therefore, counselors must understand that the key to change will always be a dynamic relationship of faith with the triune God. Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 239. In reality, the problem of a biblical counseling case is a lot like solving a puzzle. There is no singular, step-by-step method that must be followed in order to solve the puzzle. Instead, there are thousands of ways. This does not mean that anything goes. Biblical counselors must still have a common goal and some foundational principles, but after that, the approach to counseling can be as varied as the number of counselors. One of those foundational principles includes what the nature of counseling is. Powlison suggests that counseling is helping people to gaze on God. David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003), 12. Another foundational principle is how biblical change happens. Paul Tripp believes that biblical counseling happens when "God transforms people's lives as people bring His Word to others." Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 19. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju give a basic framework for counseling, primarily by building their reader's confidence in the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 16. Bob Kellemen suggests that personal change is

A Definite Application

An operational methodology should include a realistic goal, a basic plan, and a definite application. A generic application coupled with good intentions will not benefit a counselee apart from specificity. Good intentions often can easily go unrealized, because they are drowned in a mire of generalities (e.g., “I want to be a better husband,” “I plan to stop drinking,” “No more porn,” etc.). How will good intentions become reality? Good intentions are only the bones of change. The muscle and flesh of intentions are specific, measurable action steps. For example, “By Friday, I will make a list of all of the unresolved conflicts that I have with my wife.” “By tomorrow morning, I will empty all the alcohol bottles in my house, and will resolve not to make any cash purchases or any purchases at a place where alcohol is sold.”¹

If counselees miss the importance of specificity, they may continue to face their problems unchanged by the Word, and potentially set themselves on a path toward turning away from Christ. In Luke 12:45–48, Jesus tells the parable of the unfaithful slave, which illustrates this kind of danger. The servant that is judged by Christ does not raise his fist, and say, “I hate the master, and I will not do anything for him.” He has good intentions to obey the master, but he fails *because he delays*. Similarly, the counselee may think that he has a long time to obey the Master. So he or she may continue to have expectations of change and intentions to change, but he or she never experiences change, because of procrastination. Maybe the counselee is waiting for his or her spouse to

¹“centered on the person of Christ through the personal ministry of the Word.” *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 16. Paul Tautges sees counseling as “an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside one another for three main purposes: first, to help the other person to consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning their spiritual friend, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that brother or sister to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she, too, may become a spiritually reproductive disciple-maker.” Tautges, *Counseling One Another*, 20. Another foundational principle that biblical counselors must embrace is promoted by Heath Lambert in his book on counseling. He argues that “counseling is a theological discipline.” Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 11. Much value can be gleaned from all of these biblical counseling approaches. The key to remember is that there is no one-size-fits-all methodology.

change, or for somebody from the church to come to the rescue. Hell will be full of people who had good intentions. That is, many well-meaning people have the mindset of the five virgins who did not trim their lamps in Matthew 25. The Master returned, and they were ready to get to work trimming their lamps. They had good intentions, they scrambled, but it was too late. Counselees must be warned about merely having good intentions disconnected from specific steps toward change. God is patient. He is longsuffering, and slow to anger. But His patience will eventually be exhausted.

If there is going to be genuine transformation, the counselee must be willing to pursue spiritual change outside of the counseling session. A counselee cannot expect that all the transformation that is necessary will happen in a sixty-minute counseling session. That mindset is as ridiculous as the mindset of an obese man walking into a doctor's office, expecting that a sixty-minute conversation with the doctor would produce all the change that was necessary for him to lose weight. Working toward change inside and outside the counseling session is necessary for change. The homework should include practical elements (e.g., encourage one's wife in three ways this week; sign up for Covenant Eyes by Thursday; or be at all the church services this week).

Jay Adams gives eight reasons why homework is necessary: (1) It translates what was discussed into action (Prov 14:23); (2) it puts responsibility for change where it belongs (Jas 1:22–25). The blessing is not in knowing necessarily, but in doing; (3) it keeps expectations clear for both the counselor and counselee; (4) it helps minimize dependence on the counselor, and instead transfers dependence to the Lord;⁴ (5) it helps

⁴ Kent Hughes tells the story that took place early in his ministry, when the members at his church were declining, and he was ready to throw in the towel. He recounted one dark evening in particular, when his emotions reached their climax. He learned of another family leaving the church. He thought of all of the megachurches nearby that had compromised the gospel, and he wondered why he should even bother. Not only was he considering giving up pastoral ministry, he was considering giving up the faith. He questioned whether God could be trusted, and said, "God has called me to do something he hasn't given me the gifts to accomplish. Therefore, God is not good. . . . What am I to do?" His wife was just as terrified as he was, and she responded by saying, "I don't know what you're going to do. But for right now, for tonight, hang on to my faith. Because I believe. I believe that God is good. I believe that he loves us and is going to work through this experience. So hang on to my faith. I have enough for both of us" R. Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL:

the counselor to be a faithful steward of his time, by bringing out problems and patterns more quickly, and by discovering which counselees mean business; (6) it continues counseling principles between sessions; (7) it tells the counselee that you believe things can be different today;⁵ and (8) it can provide data for subsequent sessions.⁶

Reliance on God through the Means of Grace

The Puritans taught that Christians receive grace through three primary means: the Word, prayer, and fellowship with God's people.⁷ A biblical counselor must rely on God through the means of grace, and help their counselees to rely on those same means. He must rely on God through the Word. He must rely on God through prayer. He must rely on God through Christ's church. All of this reliance must be done with humility and patience.

Reliance on God through the Word

Biblical counselors put God at the center of their counseling by making His Word the center. In this era, God has most clearly revealed Himself in His written Word.⁸ The Bible is necessary for counseling, because the Bible is sufficient. To illustrate this

Crossway, 2008), 23. The point of the story is that sometimes people will come for help in their darkest hour, and they may not have enough faith to continue looking to God. But strangely, they are putting their confidence in a biblical counselor. The counselor's job is to help them to transfer that hope from the counselor to God. In time, that will happen, as long as the counselor keeps pointing them in the right direction.

⁵ If a person goes to the doctor with a fractured jawbone, and the doctor listens to an explanation of the problem, and even diagnoses it, but never does anything, then the person will walk away hopeless. The patient should be confident that the doctor can help them that day.

⁶ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 301–10.

⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 603–606.

⁸ See Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 327. He explains the difference between special revelation and general revelation. God has revealed Himself through general revelation. However, general revelation is not adequate to reveal the nature of sins, to reveal the basics of the gospel, to tell people who Jesus Christ is and what He demands. General revelation cannot save a person from sins, nor does general revelation give what is needed in order to know how to be sanctified. General revelation can speak to what *is*, but special revelation is needed to say what *should be*.

point, consider what people need when they come to a counselor for help. They might need to be taught sound doctrine (i.e., teaching); they might need to have their thinking challenged (i.e., reproof); they might need to be shown how to obey (i.e., training in righteousness); or they might need to be confronted about the way that they live (i.e., correction). The Scriptures are sufficient to provide guidance to people in need of help. Paul affirms this in 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God be adequate, equipped for every good work”.

Because the Scriptures are sufficient⁹ for all of life and godliness (2 Pet 1:2–11), the Scriptures must be at the center of biblical counseling. Sufficiency does not mean that the Scriptures reveal everything that is true, or everything that can be known about a given topic (plumbing, medicine, toolmaking, etc.). Rather, the Bible reveals everything that God wants His people to know about a given topic in this age, including salvation, sanctification, and trusting God.¹⁰

Genuine spiritual change happens only when a person gazes on the Word of God. All spiritual growth is connected to the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul teaches that if a person is going to be “transformed” from one level of glory to another, then he or she must gaze on the Word with an unveiled face. Believers who have been and who are being illumined by the Holy Spirit must engage in the task of investigation. They must look at the Word, meditate on it, interpret it properly, and then apply it to their lives. Only then will real transformation come (“from one level of glory to another”).

⁹ Wayne Grudem describes the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: “Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

¹⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

A leading integrationist, Mark McMinn, argues that biblical counseling and psychology need to be combined to reach an optimal performance, like hot air and cold air need to be combined in the temperature system in a car in order to achieve comfortable, warm air. He suggests that psychology has a history of building techniques that would be helpful with struggling people. McMinn's argument denies the fundamental reality of the sufficiency of Scripture. If the Scriptures are not sufficient for counseling spiritual issues, then McMinn is right: people need secular psychology to integrate with the Scriptures.¹¹ However, God Himself teaches that the Scriptures are sufficient for everything that is needed regarding life and godliness. Therefore, psychology does not need to be consulted in order to counsel spiritual issues. The Scriptures alone are necessary for counseling.

When people come to a counselor with problems to be resolved, biblical counselors must rely on the Scriptures in their diagnosis and prognosis. That is, counselors must frame questions in a way that shows the counselee his or her sin, and need to rely on God. The prescription that is given must be explicitly stated in or implicitly derived from the Scriptures in the forms of commands and principles. From these principles, counselors must help the counselee draw specific application to their situation. The temptation for a biblical counselor might be to grab the latest counseling book on anger or worry. While those books can be helpful, they are not *necessary* for counseling. The word of God is living and active (Heb 4:12), and therefore, biblical counselors must rely on it to provide the counselees genuine help and hope.

Reliance on God through Prayer

Biblical Counseling involves speaking to a person on behalf of God, but it also includes speaking to God on behalf of that person. If there is going to be any real

¹¹ Mark R. McMinn and Clark D. Campbell, *Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 113.

change, then it has to come through the work of God. The counselor must be committed to relying on God through prayer, and he should encourage the counselee to do the same. Conversely, it is very possible that the counselee will not be committed to prayer. Suppose a church member seeks counsel because of some private sin that has now become public. Over time he has developed a habit of ignoring God's Word. How much time per week would a wandering Christian spend praying to God? The reality is that many counselees do not have a close personal relationship with God when they come for help. They are not in the habit of practicing the disciplines of grace. And since they are not regularly and fervently praying for themselves, then counselors must be seeking God on their behalf.

Reliance on God through Christ's Church

The task of counseling is to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15), but genuine change does not happen apart from God's ordained means of change. The context of change happens within a community of organized believers. Paul writes the passage in Ephesians 4:11–16 about speaking the truth in love within the context of hearing the Word preached and taught by a pastor (v. 11). But this mutual truth-speaking also happens in the context of other believers (vv. 12–13, 15b–16). The change that God wants in the counselee's life is not confined to the presenting problem. God wants a whole person change.

Practically, counselors would do well to expect regular church attendance. A counselor might say something like this: "If you think that coming to see me is going to solve all of your problems, you are wrong. God wants to change you in more ways than the problem that you have come for. So you need to be in church, hearing God speak, even if it is not about your specific problem." Perhaps an illustration will help. Suppose a person comes to the doctor because he has had shortness of breath (i.e., his presenting problem). The doctor determines that he also has high blood pressure, which is connected

to his obesity. The doctor gives him a prescription for a drug to bring his blood pressure down, but what else might he tell him? The doctor might tell him that he needs to change his lifestyle. The problem is a whole person problem. He needs to start eating better and exercising more. He needs to start thinking better about what health is, and what it looks like for him. He cannot merely expect to come to the doctor, get a prescription, and be cured. Counselors dealing with a particular sin need more resolution than the problem for which they came. They need a whole person change. They need to be growing in the context of a local church.

An Attitude of Humility and Patience

A counselor's approach to helping a counselee change must include the means of grace. His approach must also be done with an attitude of humility and patience. What does humility and patience look like? First, the counselor must be willing to bear the burdens of his or her counselee. Counselors must approach their counseling with a sense of humility, recognizing that their counselee's problem is the problem of humankind—sin. In their book on counseling, Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju suggest that a good shepherd does not smell good, because he identifies and works with stinking sheep.¹² Counselors must be willing to work hard. A pastor may want to spend all of his time in his office studying, in order to preach and teach well, but shepherds are also called to shepherd the sheep (John 21:15–17; Acts 20:28). This shepherding includes leading, directing, correcting, feeding, caring for, and protecting. In other words, pastoring the flock of Jesus Christ demands private ministry of the Word (1 Pet 5:1–4).

