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INTRODUCING BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT  
HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IN  
GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

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

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

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by  
Russell Kane Franklin  
December 2021

**APPROVAL SHEET**

INTRODUCING BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT  
HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IN  
GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

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To my wife, Cami Franklin,  
for her loving and encouraging support to me, our wonderful children, and our church

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## PREFACE

I am thankful for the people who made the completion of this project possible through their encouragement and support. I am thankful for my parents, who played significant roles in my conversion, faith development, and calling into the ministry. My father was my pastor for nineteen years and consistently lived what he preached. My mother, who passed away soon after I began this project, lovingly encouraged me through each step of my ministry journey.

I am also thankful for the members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, especially the thirteen who participated in the “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” seminar. This project exists because of my desire to help them care and counsel one another biblically.

I am exceedingly grateful for the opportunity to study under the wonderful biblical counseling professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—Dr. Jeremy Pierre, Dr. Robert Jones, Dr. Stuart Scott, and Dr. John Street. I am also thankful for Dr. Matt Haste and Dr. Joe Harrod, whose seminars were very helpful in the completion of this project. I am especially thankful for Dr. Robert Plummer, who served as my faculty supervisor.

Finally, I am thankful for my wonderful wife, Cami, and our two children, Jarod and Anne. Their love and support during these three years has meant the world to me. I could never express my deep appreciation for them. God has blessed me with an amazing family!

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Middleburg, Florida

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Hickory Grove Baptist Church (HGBC) has been a constant presence in Green Cove Springs, Florida, and Clay County as a whole, for over 155 years. The church has recently begun moving through a period of revitalization to better impact the community with the love and grace of Jesus Christ. As such, HGBC has adopted the following vision statement: “We desire to breathe life into the Cove.” *Breathing life* occurs when church members go outside their personal comfort zones and live as agents of God’s kingdom at home, work, school, or wherever He wills. The *life* breathed out is the gospel of Jesus Christ—that Christ has come to give abundant life (John 10:10). Biblical counseling is an effective way for HGBC members to minister to one another and to the surrounding community. This project sought to introduce biblical counseling to HGBC as a part of ongoing church revitalization to fulfill its vision of “breathing life into the Cove.”

#### **Context**

HGBC was organized in 1863 in Green Cove Springs, Florida, the county seat of Clay County, a bedroom community of nearby Jacksonville. The majority of HGBC’s membership is generationally connected to the church and community; a few are even descendants of charter members. HGBC endured two difficult pastorates in the early and mid-2000s that resulted in the loss of well over half of the church membership, including several deacons, Sunday school teachers, and other key leaders. Entire families, many with school aged children and younger, also left the church during these pastorates, with mostly upper middle-aged and senior adults remaining.

When I came in 2012, the regular worship attendance was between 95 to 110 people, while in 2000 the average attendance was about 350 people. Much of the

membership was still dealing with hurt, anger, and disillusionment from all that occurred during the previous years and were at a loss on how to move forward. I was advised by fellow pastors in similar church situations that the process for church revitalization often moves at a slow pace, so I prayerfully began this ministry marathon.

Early into my tenure as pastor at HGBC, I visited the homes of church members. My goal was to encourage each member that God is faithful, and He is using the painful events of the past for the good of His people and to display His glory. Having mostly an older congregation, I primarily dealt with areas of aging, sickness, surgeries, hospital, nursing home, and hospice visits, funeral planning and officiating, and grief counseling. I often felt ill-equipped as I sat with a family as their loved one drifted into eternity. Into the third and fourth year of my pastorate the church began a process of revitalization and soon began to see a wide range of families visiting worship gatherings and Sunday school classes, many eventually becoming members. While this was exciting to me as a pastor, I soon realized that sound counseling was needed for the everyday problems facing families.

HGBC has a book and resource library that contains several books and resources on marriage, parenting, and overcoming various problems. Many were written by well-known authors who basically mixed secular psychology with Scripture.<sup>1</sup> As I read through these resources, I realized they were inadequate to help families deal with their issues in a truly biblical way. Soon after removing these materials, I learned that First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida would be hosting the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) Fundamentals Training Conference training over three months. I immediately enrolled and then continued Advanced Training Conferences the following two years. This training helped me to come alongside the congregation more effectively as they deal with marriage and family problems, sexual sin, and sorrow and grief. One of the greatest

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 1995); Henry Cloud and John Sims Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

challenges for me has been communicating the urgency of others to join me in the work of biblical counseling and discipleship.

### **Rationale**

An introduction to biblical counseling was urgently needed for HGBC as members addressed five major concerns in the congregation. First, for HGBC members to help struggling individuals and families, they must embrace their role to care for one another in the areas of marriage, parenting, sexual sin, and sorrow and grief. First Thessalonians 5:11-14 teaches that Christians are to care for one another in these various areas of life, so this project aimed to develop a curriculum to teach them to embrace their role of caring for one another. This curriculum also provided basic training and practice in counseling one another in these areas. The challenge was that HGBC is a small church with limited numbers of people and resources.

Scripture also provides wisdom and direction for addressing the remaining four concerns in the congregation. Ephesians 5:23-33 addresses biblical marriage and gives instruction concerning the roles of husbands and wives. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 commands parents to regularly disciple their children in the ways of God. Colossians 3:1-15 deals with sexual and other life-controlling sins by showing how a Christian must seek and set their minds on things above, put to death and put off characteristics of the old man, and then put on the characteristics of the new man in Christ. Second Corinthians 1:3-7 provides a clear path for Christians to walk when facing grief and sorrow.

Based on the commands of Scripture for Christians to care for one another, the need for additional ministry support, and concerns facing the membership of HGBC, a biblical counseling ministry would play an essential role as the church continues to minister effectively in a changing generational environment. The goal was not for just an additional ministry of biblical counseling, but that all existing and future ministries would begin to embrace a heart for biblical counseling. Establishing a biblical counseling ministry would involve the eventual training of a cross section of ministry staff, deacons, Sunday school

teachers and other key leaders, as well as any other church member who would desire such training. As with everything in an older established church, introducing a biblical counseling ministry would require patient, deliberate steps. My focus with this project was to introduce those needed steps while understanding people may or may not follow them.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to introduce biblical counseling at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Green Cove Springs, Florida.

### **Goals**

This project introduced a biblical counseling ministry to HGBC by implementing three goals. The first goal addressed the need for biblical insight into the challenges HGBC members face. The second and third goals addressed how HGBC would train and equip leaders and members to biblically counsel one another.

1. Increase the knowledge of the need for an effective biblical counseling ministry among HGBC members.
2. Develop an “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” curriculum to disciple HGBC members in the foundations of biblical counseling.
3. Equip HGBC members with the “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” curriculum to begin the process of counseling one another biblically.

I employed definitive research methodology that measured when these three goals had been accomplished.<sup>2</sup> The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal are detailed in the following section.

### **Research Methodology**

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to increase the knowledge of the need for an effective biblical counseling ministry at HGBC

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

among members through developing and teaching an introduction to biblical counseling curriculum. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post- survey to participants, which measured change in knowledge of a needed biblical counseling ministry.<sup>3</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The second goal was to develop a six-week “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” curriculum for the equipping of HGBC members in the foundations of biblical counseling. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip HGBC members to begin the process of counseling one another biblically. This goal was measured during the “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” course, which included observations of participants while working in groups through a case study that dealt with issues covered in the course material. This goal was considered successfully met when each participant scored at the sufficient or above level on the evaluation rubric.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

*Biblical counseling.* *Biblical counseling* may be succinctly defined as “the equipping of God’s people to promote personal change centered on the Person of Christ

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1.

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

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

through the personal ministry of the Word.”<sup>6</sup>

*Sufficiency of Scripture.* The *sufficiency of Scripture* means “that all things necessary for salvation and for living the Christian life in obedience to God and for his glory are given to us in Scripture.”<sup>7</sup>

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-course surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of a need for biblical counseling. To mitigate this limitation, respondents were promised that their answers would remain anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the commitment of attendance. If participants did not attend or actively participate in the “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” course, then it would be difficult to measure how beneficial the training had been. To mitigate this limitation, each week of the course sessions kept to a regular schedule that participants preapproved.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, participants were church members who exhibited spiritual maturity and demonstrate care for others. Second, the project was confined to a sixteen-week timeframe in order to ensure participation. This timeframe gave adequate time to conduct the pre-course survey, prepare and teach the six-week “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” course, and conduct the post-course survey after the course was completed.