Secondly, a counselor must be patient. Not only is humility expressed in a willingness to bear a counselee's burden, but also in being patient with counselees. Paul exhorts believers at Thessalonica to “be patient with everyone” (1 Thess 5:14). Whether

¹² Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 25.

they are unruly, discouraged, or weak, Christians must be patient with everyone. Patience is expected not only because Paul commands it in 1 Thessalonians, but also because patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). Practically, counselors should not be surprised when a counselee does not respond with grace and thanksgiving to the counsel they receive. Counselors should not be deterred from finishing their job when counselees do not respond with obedience and faith right away. The path of the Christian life is often slow and difficult. The counselor did not come to spiritual maturity quickly, or without any setbacks. Therefore, counselors must be patient with counselees as they struggle toward change.

Evaluation of a Counselee's Spiritual Condition

Because the beginning of spiritual change is the gospel, the biblical counselor must be able to evaluate a counselee's relationship to Christ. In order to give an appropriate prescription, a proper diagnosis is necessary. Not only must a counselor make a proper diagnosis regarding the type of problem that the counselee has, but also the spiritual condition of the counselee. Evaluating spiritual condition is important because unbelievers are unable to change. Therefore, counselors must seek to evaluate a counselee's spiritual condition, and then determine a course ahead after doing so.

The Inability for Unbelievers to Change

One reason why diagnosing a counselee's spiritual condition early is so important is because if the counselee is an unbeliever, he cannot change in the biblical sense of the word. In other words, the change that an unbeliever needs comes from outside of him. God must do the work of regeneration. Any behavioral change by an unbeliever can improve circumstances, or make life more pleasurable, but ultimately, a non-Christian is still headed on a path toward hell.

Furthermore, the Scriptures are clear that unbelievers are unwilling and unable to change spiritually. Sinful man hates God and thus is totally prejudiced against Him

(Rom 8:7; Eph 4:18). He cannot reason objectively about God or spiritual things.¹³ Paul says that an unbeliever's mind is death (Rom 8:6); it is hostile to God (Rom 8:7); and it is unable to submit itself to the law of God (Rom 8:7). Therefore, unbelievers cannot please God (Rom 8:8). Practically, a counselor who gives hope of spiritual change to a person who cannot change is actually giving no hope at all. He is offering false hope.

The Initial Evaluation

Because counselors face a real danger of giving false hope to an unbelieving counselee, they must be skilled in evaluating a counselee's spiritual condition. This evaluation cannot wait until the third or fourth session. Evaluation must happen in the first session. The key to counseling toward spiritual change is leading counselees to repentance.

Like John the Baptist before Him, Jesus began His preaching ministry with a message of repentance and faith. He said, "Repent and believe, the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15, et al.). Paul told non-Christians at the Aeropagus that "God is now declaring that all men everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). God promises to remove guilt on the condition of a person's repentance and faith. Both repentance and faith are aspects of conversion.¹⁴ They are gifts of God that come by means of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Spiritually dead people are unable to come to God (Eph 2:1–3; Rom 8:7). Therefore, God has to do a unilateral work of imparting life to those who are spiritually dead. God has to initiate salvation through the process of regeneration. Repentance can be defined as "a change of mind away from sin and toward God" (Acts 20:21).¹⁵

¹³ Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Scripture, God and Angels* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 167.

¹⁴ Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, vol. 3, *The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 68.

¹⁵ McCune, *A Systematic Theology*, 3:62. Repentance can also be described as "a recognition

The Post-Evaluation Methodology

Because repentance is necessary to turn from sin, saving faith has to be a primary focus of the early stages of counseling. No one can come to saving faith apart from repentance. Once the counselor evaluates the person's spiritual condition, he or she can then make a plan for how to deal with the sin.¹⁶ If the counselor believes that the counselee is a non-Christian, the counselor must call him to repentance and faith. The gospel must be at the center of their conversation. If the person is a believer struggling in sin, he also must be called to repentance. The difference is that a counselor can give a believer biblical commands and principles, along with a promise that God will do the work if he pursues change through God's ordained means. An unbeliever cannot have that same confidence, unless he first submits to Christ in saving faith.

A Biblical View of Progressive Sanctification

Because God's ultimate goal for the believer is Christlikeness, the counselor must be able to teach counselees about the importance of progressive sanctification.¹⁷

of sin for what it is, followed by a heartfelt sorrow, culminating in a change of behavior.” James MacDonald and Garrett Higbee, “The Power of Confession and Repentance,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God’s Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 351–64.

¹⁶ This assumes that the issue has to do with sin, which is most often the case. However, many times, counselees will seek help regarding how to handle trials and innocent suffering.

¹⁷ A full proof and demonstration that sanctification is the goal of counseling is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I should acknowledge that other counselors approach counseling with a different goal in view, or at least a different way to get to that goal. In the “Levels of Explanation” approach, Thomas Plante does not deny the Bible and Christianity, but neither does he see the Bible as authoritative. He believes that “occasionally science will challenge traditional Christian understandings.” Thomas G. Plante, “A Levels-of-Explanation Approach,” in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, ed. Stephen P. Gregg and Timothy A. Sisemore (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 23. Essentially, this approach chooses reason over faith. Consequently, a counselee’s presenting problem, which the Bible would call sin, “science” might call biologically—or environmentally—determined. In other words, if the counselor misdiagnoses the problem, he almost certainly will misidentify the solution. Mark McMinn uses a more eclectic approach to counseling, incorporating psychology, theology, and spirituality. However, he does not believe that all three will necessarily be used at the same time. Psychology, he says, is less authoritative than theology and spirituality, but still necessary. Mark R. McMinn, “An Integration Approach,” in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, 88. One of the main problems with McMinn’s approach to counseling is that he denies that sanctification is the goal of Christian counseling. He writes that “every Christian relationship *has the potential* of promoting sanctification,” but that “growing in sanctification is not the goal of counseling.” Rather, it is “the inevitable outcome of an effective counseling relationship between Christians” (emphasis mine). McMinn, “An Integration Approach,” 88. The “Transformational Approach” championed by Gary Moon is also somewhat eclectic. The problem with this approach is not so much in the goal, which Moon seems to get

God's goal for believers is to conform them into the image of Christ. He does this through the process of progressive sanctification, whereby the believer responsibly participates with the Spirit, moving toward conformity to Christ.

God's Goal for Believers

An improper view of what God is doing in the life of a believer can lead to hopelessness and wandering. If a counselee thinks that God will immediately and painlessly move them from sin enslavement to spiritual maturity, he or she will be frustrated when change is slow. If a counselee thinks that spiritual change comes apart from a relationship, he or she will be frustrated when the twelve-step process does not work.

God's ultimate goal for believers is to transform them into the image of Christ (Rom 8:28–30). In Romans 8, Paul guarantees that believers will suffer (vv. 18–25). Believers do not have to fear, however, because the Spirit intercedes on their behalf (vv. 26–27). Furthermore, God is working out all things for the good of believers (vv. 28–30).¹⁸ In his commentary, Douglas Moo says that “there is nothing in this world that is not intended by God to assist us on our earthly pilgrimage and to bring us safely and certainly to the glorious destination of that pilgrimage.”¹⁹ God desires good for the believer in verse 28.

What does this good life look like? Verses 29–30 have the answer. The good

right—transformation. The problem is in how the transformation comes. Proponents of this approach gain value from all of the counseling disciplines and incorporate them into a method that promotes transformation. Moon writes, “I have become convinced that Jesus offers a source of exquisite knowledge that answers life’s most important questions and that his answers deserve—at minimum—equal attention to that received by psychology’s pioneers.” Gary W. Moon, “A Transformational Approach” in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, 140. It seems that Moon is trying to exalt Christ’s teaching over psychology, but in his attempt, he actually undermines Christ’s authority and superiority by putting it on the same level as psychology.

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 530.

¹⁹ Moo, *Romans*.

life for the believer necessarily includes conformity to the image of Christ. God does not simply choose a person to salvation and then say, “Well, I hope he can make it.” He provides the means necessary to do so. He ensures that they receive the effectual call through the Spirit. He ensures that they are preserved and growing in the fruit of the Spirit. He ensures that they are sanctified and glorified. Believers can patiently endure sin and suffering because God is working everything for their good, so that they would be conformed to the image of Christ. If God is working out all things so that believers are progressively sanctified, then what does this look like?

Defining Progressive Sanctification

The word, “sanctification” in the Scriptures means to “to set apart as holy” or to “grow in holiness.”²⁰ There are three types of sanctification that the Scriptures describe. Sanctification begins with a believer being initially set apart from sin to God.²¹ Sanctification culminates with glorification (Rom 8:30), where the believer is fully set apart for God’s purpose, and is completely removed from the presence of sin. Between initial and final sanctification is progressive sanctification.

The present aspect of sanctification is called progressive sanctification. It is the continual process between salvation and glorification where the Holy Spirit strengthens the believer in faith, and where the believer becomes more and more like Jesus Christ.²² In this process, the believer must be complicit with the work of the Spirit. Anthony Hoekema calls it “responsible participation.”²³ God uses this process of the believer and

²⁰ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 9–10.

²¹ McCune, *Systematic Theology*: 3:124. Past sanctification is coterminous with justification, and is judicial in nature. There is no feeling that is associated with initial sanctification. Every person needs initial sanctification because of the nature of sin. Sin has fallen humanity under its power from the time of conception. And the freedom from the power of that sin comes at the moment of salvation. Paul affirms this truth in 1 Cor 1:2, where he says that believers “have been sanctified.” See also 1 Cor 6:11 (“were sanctified”); Rom 6:9–11; 1 Pet 1:1–2 (“sanctifying work of the Spirit” is referring to salvation) (McCune).

²² McCune, *Systematic Theology*: 3:150–52.

²³ Melvin E. Dieter et al., *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 61.

the Spirit working together in order to remove the effects of sin in the believer, and make believers more pleasing to Him.

At the moment of past sanctification, believers have the penalty of sin removed from them, but the presence of sin still remains, and the power of sin is still strong. The difference is that before salvation sin was a person's master. But after salvation, sin no longer is master, but still has a lot of influence. And therefore, believers must participate with the Spirit to be killing sin (Rom 6:12–14). This process of present sanctification happens as believers look into the Word like they would look into a mirror (2 Cor 3:18).

Responsible Participation with the Spirit

Spiritual progress cannot happen apart from the work of the Spirit. Therefore, believers must actively participate with the Spirit in killing sin and obeying Christ (Rom 6:12–14).²⁴ Counselors who seek to facilitate genuine spiritual change will help counselees see the role of the Holy Spirit and His Word in the process of change. Christian life is about honoring God by growing in Christlikeness through the Word. The counselor must remind counselees to engage in the spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and fellowship with believers. The Spirit integrally works in all of these to bring a believer to the next level of spiritual glory. According to 2 Corinthians 3:18, the Spirit's work in the believer to transform him happens in connection to the Word.

A proper understanding of the Spirit's role in a believer's pursuit of change gives that person hope for several reasons. First, walking with the Spirit means never walking alone. The Spirit helps in a believer's weakness (Rom 8:26). Second, understanding the Spirit's role gives hope to believer, because he or she knows that there is an end in sight. Paul states it this way, "He who began a good work in you will perform

²⁴ The Puritan theologian John Owen commented on the importance of eliminating sin by saying, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004), 14.

it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6). Third, understanding the Spirit’s role helps a counselee to put his or her confidence in God. Even when progress is slow, a believer who is relying on the Spirit through His ordained means can be confident that change is happening, even if imperceptibly.