### **Conclusion**

The problems and concerns of HGBC members are too great for one pastor to handle. The church must move away from a secular model of counseling to one that embraces the sufficiency of Scripture. The following chapters show how introducing

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<sup>6</sup> Bob Kellemen, ed., *Biblical Counseling and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught and Why It Still Matters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 334.

biblical counseling would greatly enhance the church's ministry capability. Chapter 2 will focus on biblical answers to four major problems HGBC families face today and chapter 3 will focus on how the greater biblical counseling community has addressed one of these problems specifically.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR INTRODUCING A BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY

Four passages from the Old and New Testaments present sufficient instruction and biblical counsel for Christians to disciple and care for one another in the areas of marriage, parenting, and sorrow and grief. Colossians 3:1-14, Ephesians 5:22-23, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, and 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **The Christian Life as Died and Raised with Christ (Col 3:1-14)**

Paul's strategy in writing to the Colossians was to reemphasize essential doctrinal truth communicated in the formation of the church. He also set forth a strong case for ongoing discipleship of Christians as the greatest deterrence to the acceptance of false teaching. Colossians 3:1-14 shows how Christians, in light of being raised with Christ, must seek and set their minds on things above, put to death and put off characteristics of the old man, and then put on the characteristics of the new man in Christ. Such a perspective from this passage leads a Christian to the need for regular confession and repentance of sin and commitment to live the life Jesus died and rose again to give them.

#### **The Christian Life as "Seeking" and "Setting" (3:1-4)**

In this segment, Paul challenges the Colossians to focus intently on heavenly things established by Christ instead of earthly imitations. The more a believer seeks after biblical truth, the easier it becomes to recognize and neutralize cheap counterfeits. Paul writes two corresponding commands that define the essential point of this brief paragraph: "seek those things which are above" (3:1) and "set your mind on things above" (3:2).



Douglas Moo notes that “Paul grounds these commands with reminders of the believer’s identification with Christ in both death (3:3) and resurrection (3:1). And he concludes with an expression of confidence that that this identification will extend to Christ’s second coming (3:4).”<sup>1</sup>

F. F. Bruce remarks that the motivation and power enabling believers to obey these two commands is imparted by Christ from the glory in which He now lives:

Since His people share His risen life, their interests are now centered in Him; His interests, in fact have become theirs. They must therefore pursue those things which belong to the heavenly realm where He reigns; their minds, their attitude, their ambition, their whole outlook must be characterized by their living bond with the ascended Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Bruce offers two practical implications of being raised with Christ: First, believers have no private lives of their own because their life is the life of Christ. Second, instead of waiting until the last day to receive the resurrection life, those who have been raised with Christ possess it already.<sup>3</sup>

While commenting on verse 3, Moo observes that obeying these twofold commands is necessary and possible: “It is necessary because our union with Christ means we no longer belong to the realm of this earth but to the heavenly realm; and it is possible because our union with Christ severs us from the tyranny of the powers of this world and provides us with all the power needed to live a new life.”<sup>4</sup> Eduard Schweizer stresses that because they have died, the Colossians no longer belong to the earth but to

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 243.

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 131.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 134.