The Ruling Authorities of the Heart

For counselees to change, the counselor must recognize and be skilled in understanding the nature of the human heart. External conformity is not enough. The counselor must seek to draw out what is in the counselee’s heart, identify ruling authorities, and bring all of those authorities into subjection to God and His Word. This change can only happen through the power of the Spirit, and it does not happen overnight. Therefore, the counselor must be patient as he calls for incremental change.

The Inadequacy of Mere External Conformity

What are biblical counselors trying to accomplish? Counseling has been defined as using the Bible to help people change. Therefore, biblical counselors are seeking to see genuine change through God’s ordained means. This change must encompass the entire person. The counselor should not be satisfied with external conformity alone. He should desire to see the person changed both externally and internally.

The Pharisees could not quite understand this point. They thought that spiritual purity came from following traditions. In Mark 7:1–8, the Pharisees and the Scribes complained to Jesus that the disciples ate before ceremonially washing their hands. Dirty hands went against rabbinical rules, and according to the religious leaders violated the law of God.²⁵ Jesus recognized that they were trying to trap Him, and responded by

²⁵ Homer Kent, *Studies in Mark: The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2005), 95–97.

getting to the heart of the matter. Quoting from Isaiah 29:13, Jesus called attention to the Pharisees' externals by noting that they had an absence of spiritual, heartfelt religion, "They honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me" (Mark 7:6).

The religious leaders needed to learn the truth that biblical counselors must be reminded of—God wants more than external conformity. Instead, He is looking for people whose hearts are completely engaged in service to Him. In contrast, the Pharisees used a rule designed to avoid disobedience (i.e., ceremonial washing of hands) as an instrument of disobedience. Jesus summarizes the error of the religious leaders by saying, "neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8).

Jesus wanted His followers to understand that sinfulness in the human heart is a most serious problem. Ceremonial purity pales in comparison to the influence and effect of the human heart. In Mark 7:14–23, Jesus shows that spiritual defilement does not come from disobeying tradition. Nothing physical can come into a person and defile him or her spiritually. The Jews learned that unclean food defiled their bodies. Jesus taught that fellowship with God was not hindered by following tradition or not (e.g., ceremonially washing [7:1–8] and eating food [7:14–19]), but rather by sin in the heart. Physical eating on its own cannot cause spiritual defilement. Conversely, spiritual rituals and external exercises cannot cleanse a person internally. Jesus explains this revolutionary principle by giving a list of sins which all flow out of the heart (7:21–23).

Biblical counselors must recognize that a counselee's external conformity cannot guarantee genuine transformation. For example, a person who is constantly satisfying all of his basest desires has not necessarily experienced a spiritual transformation when he has stopped drinking alcohol. His heart may still be far from God, while he is "cleaning up" all of his externals. He may have simply replaced one idol for another. The most basic command that the Scriptures give is to love the Lord with one's entire heart. This demand requires more than external conformity to a standard. Transformation has to involve the heart.

The Nature of the Heart

The reason that the heart of the individual is important is because it is the “intellectual soul-center of man.”²⁶ In the Bible, the heart is said to believe (Rom 10:10), to purpose (Prov 20:5; 2 Cor 9:7), and to feel (2 Cor 2:4). The heart is the center from which a person thinks (mind), purposes (will), and feels (emotions). Everything that comes out of a person is derived from the heart. Jesus said, “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Luke 6:45). Solomon taught his son that the heart is the spring from which everything in his life flows: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well spring of life” (Prov 4:23). The heart must be evaluated, but can a person be trusted to examine his own heart?

Previous generations denied the importance of the heart, focusing on “doing their duty.” In today’s Western culture, the heart is exalted as something that can and must be trusted, “Follow your heart. It will never lead you astray.”²⁷ The Bible teaches people to be wary of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) says that “the heart is deceitful . . . and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” Deceit not only affects other people, but it also affects the individual himself. It blinds the person to reality. Who can know the heart? From this, it is important to recognize that “the heart’s chief unsettling characteristic is its capacity for self-deception.”²⁸ Society is wrong; the heart cannot be trusted. And if an individual cannot know his or her own heart, how is a counselor supposed to understand that person?

The prophet Jeremiah asked, “Who can really know the heart?” His answer comes in the very next verse: “The Lord searches the heart” (Jer 17:10). While it is

²⁶ C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Waikato, HI: Titus Books, 2014), 115. John Street describes the heart as “that inner being of the one created in the image of God.” John Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2019), 3.

²⁷ Street, *The Passions of the Heart*, 4.

²⁸ Street, *The Passions of the Heart*, 3.

difficult to understand what is in the heart of an individual, it is not impossible with God's help to know some of the key components. God reveals what is in the human heart in a number of ways, including through trials like He did with Israel in the wilderness (Deut 8:2). He uses the Scriptures to convict and to shape the heart. Other times, He simply reveals what is in a person's heart through his or her speech.²⁹ For the counselor, a person's heart is most clearly seen through their fruit. Jesus teaches in Luke 6:43–45 that good fruit comes from good trees, and bad fruit comes from bad trees. Therefore, if a counselor wants to look at a person's heart, he has to look at their fruit, and evaluate that fruit on the basis of Scripture. The point is that individuals cannot be trusted to evaluate their own hearts using their own standard. Even the most godly people in the Bible mistrust their own hearts (see 1 Cor 4:4). God is the only righteous Judge of the heart.³⁰

One of the main goals of counseling then is to find out what is going on in the heart of a counselee by using wisdom to draw out the contents (Prov 20:5), and then take that information and evaluate it on the basis of God's standard given in the Scripture. God's Word alone has the power to reach into the deepest recesses of the human heart to reveal what is there (Heb 4:12–13). Essentially, counselors seek to bring counselees to stand in front of the mirror of God's Word, so that they can see what needs to be changed (2 Cor 3:18). How does this happen? How does a biblical counselor draw out what is in the heart, show it to the counselee, and compare the heart contents to what God desires?

²⁹ Paul Tripp tells of a time when he went to a wedding of an extended family member. At the reception, his uncle got drunk and said some extremely inappropriate things. Paul's mom determined that it was time to go home. On the way out of the reception, Mrs. Tripp told her children that her brother was speaking from his heart. She said, "No one has ever said anything that he has not first thought in his heart." This was a pretty profound statement by Mrs. Tripp, which she learned from the principle found in Luke 6:45. The alcohol of Paul's uncle did not create a problem; it loosened the lips, and allowed what was in the heart to come out of his mouth. "Word problems are not technique problems. Word problems are heart problems." Paul Tripp, *War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2000), 30–31.

³⁰ Street, *The Passions of the Heart*, 26.

The Personal Desires of the Heart

While it is impossible to fully know the heart, the biblical counselor can work to understand its primary ruling authorities. Those ruling authorities in many cases will be directly connected to the presenting problem for which the counselee came. The key for the counselor then is to determine what is ruling the heart. Who is controlling this person? What idols are being served? John Calvin said that the heart is like an idol factory, constantly creating competing rulers.³¹

The counselor must work to identify the ruling authorities of the counselee's heart, and then call him or her to view God in the proper light, and then properly submit to Him. Jeremy Pierre argues that the greatest hindrance to submission is often a misperception of God. People view him through the lens of personal desire.³² The task of the counselor is to call the counselee to faith. The counselee must continually resubmit his personal beliefs, values, and commitments to God by aligning them with His Word. This happens through the strength given by the Holy Spirit.³³

The Necessity of Incremental Work

Genuine change begins with the work of the Spirit, as He brings the Scriptures to bear on the person's challenge, and is also influenced by the effort of the counselor. However, this change does not happen overnight. A proper understanding of sanctification causes both the counselor and counselee to trust God, even when the steps of spiritual growth seem small and slow-going. The reality of genuine spiritual change is that it does not happen in a microwave. It is more akin to the change that happens in a smoker. When a person puts a piece of meat in a microwave, within a few minutes, the meat is fully cooked and ready to eat. Raw meat put into a smoker would be of no value

³¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:108.

³² Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 117.

³³ Pierre, 119.

after a few minutes, unless those few minutes were part of a longer time period (i.e., several hours). This illustrates the nature of spiritual change.

A biblical counselor may look for clear signs of genuine change after a few minutes, and think, “Nothing is happening.” In reality, changes may very well be taking place, though subtle. To expect immediate change mistreats and misunderstands the process of the smoker, and how it was made to produce change. It is meant to take time. In a similar way, expecting immediate change within a counseling session or from one counseling session to the second misunderstands the nature of progressive sanctification. The counselee may be looking for immediate results as well, and feel frustrated that the counselee is not completely eradicating the besetting sin right away. The point is that change may very well be happening over the course of a few weeks, even if it is imperceptible. Counselors must help the counselee to trust that when a person follows God, using God’s Word in God’s way, change is happening. Ultimately, a person’s perception of his or her own change is not as important as the fact that it is.³⁴

God promises to transform those who put their faith in Him. An example of this imperceptible change is found in 1 John 1:9, where God promises to forgive and to cleanse those who confess their sins to Him. A counselee may not feel like anything is happening when he confesses his sin to God. But even that simple act is an expression of faith. In taking that step of faith, change has happened and is happening in that person’s life. God grants the forgiveness, but He also grants the cleansing (i.e., the transformation). The cleansing restores a person to fellowship with God.³⁵ God removes

³⁴ Another analogy for the slowness of spiritual change would be an unhealthy person seeking to change his eating habits. He may not see how one healthy meal is changing him from obesity to healthy, but when he eats right, the change is happening, although subtly. He needs to trust the process, and more importantly, trust the God of the process.

³⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistles of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991), 67.

the stain of sin both judicially through forgiveness, and effectively through cleansing.

That is, He purifies confessing sinners.³⁶ He changes them.

Conclusion

This chapter was designed to show that equipping seminary students for biblical counseling requires a God-centered operational methodology that promotes genuine change. Counselors seek help from counselors because they want to see change. Biblical counselors must facilitate biblical change by using an operational methodology that relies on God through His Word, prayer, and engagement in Christ's church. The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's children. Therefore, the counselor must evaluate the counselee's relationship with Christ so that the counselor knows how to direct the counselee toward the change that he is seeking. In the process of this sanctification, the Holy Spirit works with the believer, as he responsibly participates through faith and obedience. This change cannot happen on the outside alone. The change must begin and continue at the level of the heart.

³⁶ See John Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 82.

CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the ministry project from preparation to completion. It gives an assessment of the purpose of the project and an evaluation of its four primary goals. The purpose of this project was to begin to equip seminary students for biblical counseling certification at Inter-City Baptist Church (ICBC) in Allen Park, Michigan. The means for reaching the objective was to develop and teach a twelve-week curriculum that was designed to give students a foundational understanding of biblical counseling. This project implementation began on July 22 and concluded on December 14, 2019. This chapter proposes that the project was successful in meeting its purpose.

History of the Ministry Project

When I finished seminary, I was not fully aware of the level of counseling training that I would need in the years ahead. As a first-year pastor of a small church in suburban Detroit in 2009, I thought that I could simply preach and pray my way to ministry success. While Acts 6 shows that preaching and praying are primary responsibilities in pastoral ministry, the interpersonal ministry of the Word through counseling is also necessary for pastoral ministry. In my early ministry, I quickly learned that counseling would be critical, and I learned that I was not as equipped as I could have been. My experience led me to wonder if students at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (DBTS) had a similar experience.

This project began with the vision of Dr. David Doran, who serves as the pastor of ICBC and the president of DBTS. He saw the need to prepare seminary students

to counsel from a biblical perspective. His desire was to see the seminary offer a concentration in biblical counseling beginning in 2017. Up until that point, he had been handling the lion share of the biblical counseling teaching. In order for DBTS to offer a concentration in biblical counseling, counseling classes would have to be offered more frequently and new biblical counseling courses would need to be added. In addition to the training, Dr. Doran thought that it would be helpful if our seminary could offer certification with a recognized training organization—the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC)—so that those who pursued a biblical counseling concentration at DBTS would also be certified by graduation. As a result, Dr. Doran enlisted me to evaluate the present counseling courses at DBTS, as well as take over some of the teaching in biblical counseling.

With a desire to assist Dr. Doran in this work, I began pursuing several tasks in order to better equip myself to help our church and seminary strengthen its focus on biblical counseling. First, I needed to pursue certification with ACBC. If I was going to teach the fundamental training courses, I would need to be certified with ACBC, since at the time of this writing, ACBC requires that two-thirds of core training be done by a certified member. Second, I needed to pursue a teaching degree that would provide the training that better equip me to teach counseling on a seminary level. I began working toward a doctorate of educational ministry in biblical counseling from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2017. Third, I would need to pursue training center certification for our church and seminary, so that we could be authorized by ACBC to train ACBC certification candidates. Fourth, I would need to pursue a fellowship with ACBC, which would allow me to supervise ACBC certification candidates at DBTS. I am presently fulfilling phase 1 fellowship requirements, and am planning to officially apply in the summer of 2020. Fifth, I would need to become approved as an ACBC exam grader. I completed this task in the spring of 2019, and am currently serving ACBC as one of their graders. Sixth, I would need to align the DBTS counseling courses with

ACBC training requirements. As part of the training center requirements, ACBC expects the training center to teach a set of core topics over the course of two years. In 2017, the seminary offered a class on marriage and family counseling that was consistent with the doctrine as well as the scope of ACBC's training requirements. In 2018, DBTS offered a course on problems and procedures in biblical counseling that aligned with ACBC's doctrine and scope. The final component that needed to be fulfilled was for DBTS to offer an introduction to biblical counseling course that was taught by an ACBC certified member and that was consistent with the scope and doctrinal expectations of ACBC.

This project has been the climax of equipping DBTS students for biblical counseling. The development and teaching of the course curriculum was one of the final dominoes to fall on the way to becoming a certified training center. After the final part of the counseling training was developed, our church and seminary began the certified training center application process with ACBC in October 2019.

Structuring the Ministry Project

The design of this project was driven in part by the length of a semester at DBTS, as well as the ACBC requirements for certification training, which are spelled out in their course training documents. A typical fall semester at DBTS lasts for thirteen weeks plus an extra week at the end for a final exam. Since I designed the course to include an in-class exam toward the beginning of the course, the curriculum would need to be covered in twelve weeks of classes. Classes met once a week and lasted for one hour and fifty minutes each.

The ACBC requirements for course content include the following categories: survey and critical analysis of counseling theories; basics of biblical counseling (including a definition of biblical counseling, a biblical view of change, and how to get to heart issues); and key elements in biblical counseling (i.e., methodology).¹ While these

¹ These requirements are based on an ACBC-issued certification manual dated April 3, 2018.

three categories give the basic overview of what ACBC expects to be taught, the training document is more detailed in its scope. Therefore, the training document outline essentially established the course curriculum outline for the introduction course that I developed. Working from the outline, my job was to lean on the training and understanding that I had received and then fill out each section of the outline with biblically faithful content.

Implementing the Ministry Project

Four goals framed the specific implementation of this ministry project. First, I wanted to assess the level of knowledge and proficiency of seminary students in the area of biblical counseling. Second, I planned to develop a twelve-week curriculum for an introduction to biblical counseling seminary course. Third, I wanted to track the progress of students in class attendance and in course reading. Fourth, I planned to measure the post-course level of competency of students in biblical counseling. These four goals served as a guide to determine the success or failure of implementing the project. The following four sections describe and assess each of these goals.

Goal 1: Assessment of Knowledge in Biblical Counseling

The first goal of this project was to assess the knowledge in biblical counseling of DBTS students. This goal was considered to be met when I distributed and collected surveys of at least fifteen DBTS students. Each participant's survey was recorded based on their name and their agreement to participate in the assessment survey. The goal was met based on the following explanation.

In order to determine deficiencies in survey questions and to get a gauge on the amount of time that the survey would take, I chose to pilot-test a biblical counseling

At the completion of this project, ACBC was presently working on updating their training center requirements.

competency survey to a select group of DBTS alumni. The average time that alumni used to take the survey was around five minutes. The alumni survey, while slightly different than the BCA for current students, revealed some of the same patterns of limited training and an inability to handle biblical counseling well. The pilot test included a population of DBTS graduates from 1976 to 2019.² Graduates who died or defected from the faith for doctrinal or moral reasons were not included in this study. A census of the remaining graduate population was attempted. The results of this pilot test were limited in generalization.

There are many factors that can influence a seminary graduates' sense of competency in counseling. Some graduates may have received biblical counseling training in undergraduate or graduate degrees prior to their seminary training at DBTS. Other graduates may have had counseling experience prior to finishing their seminary degree. Some pastors were involved in pastoral ministry concurrent with their seminary training. The pilot test revealed something very similar to the student body survey—a lack of biblical counseling training as well as a general feeling of incompetency in the area of biblical counseling.

Following the pilot test and prior to the start of the semester, I sent an email to active DBTS students, explaining the need to assess, by means of survey, their training and competency in biblical counseling. Participants were given the biblical counseling assessment (BCA) survey. This survey included three questions on demographics, two questions on past biblical counseling training, and thirty questions on biblical counseling competency. The BCA survey instrument was delivered via email and administered by Survey Monkey. The population size of the DBTS student body at the time of conducting the survey was seventy-one. The goal of fifteen survey respondents was exceeded, with a

² This includes all graduates, a total of 207. Three have died. Five have left the ministry because of doctrinal or moral defection. Therefore, the population size will be 199 graduates.

total of forty-three students completing the survey. Many valuable observations were gleaned from the survey results, which served to shape my thinking and helped to inform my additional modifications of the course curriculum.

Research Questions

The research questions of this quantitative study sought to answer two main questions. First, what kind of counseling training had DBTS students received at the time of the survey? Second, how did DBTS students describe their competency in biblical counseling?

Methodological Design

The research methodology for this assignment included a survey using the quantitative research method. The survey used question to assess the level of counseling competency among DBTS students. The questions addressed three categories illustrated in the following chart.

Table 1. BCA survey category distribution

Categories	Questions
Demographics	1, 2, 3
Research Question #1: Type of counseling training	4, 5
Research Question #2: Competency in counseling	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35

The first category asked preliminary demographic questions. The second category asked questions relating to the level of training that DBTS students received related to biblical counseling. These questions sought to gather information on what kind

of counseling training they had received. The third category asked questions relating to how students described their competency in counseling.

Demographics and Pre-Course Training

The survey gave several interesting results regarding the background of students: 83 percent of respondents were married; the average student had been saved for twenty-two years; and 81 percent were serving in some type of vocational ministry at the time of the survey.

Not surprisingly, twenty of the respondents had not received any type of training in counseling. Of the twenty-three who were trained on some level, fifteen took at least one biblical counseling course in college. Four others received biblical counseling training through a conference or camp setting. Two had taken a seminary-level biblical counseling course. The final two were trained in the fields of psychology or Christian psychology. This data identifies an important reality regarding our students. In the area of biblical counseling, the overwhelming majority of students had very little in-depth biblical counseling training beyond college.

Pre-Course Perception of Competency

The thirty questions relating to counseling competency could be further broken down into understanding of biblical counseling concepts and perception of biblical counseling ability. While several of the responses relating to understanding were intriguing, I will focus on five of the lowest scoring questions.

Table 2 examines questions relating to respondents' understanding of biblical counseling concepts. The first question in the table reveals some confusion among the respondents regarding the synthesis of the Bible and psychology. Over half believed that psychology works together with the Bible. The second question in table 2 revealed that 98 percent of students believed that only the pastor was responsible for counseling in the

church. The key word in that question was “solely.” The implication from the response is that students do not believe that fellow church members bear some of the responsibility.

The third question related to the practical part of counseling. The survey results showed mixed opinions on who was responsible to set the goals of counseling. Twenty-one respondents thought that the counselee should set the goals. The fourth question showed that thirty-one people believed that the counselor should work to build the counselee’s self-esteem.

Table 2. Pre-course understanding of biblical counseling concepts

Survey Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Bible and psychology work together.	3	8	10	8	7	6
The pastor is solely responsible for counseling in the church.	0	0	1	5	15	22
The goals of counseling are set by the counselee.	1	4	17	9	10	2
Building a counselee’s self-esteem has value for biblical counseling.	1	4	7	11	15	5
Offering group counseling to a counselee has value for biblical counseling.	2	9	23	7	1	1

The fifth question was unclear in its wording. I was expecting a negative response. Since the survey revealed that many thought that group counseling would be good, I reevaluated the wording of the question. When I wrote the question, I had in mind

group counseling, like Alcoholics Anonymous. However, the participants may have had in mind a church's small group. Therefore, I considered this question to be unhelpful in my research of students' understanding of biblical counseling concepts.

Combining the first four questions from table 2 suggested to me that a large number of students lacked a basic understanding of biblical counseling concepts. While these questions were concerning, other questions not listed revealed that the students have a strong foundation of theology and common sense. Because a robust theology is the foundation for biblical counseling, several of the questions were answered consistently with biblical counseling principles.

Table 3. Pre-course perceptions related to biblical counseling

Survey Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know which questions to ask for any given counseling issue.	2	10	11	17	3	0
I have a strategy for studying and responding to any counseling issue.	2	10	7	16	6	2
I am comfortable counseling someone who is unrepentant.	2	9	11	12	9	0
I am comfortable counseling someone who is full of pride and selfishness.	1	7	6	16	12	1
I know how to counsel someone who talks too much.	1	7	7	16	10	2
I know how to counsel someone who has difficulty expressing his or her thoughts.	2	5	9	15	10	2

Table 3 demonstrates a perceived lack of knowledge among respondents regarding a range of biblical counseling issues. The BCA survey concluded with eight statements about the students' perception of their own biblical counseling abilities. The final two questions are not listed in table 3 because the respondents answered confidently in being able to handle those issues (i.e., keeping a counselee on track regarding their explanation of the problem and asking counselees deep questions that move beyond the surface issue).

The six questions in table 3 reveal that DBTS students did not feel comfortable handling difficult counseling challenges. At least fourteen people in each question did not feel comfortable handling these situations. Respondents were least confident on the first question listed in table 3. They did not perceive strength in being able to ask the right questions for any counseling issue. Of course, the question is pretty broad, but a trained biblical counselor would be experienced and taught enough to know which questions to ask.

This preliminary assessment of DBTS students showed what I assumed to be true: (1) students did not have adequate training in biblical counseling; (2) students did not know some of the basic biblical counseling concepts; and (3) students did not feel equipped to counsel in a various issues. Training in biblical counseling is critical for future pastoral ministry. In his research on the counseling function of pastors, Louis Abramczyk discovered that while pastors are averaging 20 percent of their time on counseling, they are dissatisfied with the preparation for counseling, and desire further training.³ Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary exists to serve local churches by shaping faithful men for the gospel ministry through the word of God. With these realities in view, how can DBTS better train pastors for the biblical counseling responsibilities that they will have in future ministry?

³ Louis W. Abramczyk, "The Counseling Function of Pastors: A Study in Practice and Preparation." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9, no. 3 (1981): 257–65.

The purpose of this survey study was to compare seminary training in biblical counseling with pastoral competency in counseling among Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary students. This study sought to elaborate on and clarify the link between seminary training in counseling and pastoral competency in counseling. Understanding how current students perceive their counseling training and abilities helps me to know how to better train and equip pastors for ministry.

Goal 2: Development of Course Curriculum

The second goal of the project was to develop a twelve-week curriculum that partially fulfills training center requirements given by ACBC, and that will equip students for ACBC exams. The goal was considered to be successful when a panel of three experts agreed that I had met the requirements given on a rubric.⁴ The curriculum rubric requested feedback in four categories, including biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality. The curriculum was developed in part through my research and writing of chapters 2 and 3. The curriculum was developed over the course of sixteen weeks. The curriculum was delivered to the expert panel in four parts. The first part was delivered via email on August 5, 2019. The second part was delivered via email on September 3, 2019. The third part of the curriculum was delivered via email on September 23, 2019. The final part was delivered via email on October 21, 2019, along with the curriculum evaluation rubric. Final approval was received on November 10, 2019.

This second goal was considered to be successfully met when a minimum of 85 percent of the responses on the rubric were at the level “sufficient” or above. This goal was considered successful considering that 100 percent of the responses were at a level of “sufficient” or above. Each line on the curriculum evaluation rubric was scored as

⁴ See appendix 2.

sufficient or exemplary. Each member of the expert panel was given nine items to evaluate, for a total of twenty-seven possible individual evaluations. Twenty-two line items were scored as exemplary and five were scored as sufficient.

Construction of Course Curriculum

As I developed the curriculum for the introduction class at DBTS, I wanted to align the curriculum with ACBC training requirements. The template for training requirements was established by ACBC and clearly outlined in the ACBC certification manual, dated 2018 as well as the ACBC bylaws. The outline included the following three areas: critical reflection on various theories in counseling; basics of biblical counseling; and key elements in biblical counseling.⁵ Based on that outline, I decided on three passages to exegete in chapter 2, which would inform and fulfill curriculum requirements. The first passage, 2 Peter 1:2–11, focused on the sufficiency of Scripture, which is at the heart of biblical counseling. The second passage, Colossians 1:28–29, described the pastor’s role in biblical counseling, showing that pastors must admonish and teach believers in all wisdom. The final passage, Ephesians 4:7–16, revealed that speaking the truth in love should be the ministry of every believer. This passage also showed that truth-speaking ought to be done in the context of the local church, and under the authority of pastors.

My research for chapter 3 also formed a large part of the course curriculum. Chapter 3 was designed to show the methodological foundation for equipping seminary students to help people change. The thesis for chapter 3 was that equipping seminary students for biblical counseling requires a God-centered operational methodology that promotes genuine change. The content of chapter 3 included five primary components: 1) a God-centered methodology that will help a biblical counselor lead counselees to

⁵ A detailed outline can be found in appendix 4.

change; 2) a counselor's reliance on the means of grace, and helping the counselee to do the same; 3) an evaluation of the counselee's spiritual condition in order to determine case direction; 4) a level of expertise to advance the counselee's sanctification; and 5) an understanding of the nature of the human heart.

Based on the outline prescribed by ACBC along with the exegesis and research that I did in chapters 2 and 3, I developed the following structure for the course curriculum. The first lesson served as an introduction, focusing on the definition, the goal, and the history of biblical counseling. The second and third lessons focused on the theological basis of biblical counseling and the importance of the gospel for biblical counseling. The fourth lesson provided a lecture on the qualifications and posture of a biblical counselor. The fifth lesson sought to expound on the doctrine of progressive sanctification, and give practical application for helping a counselee through the process of biblical change. The sixth lesson focused on moving past the surface issues and using the Scriptures to get to the heart. The seventh and eighth lessons were designed to be practical in nature. These lessons developed a basic methodology for counseling, and then walked through the steps of a typical counseling session. The ninth and final lesson led the students through a critique of the various secular and integration theories.

With the course outline determined, the curriculum was expanded and developed. In the development of the curriculum, I read over twenty-five biblical counseling books, taking notes and developing a methodology as I went. The primary foci of the course curriculum were the history of biblical counseling, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, and a biblical view of progressive sanctification. I especially wanted each student to be solid in their understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture. While this topic was developed in a section of curriculum, the sufficiency of Scripture was also woven throughout the notes to show the students how it showed up in church history, as well as how it practically applies to counseling methodology. A person who is not confident that the Scriptures are sufficient for all of the problems that a person faces

will be quick to run to secular psychology or elsewhere to find the answers.

Refinement of Course Curriculum

The construction of the curriculum went through several changes. The first changes came as a result of the BCA survey that was administered prior to the start of the class. I learned that students were weak in their methodology as well as in confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, so I sought to bolster those two areas in my notes. The second round of changes came as a result of the helpful feedback from the expert panel. One of the members of the panel was especially helpful, giving thorough and thoughtful feedback on each page of the curriculum that was sent to him. Based on those recommendations, I made several edits to the course curriculum prior to teaching. The final set of edits came after each individual lecture. As I taught, I made further modifications. Some modifications were a result of lack of clarity. Others were a result of questions and discussion with the students. While the curriculum is far from a perfect document, I am happy with where it is right now. Before I teach it again, I will again refine and modify based on what I have learned prior to the next course. I chose to manuscript the course curriculum, so that I could ensure that I understood where I was going, and also so that those who evaluate the curriculum from ACBC will have some substance from which they can determine if we have met their requirements.

Once the curriculum was examined by the expert panel, and the modifications were made, I went on to teach the students in the introduction class at DBTS. The first class was taught on September 9, 2019. The lecture laid out the course requirements, and finished with an introduction to biblical counseling that described the definition and goal. The second class lecture was taught on September 16, 2019, and described the history of biblical counseling, and began into the topic regarding the theological basis for biblical counseling. The third lecture was taught on September 23, 2019, and finished the theological basis, focusing on the sufficiency of Scripture from 2 Peter 1:2–11. The

fourth lecture was taught on September 30, 2019. This lecture focused on the posture of a biblical counselor, and I began to talk about progressive sanctification, describing the theological foundation for it.

The fifth lecture, taught on October 14, 2019, completed the section on progressive sanctification, with a special emphasis on helping counselees through the process of biblical change and getting to heart issues. The sixth lecture, taught on October 21, 2019, was designed to help students develop their own biblical counseling methodology that included a realistic goal, a basic plan, a definite application, and a focus on relationship. The seventh, eighth, and ninth lectures were taught on October 28, November 4, and November 11, 2019. The lessons were meant to help students think through a typical counseling case, using ACBC's approach as an outline: gathering data, discerning problems biblically, establishing involvement, giving hope, providing instruction, and giving homework. The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth lectures were taught on November 18, December 2, and December 9, 2019. These final lectures were designed to help the students use the sufficiency and authority of the Scripture to critique secular and integration theories.

Goal 3: Evaluation of Participation

The third goal of this project was to track the progress of students' participation in class through assigned reading and class attendance. This goal was measured by evaluating the number of pages that the students read, as well as the number of hours that the students attended class.

Participation of Class Attendance

I used a video recording device to record each lesson that I taught, so that a person who missed a lecture would be able review the lecture at a later time. This was important for two reasons. First, I wanted to ensure that every student received the same amount of training. As a result, I tracked each student's progress including class

attendance and class participation. Second, ACBC requires a review of class notes and teaching in order to evaluate DBTS for the training center. These videos would later be sent to ACBC for their review.

The students were expected to attend every class, but because of sickness, work responsibilities, or other scenarios, students on occasion might miss a class. When a student missed a class, I challenged him to watch the recorded lecture to ensure that he was up to speed with the course curriculum. The goal was considered to be met when 80 percent of the class attended (or watched the lectures) of 90 percent of the classes. This goal was considered successful, since 80 percent of the students attended more than 90 percent of the classes. One student attended all of the classes. Three students attended more than 90 percent of the classes, missing only one class. The final student missed two classes, which was 83 percent. Although watching the video was not a requirement, each student attended enough classes to meet the goal. Additionally, the notes for the classes missed were distributed to each student.

Participation of Course Reading

The reading was divided into four parts that coincided with the four books students were required to read. The first book, *The Biblical Counseling Movement* by David Powlison, was assigned to be read by October 21, 2019. The second book, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* by Heath Lambert was to be read by November 4, 2019. Jeremy Pierre's book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* was supposed to be completed by November 18, 2019. The final book, *Descriptions and Prescriptions* by Michael Emlet was assigned to be read by December 2, 2019. The goal was considered successfully met when 80 percent of the class completed at least 90 percent of the assigned reading. This part of the goal was considered successful, since 100 percent of the students completed more than 90 percent of the reading.

Goal 4: Measurement of Post-Course Competency in Biblical Counseling

The fourth goal of this project was to measure the progress of students in biblical counseling by enlisting an ACBC representative to grade the students' exam questions in a way that mimics the scoring patterns of ACBC. This was one of the key ways for me to evaluate whether I did an adequate job of teaching the course curriculum. I secured an independent evaluator to determine the quality of training the students received. The independent evaluator was an ACBC exam grader named Gabriel Powell. Mr. Powell scored the students' exam questions just as he would score an ACBC certification candidate's exam.

My first task was to assign ACBC exam questions to the students. I chose to use questions that directly related to the course curriculum content. The questions were divided into two sections, so that the students would have adequate opportunities to learn from the lectures, research, and write the questions. The first five questions were due on October 28, 2019. They were as follows: ACBC counseling exam questions 2, 10, 16, and ACBC theology exam questions 2 and 20. These questions corresponded with the course lectures that had been taught prior to that date. Question 2 from the ACBC counseling exam focuses on developing rapport with a counselee and determining how to care for them. The ACBC counseling exam question 10 asks about the role of the church in biblical counseling, specifically how church discipline plays a part. The ACBC counseling exam question 16 is a case study that asks how a counselor would determine their spiritual condition in order to determine next steps. Question 2 from the ACBC theology exam asks the student to describe the sufficiency of Scripture. The ACBC theology exam question 20 is a question that focuses on the nature of progressive sanctification.

The second five questions were due on December 9, 2019 and corresponded to the class lectures that students had received prior to that point. The questions that were assigned were as follows: from the ACBC counseling exam, questions 1, 7, 11, and 12;

and from the ACBC theology exam, question 6. The first question from the counseling exam asked students about what should be covered in an introductory session with a counselee. Question 7 asked students to list and discuss reasons why they might conclude a counseling case. Question 11 was designed to help students think through and articulate the role of confidentiality in biblical counseling. The ACBC counseling exam question 12 was a case study that required students to describe a homework assignment they might give to a young man who was struggling with pornography. The final question from ACBC theology exam question 6 asked about the nature of sin and how it impacted biblical counseling over and against secular psychology.

After assigning the counseling questions, my second task was to secure an ACBC grader who could impartially evaluate the students' answers to the assigned question according to the ACBC standard rubric for ACBC exams. The ACBC grader was given two weeks to return the scores. The goal would be considered successful when each student scored at a sufficient or above level on the evaluation rubric. This goal was difficult to evaluate because the goal's wording did not match the options on the evaluation rubric. The ACBC grader returned scores for each of the student's ten exam responses. Of the fifty responses by the students, ten of the responses were scored as best. Six of the responses were scored as acceptable. Fourteen of responses were scored as acceptable with comment. Twenty of the responses were scored as not acceptable. Zero of the responses were scored as fatal error.

The ACBC grader explained to me via email that the students who scored not acceptable had not failed on those questions. However, if the students had submitted those responses to ACBC, those particular responses would have been returned to the certificate candidate asking them to revise them and resubmit. The other responses that the DBTS students received from the ACBC grader (best, acceptable, and acceptable with comment) were sufficient for ACBC expectations for the exam. In other words, those responses would have been approved without a requirement of a rewrite. When designing

the goal, my desire was to equip the students to be able to sufficiently pass the exam questions. Although each student would have to rewrite the questions that were scored as not acceptable, the answers they submitted reflected a solid foundation from which they could build. They simply needed to clarify or expand their answers to meet ACBC expectations. Consequently, I believe that the goal I had in mind (although not stated accurately at the beginning of the project) was determined to be successful.

Conclusion

This chapter served to demonstrate the means and results of how my project met four primary goals: assessment of knowledge in biblical counseling, development of course curriculum, evaluation of participation in course requirements, and measurement of post-course competency in biblical counseling. It is with great joy and thanksgiving to God that I can present data indicating the success of the four primary goals. While the four goals were met, it is essential to evaluate how this project could be strengthened even more. The following chapter provides an assessment of this project, and how it can be used in another setting to advance the mission of Christ's church.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF MINISTRY PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter serves as an evaluation of the ministry project, offering assessments of the project's purpose, goals, weaknesses, and strengths. A portion of this chapter also addresses how the project might be changed for greater benefit in future use at Inter-City Baptist Church (ICBC) as well as among other institutions. The last section of the chapter contains personal reflections on the experience as a whole. The chapter concludes with a summary of these evaluations.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The stated purpose of this ministry project was to initially equip seminary students for biblical counseling certification at ICBC. Pastors must be equipped to handle problems that individuals in their churches face. The Scriptures call the church to train disciples who will be able to teach others also. The goal of this project seeks to obey the command of the Scriptures to train others for ministry (Matt 28:18–20; 2 Timothy 2:2, et al). Additionally, it supports the mission of ICBC—to make and mature disciples who are together becoming like Jesus Christ.

Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (DBTS) exists to advance the mission of ICBC by aiding in the responsibility to train men for ministry. The seminary focuses on training men for the public ministry of the Word, but also for the interpersonal ministry of the Word. Preparing ministers of the gospel to counsel well will serve them and the church of Jesus Christ.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

In keeping with the purpose of the project, the goals of this project were both relevant and practical. To accomplish its stated purpose, this project focused on four related goals: (1) assess the students' current knowledge in biblical counseling; (2) design a twelve-week curriculum that fulfills ACBC training requirements, and that will equip students for the ACBC exams; (3) track the progress of students' participation in class through assigned reading and class hours; and (4) measure the progress of students in biblical counseling by enlisting an ACBC representative to grade the students' exam questions in a way that mimics the scoring patterns of ACBC.

Goal 1: Assessment of Knowledge in Biblical Counseling

To assess the student's knowledge in biblical counseling, the Biblical Counseling Assessment Survey was administered electronically to seventy-one DBTS students.¹ The objective under this goal was to identify areas of the curriculum that would need to be addressed prior to the completion of the curriculum. Even though my goal was to administer the survey to at least fifteen students, I far exceeded that goal by receiving responses from forty-three participants.

As I reviewed the surveys, I expected to find deficiencies in biblical counseling training, as well as a lack of healthy self-confidence in their ability to counsel others. As expected, no student had significant training in biblical counseling. A few had training in secular psychology. A few others had taken biblical counseling classes at seminary. Nearly half of the respondents had not been trained in biblical counseling.

Additionally, students did not feel confident in their own abilities to counsel from a biblical perspective. However, many of them intuitively answered some of the questions well because of their previous theological training.

¹ See appendix 2.

Goal 2: Development of Course Curriculum

The second goal concerned the development of a twelve-week curriculum designed that matches a portion of the training requirements for Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) training centers and that will equip students for selected questions on the ACBC exams. This curriculum was designed to meet ACBC training requirements, including 50 percent of the curriculum being original content.

This goal was considered successful when a panel of three experts reviewed the material and scored it at the sufficient level or above according to the categories on a rubric.² For the most part, the reviewers gave the curriculum exemplary marks. Each rubric contained eight items to score. With three reviewers on the expert panel, the total items to score were twenty-four. Of those, nineteen were scored with the highest mark of exemplary. The other five were scored as sufficient. Several revisions were suggested by the panel, and those revisions were incorporated in the curriculum, including adding more theological content, more biblical examples, more illustrations, case studies, and clarifying unclear sentences and paragraphs.

The knowledge gained in the literature reviews and research for chapter 3 served me well in developing the curriculum. While authors vary on the specifics of counseling methodology, the focus of each biblical counseling model was on intentional, Word-centered change. The curriculum sought to emphasize those ideas.

The panel proved to be extremely beneficial in preparing the final draft of the curriculum. Each reviewer received the curriculum in four parts. Each part was sent via email and the reviewer was given two weeks to return with any suggested revisions. Once I received each part, I incorporated the recommended changes prior to teaching the curriculum. When the final part was delivered to the reviewers, a rubric was sent as well. The reviewer was to offer recommended changes as with the other parts and also score

² See appendix 3.

the curriculum as a whole in four categories, including biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability.

The main critique of the curriculum had to do with the scope of content. One reviewer mentioned that it was good enough for the kind of class that it is. Another reviewer said that it could be more comprehensive and even expanded to be a three-credit course. Since the course was designed to be an introduction, the reviewers all agreed that the depth was sufficient based on the nature of the class and what it intended to do.

Another main critique of the curriculum had to do with practicality. Much of my post-graduate training has focused on theology and Bible content. Some of the points of discussion that were added to the curriculum were more practical in nature and served me well by strengthening the curriculum with specific examples and case studies. Specific examples help bring the teaching to life for the students. The reviewers' feedback led me to make the course more interactive in nature. While the majority of the classes were lecture-driven, I took ten to twenty minutes in the final six classes to work through case studies with the students. The case studies and ensuing discussions proved to be practical and valuable for the students to apply the principles of biblical counseling.

The course curriculum was developed primarily through the preparation done for chapter 3. The curriculum was strengthened even more because of the expert panel and their suggested changes. The curriculum was taught, and feedback from class participants has been positive. The curriculum achieved its purpose, and I hope that I can continue to refine and strengthen it in preparation to teach it in the future.

Goal 3: Evaluation of Participation

The third goal was to track the progress of the students' participation in class through assigned reading and class hours attended. This goal was measured by evaluating the number of pages the students read and the number of hours that the students were in the class. Ensuring that students read according to the assigned schedule and attended

classes was important to me because I wanted to make sure that each of them were getting the appropriate content to supplement the class lectures so that they could grow in their understanding and competence. In addition to course curriculum, I thought it would be helpful to have the students supplement their learning with outside reading. Each of the books had a due date on a different date in order to minimize the end-of-semester crammed reading that seminary students can be prone to do.

Master of Divinity students were required to read four books, with each book due at four different times throughout the semester. The first two books described the history of the biblical counseling movement and were due on October 21 and November 4. The third book, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* by Jeremy Pierre, helped students think through methodology, and was due on November 18. The fourth book, *Descriptions and Prescriptions* by Michael Emlet, was designed to help the students read one approach to understanding medications in relation to biblical counseling. The reading of that book was due on December 2. Master of Theology students were required to read these four books plus an additional book, *Counsel with Confidence* by Joel James, due on December 2. Four students read every page assigned prior to the due date. One student read all of the assigned reading, except for seventeen pages on one assignment.

While the course grading did not include a line item for class attendance, the students were expected to be in class each week. If a student was unable to attend, they were encouraged, but not required, to watch the class lecture on video within the next week. There were five total absences among the five students. For each absence, the video of the missed class was made available to the student. In addition to making the lecture available, the course notes in manuscript form were given to each student in order to ensure that students did not miss any of the course content.

The third goal of this project was considered successful when 80 percent of the class completed at least 90 percent of the course's assigned reading, and 80 percent of the class attended at least 90 percent of the classes. The reading part of this goal was

successful, because every student read more than 90 percent of the required reading. Four students completed all of the assigned reading, and one student completed 98 percent of the reading prior to the due date. The attendance part of the goal was also successful, since 80 percent of the class (i.e., four out of five students) attended at least 90 percent of the classes. One student attended all of the classes. Three students attended twelve out of thirteen classes, totaling 92 percent. One student attended eleven out of thirteen classes, giving him an attendance rate of 85 percent.

Goal 4: Measurement of Post-Course Competency in Biblical Counseling

The fourth goal of this project was to measure the progress of students' competency in biblical counseling by requiring each student to complete ten ACBC exam questions, including three from the theology exam and seven from the counseling exam. The first reason to assign exam questions was to prepare students for future certification. The second reason to assign exam questions was to provide an indirect evaluation of my teaching. In order to do this, I enlisted an independent grader to evaluate the students' knowledge of how to do biblical counseling.

The goal would be considered successful when each student scored at sufficient or above on the evaluation rubric. The problem with this goal is that it is not specific enough and it did not match the language on the rubric. The goal did not clarify whether each question should be at sufficient or above, or if the average for each student was sufficient or above, or if the average of the entire class was at sufficient or above. While the goal was not clear from the beginning, my intention was to prepare the students for ACBC certification. A better way to state the goal would have been to say that the goal would be considered successful when 80 percent of the class scored as "acceptable with comment" or better on 50 percent of the exam questions. However, since the goal was stated vaguely, I evaluated this goal's success on a comparison between the responses that were scored as "acceptable with comment" or better.

Strengths of the Project

The strengths of this project can be summarized in three ways: (1) The curriculum is well-developed; (2) The course will be taught again; and (3) The development of this course serves as a template for developing the biblical counseling concentration at DBTS. The first main strength is that the curriculum was developed well. I read over twenty-five books on biblical counseling in order to improve my understanding of the history and methodology of biblical counseling. I leaned on several of these resources in order to develop the curriculum for the introduction course that I taught. The curriculum was manuscripted, which helped keep me and the students moving through the material at a comfortable pace. The teaching of the curriculum was designed to be interactive, in order to allow for examples, case studies, and dialogue with the students. If the curriculum were developed solely through my research, it may have been sufficient, but the curriculum was further strengthened through the evaluation of the expert panel. The feedback from the expert panel proved to be one of the greatest strengths of designing this course. The panel provided some invaluable recommendations for revision that allowed me to improve the content and clarify specific areas that were unclear or imprecise.

The second strength that is worth considering is that the pastor of ICBC asked me to teach it again. To have the expert panel encourage me in the development of the curriculum was one thing, but to be asked to teach it again is a huge encouragement as to the value of the course. The great advantage to teaching it a second time is that I will have another opportunity to improve and revise the curriculum. In teaching the class, I made some notes in a few areas where I would like to do more research. Additionally, I made notes of student interaction and student competence on ACBC exam questions. All of these things will be used to inform and strengthen the curriculum prior to teaching it a second time.

The third strength is that the development of this course serves as a template

for developing the biblical counseling concentration at DBTS. When I began this project in 2017, I wanted the project to focus on developing biblical counseling at DBTS. However, my advisor suggested that that was too ambitious a project. Instead, he said, I should focus on developing curriculum for one course, and then use the principles I learned from that experience to apply to the rest of my development of the biblical counseling concentration. Since the teaching of this course, the president of the seminary asked me to teach a marriage and family counseling course in the near future. I am working right now to develop the curriculum in a way very similar to what I learned from this project. Additionally, our seminary is making plans for future courses that coincide with specialization courses that ACBC offers. Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary is currently pursuing certification as an ACBC training center. As a training center, the seminary would like to offer specialization courses in addition to the core training courses.

Weaknesses of the Project

The weaknesses of the project have to do with the curriculum that was developed. The first weakness has to do with the structure of the curriculum. As I taught through the material, I realized that the material at the end of the course (i.e., evaluation of secular and integration theories) would have served the students better if it were placed closer to the beginning of the course. The first two topics of discussion in the course were the history and the foundational elements of biblical counseling. Critiquing secular and integration theories would have fit better under those foundational elements of biblical counseling. Another related weakness with the structure was that the teaching did not fit into twelve clean teaching units. Maybe that kind of structure would be an impossibility, but for the students, having one topic for each class would have been helpful.

The second weakness has to do with the evaluation of the curriculum by the expert panel. I delivered the completed portion of the curriculum to the expert panel

within three weeks of teaching the curriculum. That gave the expert panel two weeks to evaluate the curriculum, and it gave me one week to incorporate the changes. In most cases the given time did not present any issues. But in one specific case, the expert panel suggested a revision to me that required more in-depth research than I had time for. The panel suggested that I add a section on the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of man that would give students a more well-rounded approach to biblical counseling issues. This was especially important, the reviewer suggested, because secular psychology's errant views of these key doctrines. While I agreed that an additional discussion of the doctrines of sin and man would have been a helpful addition to the curriculum, I did not have enough time to adequately develop each doctrine.

The third weakness stemmed from a poor design evaluation. As I stated in my evaluation of the fourth goal, I should have been clearer in what I desired from the independent grader for the ACBC exam. This made the evaluation of the project more difficult and less empirical.

What I Would Do Differently

Considering the weaknesses, I would do a few things differently if I were to implement this process in preparing other curricula. First, as it pertains to curriculum development, I would seek to organize the content in a way that makes logical sense. I would also be clearer with the expert panel, asking the reviewers to take some time to evaluate the structure of the curriculum. While the final draft of the curriculum turned out well, I could have improved the curriculum if I had taken these steps.

Second, I would have given the expert panel the curriculum two weeks earlier than I did before. An additional two weeks of lead time to critique the draft of my curriculum. This would give me more time to incorporate more significant changes. Because I only gave three weeks of lead time, I was often pressed for time in making the minor changes and prevented from making the more significant revisions.

Third, if I were to do this project over from the beginning, I would write the goal for the evaluation rubric more clearly. The goal should have been more student-focused. It could have been stated as follows: “This goal will be considered successful when 80 percent of the students score as ‘acceptable with comment’ or above on 50 percent of the ACBC exam questions.” Clarifying this goal would have allowed me to evaluate individuals more specifically, which in turn would have helped me to see how I did in equipping the students for the ACBC exam.

Theological Reflections

Preparing men for counseling certification is a subset of discipleship ministry. As I reflect on the process of developing curriculum for the introduction to biblical counseling course, four things have struck me with regard to theology. First, I am more convinced of the necessity of good theology combined with a practical methodology. Practically moving to help people with their problems is important, but unless it comes from a biblical foundation, does it really help? On the flip side, a good theology is useless if it is not connected with practical application.³ As I researched various counseling models—biblical and integrationist—and found that well-meaning people filled the spectrum with regard to helpfulness. And their helpfulness, in my view, was directly connected to their ability to properly understand and use the Scriptures.

Second, the process of preparing the curriculum has made me more convinced of the importance of progressive sanctification, and particularly its role in counseling.

Third, I found the understanding of doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture to be critical for teaching counseling. Some of the students were unclear on this doctrine, and were more willing to equivocate on secular psychological ideas. The doctrine of the

³ John Frame states it this way, “the theologian states the facts and truths of Scripture for the purpose of *edification*. . . . I offer my definition of theology: theology is *the application of Scripture, by persons, to every area of life*.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 5–8.

sufficiency of Scripture is the key doctrine that sets biblical counseling apart from all other methods of helping people with spiritual problems.

Fourth, this process has also reminded me of the important work of personal discipleship, both in teaching people how to counsel, and in counseling itself.

Personal Reflections

I appreciate the challenge of developing curriculum. The process has helped me to think more carefully about the counseling process. The process of developing curriculum has also helped me to develop a basic counseling framework to help students.

As much as I enjoyed and benefited from the development process, the teaching was even more enjoyable. Classes met on Monday nights. My routine each week was to review the notes prior the class. By the time that the class began, I was prepared, confident, and ready to teach. Occasionally questions would come up that would help round out the teaching. The teaching and class interaction was a great treasure. I grew in my desire to teach, and also in my desire to work toward greater precision in my teaching. Before I began, I thought that much of the material was common knowledge for a typical seminary student. While much of the theological foundation was review for the students, I discovered that for the most part, the students did not have much knowledge or experience in biblical counseling. It seemed like they were soaking up the teaching, and were looking forward to putting these principles into practice. The feedback from both the expert panel and the students reassured me of my abilities to practice and teach biblical counseling.

Conclusion

This project was successful in meeting its purpose and goals. I am thankful to God for how He has used this to strengthen my confidence in the Scriptures for counseling, and in how He has used me to influence young men to counsel well. I pray that God will help me to continue to refine the curriculum and use what I learned from

this project to shape the rest of the biblical counseling concentration at DBTS. It has been a great blessing to shepherd these young men in their understanding of the Scriptures as they apply to life's challenges. I will continue to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of this project as I look ahead to further teaching and training of men for ministry. May the God of all grace strengthen the members of ICBC and the students at DBTS to use the Bible to help people change. May they humbly rely on His grace, and may they patiently strengthen and restore those who are seeking help.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL COUNSELING ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Biblical Counseling Assessment (BCA). Some general questions will be followed by a thirty-two question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The purpose of the instrument is to assess seminary students' present level of theological understanding and confidence in offering biblical counseling.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING ASSESSMENT SURVEY¹

Agreement to Participate

Inter-City Baptist Church is committed to glorifying God by making and maturing disciples who are together becoming like Jesus Christ. One of the ways that we fulfill this commitment is by training pastors to counsel well. Specifically, we want to train seminary students in biblical counseling, and help them fulfill their ACBC requirements. In light of this desire, our church takes seriously our ability to provide quality, distinctively biblical training in biblical counseling. This survey for DBTS students will help us assess the seminary's current competency to counsel well.

This research is being conducted by Jacob Elwart for the purpose of gathering data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Date: _____

Name: _____ **Gender:** _____ **Age:** _____

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

General Questions:

1. Are you married?
____ A. Yes
____ B. No
2. How many years have you been a Christian? _____
3. Are you currently serving as a ministry leader, teacher, or discipler?
____ A. Yes
____ B. No
4. Have you ever been trained in any kind of formal counseling?
____ A. Yes
____ B. No
5. If so, please describe.

¹Derived from Wes Pinkley, and used by permission, "A Twelve-Week Course In Biblical Counseling for the Adult Members of Ekron Baptist Church, Ekron, Kentucky" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly agree

AS = agree somewhat

D = disagree

A = agree

DS = disagree somewhat

SA = strongly agree

6.	People regularly come to me for help with spiritual problems.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I consider myself to be well versed in the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I am an effective biblical counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I desire to grow in my faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	I consider myself teachable.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	I am skilled at using the Bible to help people change.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	The Bible and Psychology work together.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	I am able to give a clear and biblically faithful presentation of the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	In counseling, addressing a person's salvation is a priority before addressing their behavioral needs.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	The pastor is solely responsible for counseling in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	Lay people can be equipped for counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	The goals of counseling are set by the counselor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	The goals of counseling are set by the counselee.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	The Holy Spirit is critical for effective biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	Meeting weekly with a counselee has value in biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21.	Assigning homework to a counselee has value in biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22.	Understanding a person's health history has value in biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23.	Understanding a person's life history has value in biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24.	Building a counselee's self-esteem has value for biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25.	Understanding a counselee's medications has value in biblical	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

	counseling.						
26.	Offering group counseling to a counselee has value in biblical counseling.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27.	I am able to demonstrate God's love to counselees for any given counseling issue without being prideful of my spiritual maturity.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28.	I know which questions to ask for any given counseling issue.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29.	I have a strategy for studying and responding to any counseling issue.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30.	I am comfortable counseling someone who is unrepentant.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
31.	I am comfortable counseling someone who is full of pride and selfishness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32.	I am comfortable counseling someone who talks too much.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33.	I am comfortable counseling someone who has difficulty expressing their thoughts.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
34.	I am comfortable listening to people talk about problems and helping them keep on track.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
35.	I am able to ask a person questions of a deeper nature than the counselee's presenting problem.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING CURRICULUM

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel consisting of one ICBC pastor, one seminary professor, and one ACBC member. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Introduction to Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of biblical counseling.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses counseling methodology.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, and homework.					
Practicality					
The curriculum includes opportunities to practice counseling applications.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to counsel others biblically.					

Please include any additional comments regarding curriculum below:

APPENDIX 3

STUDENT EXAM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation rubric was sent to an ACBC grader along with student responses to ACBC exam questions given in class. The ACBC grader evaluated the exams to ensure that the students satisfactorily answered each question.

Name of evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

Introduction to Biblical Counseling Student Exam Evaluation						
1 = best; 2 = acceptable; 3 = acceptable with comments; 4 = not acceptable; 5 = fatal error						
ACBC Exam and Question	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Counseling Exam, Question 1						
Counseling Exam, Question 2						
Counseling Exam, Question 7						
Counseling Exam, Question 10						
Counseling Exam, Question 11						
Counseling Exam, Question 12						
Counseling Exam, Question 16						
Theology Exam, Question 2						
Theology Exam, Question 6						
Theology Exam, Question 20						

Please include any additional comments regarding exam questions below:

APPENDIX 4

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

CURRICULUM

This appendix includes curriculum utilized in the project. Only a sample of the methodology is included in this appendix, as the size of the full curriculum precludes the full demonstration of the curriculum.

Introduction to Biblical Counseling

A Twelve-Week Curriculum for students
at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary

Jacob Zachary Elwart
September 9, 2019

Methodology

Counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby a believer comes alongside another believer in order to apply the Bible in a way that leads the individual to grow in spiritual maturity.¹ In short, biblical counseling is using the Bible to help people with the problems that they face. In order to help people with their problems, counselors would do well to develop a plan for stimulating biblical change. An operational methodology helps accomplish this purpose. An appropriate operational methodology includes a realistic goal, a basic plan, and a definite application.

A Realistic Goal

An operational methodology begins with the end in view: sanctification. A realistic goal for the counselee is helping them be better equipped to rely on God. Biblical counseling focuses on encouraging the counselee to depend on God, rather than on the counselor. The counselee depends on God through prayer and learning from His Word in the fellowship of believers, giving and receiving ministry in the power of the Spirit. The

¹ Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2016), 20.

counselor inspires spiritual maturity, in which the counselee can face his or her problems according to God's prescription.

The counselor should explain from the outset what can and cannot be accomplished in a counseling relationship. For example, the counseling relationship cannot guarantee the elimination of all temptations, nor can the counselor guarantee elimination of all future stumbling. On the other hand, the biblical counselor can promise what the Scriptures promise. He can promise grace to those who humble themselves. He can promise change to those who work and rely on God's means of change.

A Basic Plan

In addition to a realistic goal, an operational methodology also should include a basic plan. If the goal is grace and spiritual change, then how will the counselee get there? Counselees benefit from having a basic plan that leads them toward genuine change. First, a basic plan must begin with an identification of the counselee's spiritual condition. Second, a basic plan must include an identification of the problems that the counselee is facing. Third, a basic plan must connect the counselee's problems with specific sins (if necessary) in the Scriptures.² The benefit of connecting a person's problems to sins mentioned in the Bible is that the Bible has the answer for sin issues. Fourth, a basic plan should include an exhortation toward thinking God's thoughts after Him. The counselee must renew his mind, making plans to put off sin and put on acts of righteousness (Eph 4:22–24). Fifth, a basic plan should call the counselee to action. The counselor can lay out the basic plan in the first session. However, the entire process of investigation, interpretation, explanation, and application will take time to unpack.³

² It can be dangerous to try to always identify "the root issue" or the "idol of the heart" because we are more complex than simply one issue. We usually have overlapping sin issues and we generally have multiple competing motives when we give into temptations. Of course, a person could be an innocent sufferer. In that case, the counselor must identify the problem, and how to respond biblically.

³ The methodology given in this paper borrows from several approaches by various biblical counselors. However, many solid approaches to biblical counseling will suffice. David Powlison in his book, *How Does Sanctification Work?* suggests that counselors tend to oversimplify sanctification, seeking

A Definite Application

In addition to a realistic goal and a basic plan, an operational methodology should also include a definite application. A generic application coupled with good intentions will not benefit a counselee apart from specificity. Good intentions often can easily go unfulfilled because they drown in a mire of generalities (e.g., “I want to be a better husband,” “I plan to stop drinking,” “No more porn,” etc.). Counselees must consider how their good intentions will become reality by God’s grace. Good intentions are only the bones of change. The muscle and flesh of intentions are specific, measurable action steps. For example, “By Friday, I will make a list of all of the unresolved conflicts that I have with my wife,” or “By tomorrow morning, I will empty all the alcohol bottles in my house, and will resolve not to make any cash purchases or any purchases at a place where alcohol is sold.”

to promote one single truth or foolproof technique that will guarantee change. David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 23. Jeremy Pierre agrees that oversimplification in counseling is a problem. He argues that the human experience is complex. Therefore, counselors must understand that the key to change will always be a dynamic relationship of faith with the triune God. Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 239. In reality, the problem of a biblical counseling case is a lot like solving a puzzle. There is no singular, step-by-step method that must be followed in order to solve the puzzle. Instead, there are thousands of ways. This does not mean that anything goes. Biblical counselors must still have a common goal and some foundational principles, but after that, the approach to counseling can be as varied as the number of counselors. One of those foundational principles includes what the nature of counseling is. Powlison suggests that counseling is helping people to gaze on God. David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003), 12. Another foundational principle is how biblical change happens. Paul Tripp believes that biblical counseling happens when “God transforms people’s lives as people bring His Word to others.” Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 19. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju give a basic framework for counseling, primarily by building their reader’s confidence in the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 16. Bob Kellemen suggests that personal change is “centered on the person of Christ through the personal ministry of the Word.” *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 16. Paul Tautges sees counseling as “an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside one another for three main purposes: first, to help the other person to consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning their spiritual friend, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that brother or sister to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she, too, may become a spiritually reproductive disciple-maker.” Tautges, *Counseling One Another*, 20. Another foundational principle that biblical counselors must embrace is promoted by Heath Lambert in his book on counseling. He argues that “counseling is a theological discipline.” Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 11. Much value can be gleaned from all of these biblical counseling approaches. The key to remember is that there is no one-size-fits-all methodology.

If counselees miss the importance of specificity, they may continue to face their problems unchanged by the Word, and potentially set themselves on a path toward turning away from Christ. Jesus illustrated this kind of danger in Luke 12:45–48, where he tells the parable of the unfaithful slave. The servant that is judged by Christ does not raise his fist, and say, “I hate the master, and I will not do anything for him.” He has good intentions to obey the master, but he fails *because he delays*. Similarly, the counselee may think that he has a long time to obey the Master, so he or she may continue to have expectations of change and intentions to change, but because of procrastination, nothing happens. Maybe the counselee is waiting for his or her spouse to change, or for somebody from the church to come to the rescue. Hell will be full of people who had good intentions. To illustrate this sobering reality, consider the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. Many well-meaning counselees have a similar mindset to the five virgins who did not trim their lamps. The Master returned, and the five virgins were ready to get to work trimming their lamps. They had good intentions, they scrambled, but it was too late. Counselees must be warned about merely having good intentions disconnected from specific steps toward change. God is patient. He is longsuffering, and slow to anger. But His patience will eventually be exhausted (cf. 2 Pet 3:3–18).

The point is that it is not enough to know what to do. It is not enough to hear the Word, and know what God wants. We must put it into practice. James 1:25 calls us to be doers, not hearers only. Consider the parables of the soil (Mark 4:1–20) and the parable of the wise man and foolish man (Matt 7:24–29). What separates the soil that bears fruit from the soils that do not bear fruit? What separates the wise man from the foolish man? It is not that one hears the Word and the other does not. In fact, Jesus tells us that they all hear the Word. The difference between the good soil and the other soils is that one heard the word and acted on it, and the other heard the word and did not act on it. The same is true about the wise man and the foolish man.

Practically, if there is going to be genuine transformation, the counselee must be willing to pursue spiritual change outside of the counseling session. A counselee cannot expect that all the transformation that is necessary will happen in a sixty-minute counseling session. That mindset is as ridiculous as the mindset of an obese man walking into a doctor's office, expecting that a one-hour conversation with the doctor would produce all the change that was necessary for him to lose weight. Working toward change inside and outside of the counseling session is necessary for change. The homework should include practical elements (e.g., encourage your wife in three ways this week; sign up for Covenant Eyes by Thursday; or be at all the church services this week).

Jay Adams gives eight reasons why homework is necessary: (1) It translates what was discussed into action (Prov 14:23); (2) It puts responsibility for change where it belongs (Jas 1:22–25). The blessing is not in knowing necessarily, but in doing; (3) It keeps expectations clear for both the counselor and counselee; (4) It helps minimize dependence on the counselor, and instead transfers dependence to the Lord;⁴ (5) It helps the counselor to be a faithful steward of his time, by bringing out problems and patterns more quickly, and by discovering which counselees mean business; (6) It continues counseling principles between sessions; (7) It tells the counselee that you believe things can be different today;⁵ and (8) It can provide data for subsequent sessions.⁶

⁴ Kent Hughes tells the story that took place early in his ministry, when the members at his church were declining, and he was ready to throw in the towel. He recounted one dark evening in particular, when his emotions reached their climax. He learned of another family leaving the church. He thought of all of the megachurches nearby that had compromised the gospel, and he wondered why he should even bother. Not only was he considering giving up pastoral ministry, he was considering giving up the faith. He questioned whether God could be trusted, and said, “God has called me to do something he hasn’t given me the gifts to accomplish. Therefore, God is not good. . . . What am I to do?” His wife was just as terrified as he was, and she responded by saying, “I don’t know what you’re going to do. But for right now, for tonight, hang on to my faith. Because I believe. I believe that God is good. I believe that he loves us and is going to work through this experience. So hang on to my faith. I have enough for both of us” R. Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 23. The point of the story is that sometimes people will come for help in their darkest hour, and they may not have enough faith to continue looking to God. But strangely, they are putting their confidence in a biblical counselor. The counselor’s job is to help them to transfer that hope from the counselor to God. In time, that will happen, as long as the counselor keeps pointing them in the right direction.

⁵ If a person goes to the doctor with a fractured jawbone, and he listens to an explanation of the problem, and even diagnoses it, but never does anything, then the person will walk away hopeless. The

A Counseling Relationship⁷

Counseling is about discipling through a relationship. While discipleship happens through transferring biblical truth, much of the truth that a person embraces is mediated through watching other people live their lives. Therefore, counselors take seriously the influence that they have on people through how they live. They seek to model their beliefs, values, and commitments in the way that they treat their counselees. Whether we realize it or not, one of the primary influences on how people learn from us is through how we conduct ourselves. This does not mean that actions are more important than words. But rather, our conduct is the necessary platform from which we help people. Because relationship is important to counseling, aspiring counselors should seek to develop some relational skills.

First, a counselor should work to connect and be present. The connection begins at the first interaction with them. I have found it helpful to begin the session with small talk. This is an act of love that shows that you are interested in other parts of their life, not only in their presenting problem. This also helps to calm their nerves, and show them that you are on their side. Another point of connection that really helps is to lay out a basic framework for what you intend to accomplish during the session: “We are going to begin with prayer. I’m going to talk about my understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture. I will ask you some questions. We will look at a passage, and then we will be done. Does that sound okay?” It is also helpful to lay out expectations for the relationship: “The purpose of our meeting is for me to understand what is going on, and give God’s perspective on the situation, so let’s meet for the next four weeks to see how it goes. After that we will evaluate to see where we are.”

patient should be confident that the doctor can help them that day.

⁶ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 301–10.

⁷ This section was adapted from Jeremy Pierre, “Problems and Procedures of Biblical Counseling” (Class Notes. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Summer 2018).

Throughout the counseling session, focus on them without distraction. A “quick” glance to your phone or smartwatch to check on a notification tells counselees that you are not fully engaged. You would do well to limit your access to the outside world during a counseling session. If you are going to be there, be all there. Learning how to connect is also important when the content of the session gets intense. When the person stalls out or becomes extremely emotional, learn to be comfortable in silence, but at the same time, learn how to disseminate the intensity by turning the attention to something else (“Grab your Bible. Let me show you something”). At the end of the first meeting, give them clarity on your accessibility. You want to make yourself available to them, but not necessarily instantly accessible. It might be wise to keep deeper spiritual matters to vocal conversations (in person or on the phone), while allowing for scheduling-type issues via text. Be careful about adopting the counselee’s level of urgency. They may want to meet right away, but you can respond like this: “God knows about your situation and He knows that I am not available until Friday afternoon. Let’s meet then.”

Second, a counselor should work toward understanding and summarizing. Help the counselee organize his thoughts. Before you offer solutions, organize what they are saying. This requires skill and experience, but recognize that you are already trained in this way. How do you preach through Psalm 119? You have to learn to summarize what the author is saying. You look for repeated words or phrases. Do the same with your counselee. Look for ideas that are coupled with emotional responses. Look for repeated words or phrases. Summarize what you are hearing, so they understand that you understand (“It sounds like you believe that your feelings of depression are connected to your parents’ expectations. Is that accurate?”).

Third, a counselor should work to commend and encourage. What are the evidences of God’s grace in their lives? Be wise with how you do it though. It would not be helpful to remind a couple who just lost a child that “at least the other two are still alive.” Instead, you could comfort that couple with the promise of God’s nearness and

care for them and that He loved that child more than both of them. Additionally, seek to commend the counselee with the areas of his or her spiritual life that are being done rightly (“You are right to grieve the loss of a child. God grieves over death as well”).

Fourth, a counselor should seek to correct and disagree. Counseling can be challenging, because saying the hard right thing is often difficult. And besides, who wants to make people angry, emotional, or hateful towards them? The counselor can seek to avoid those negative responses by pandering to the counselees. Of course, doing so is spiritually dangerous for counselees. Counselors can end up enabling them and affirming sinful actions. Conversely, identifying sin is one of the most loving things to do for a person. Make it clear when they are wrong. I am not calling for nitpicking every minor thing that they say. I am not suggesting that you condemn their confusion or ignorance. This has to be handled with care. However, it must be done. Use the Scriptures as your foundation and guide, and show them the mirror of the Word, so that they can see the sin for themselves.

Fifth, counselors should seek to illustrate and inspire. Help the person get excited about the change to which God is calling them. Use metaphors to show truth, not just tell truth. Where can you find metaphors for the truth that needs to be embraced by the person? One of the best places is from the person’s own life. What metaphors can you find in the person’s job or in their hobbies that would cause the truth that they need to grasp to resonate within them.⁸ Metaphors can also be found in your own life, in the Scriptures, in books, in movies, music, etc.

Sixth, counselors should seek to convince and appeal. Counselors should attempt to change the minds of individuals. Most often, the counselee comes with a secular or

⁸ See “Illustrative Counseling,” in David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2005), 73–82.

anti-biblical worldview. Your job is to reorient their minds toward the Scriptures, and show them what God's perspective is on their situation.⁹

⁹ As mentioned earlier, all of these goals must be accomplished within the context of the local church. Counseling happens behind closed doors, but the Christian life and change should take place in the context of the local church life, utilizing relationships and family in hospitality situations (contra secular counseling which separates the counseling relationship entirely from relating to life).

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING SEMINARY STUDENTS FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING CERTIFICATION AT INTER-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN ALLEN PARK, MICHIGAN

Jacob Zachary Elwart, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project sought to equip seminary students for biblical counseling certification at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan. Chapter 1 describes the ministry context of Inter-City Baptist Church and establishes the project's goals. Chapter 2 defends the biblical and theological basis for the project by examining three passages that describe how God has called pastors to equip the saints for interpersonal discipling (Col 1:28–29; Eph 4:7–16; 2 Pet 1:2–11). Chapter 3 presents the foundation for equipping seminary students to help people change, using a God-centered operational methodology. Chapter 4 details the project. Chapter 5 offers an overall evaluation of the project, with suggestions for improvement and further development.

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EDUCATION

BBA, University of Michigan, 2003
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ORGANIZATIONS

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Assistant Professor of Biblical Counseling, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018–
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