<sup>4</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 249.

the world above and this new life is a hidden reality.<sup>5</sup> Schweizer then observes that the term “with Christ in God” is “described here as the guarantee of their new life. God’s faithfulness gives, here and now, a guarantee of that life which one day will appear.”<sup>6</sup>

C. F. D. Moule states that the hidden aspect of the believer’s life is “sometimes taken to mean that the new life of Christians in Christ is a secret to the unregenerate (and in part even to themselves). Until the End, it remains unrevealed.”<sup>7</sup>

Moo observes how these four verses (3:1-4)

reflect Paul’s conviction that the life and destiny of the believer are inextricably bound up with Christ. As Christ died, so believers die with him. When He died, believers were buried with Him. As He was resurrected, so believers were raised with Him. And when He appears in glory at the time of His return, believers will appear with Him.<sup>8</sup>

Concerning Christ’s appearing, Bruce states,

The indwelling Christ who is at present their hope and glory is the Christ whose manifestation at His *parousia* will bring them the realization of that glory. The inward revelation of His saving glory which has come home to them already is the earnest of a fuller revelation yet to come, the grand consummation of the union between Christ and His people.<sup>9</sup>

Until that day comes, believers are to continue “seeking those things which are above” and “setting our minds on things above.”

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<sup>5</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1982), 175.

<sup>6</sup> Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 176.

<sup>7</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), 112.

<sup>8</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 251.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 136.

## The Christian Life as Putting Off the Practices of the “Old Man” (3:5-11)

After urging the Colossians to seek the heavenly over earthly things and setting their minds on things above, Paul compels them in this segment to rid their lives of past sinful practices. As already noted, a believer not only identifies with the person and work of Christ, but he is also obedient to the Word of Christ. Having died with Christ to sin and risen with Him to new life, believers must therefore continually strive to turn away from and sever all connections to past sinful behaviors.

Similar to the first segment, Paul includes two commands here: “put to death” (3:5) and “put off” (3:8). Moo observes that with these commands “Paul follows the imperative with an object that denotes a general class of sins, elaborates this class by enumerating five specific vices, and then concludes with a brief characterization of the last vice in the list.”<sup>10</sup>

verse 5: put to death

whatever belongs to your earthly nature  
sexual immorality  
impurity  
lust  
evil desires  
greed  
which is idolatry

v. 8 put off

all such things as these  
anger  
rage  
malice  
slander  
filthy language  
from your lips<sup>11</sup>

In commanding the Colossians to “put to death your members” (3:5), Bruce explains,

Paul is not talking here of the actual members of the human body, nor is he expressing himself in quite the sense intended by Jesus when He said that the offending hand or foot should be cut off or the offending eye plucked out, if

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<sup>10</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 253.

<sup>11</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 253.

entrance into life could not otherwise be gained. This seems plain from the apposition of the noun ‘members’ with the list of following vices.<sup>12</sup>

Schweizer adds, “The putting to death of the members, that is the vices within them, is understood, from the Jewish view of sins located in the members, to apply to the individual.”<sup>13</sup> Moule describes this “death” as a “transformation of the will and metamorphosis of one’s whole attitude, a radical shifting of the very centre of the personality from self to Christ. This is a change worked by the Spirit of God, not by our unaided struggles.”<sup>14</sup>

Paul lists five specific earthly vices that Christians are to “put to death”—sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. Sexual immorality (*porneia*) refers to all kinds of sexual sin. Bruce relates the term to engaging with harlots and more widely of prohibited sexual irregularity in general.<sup>15</sup> Impurity (*akatharsia*) refers more commonly to any kind of moral decadence, but Moo points out that the term is “applied quite often to sexual sins.”<sup>16</sup> Passion (*pathos*) refers to a variety of emotion and affection, but Bruce contends that it appears in this kind of context to denote “dishonorable passions.”<sup>17</sup> Evil desire (*epithymian kaken*) refers to the fundamental human inclination toward sin.<sup>18</sup> Covetousness (*pleonexia*), the last item on this list, is associated here with idolatry. Bruce notes, “Covetousness is idolatry because it involves the setting of one’s affections on earthly things and not on things above, and therefore the putting of some

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 140.

<sup>13</sup> Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 187.

<sup>14</sup> Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and Philemon*, 115.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 143.

<sup>16</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 256.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 257.

other object of desire in the place which God should occupy in His people's hearts."<sup>19</sup> Bruce goes on to observe that covetousness is more dangerous than the preceding vices "because it may assume so many respectable forms."<sup>20</sup>

Paul then warns the Colossians that God's wrath, or righteous indignation, is coming on account of these vices (3:6). Moo underscores the serious nature of this warning and the necessity of believers ridding these from their lives: "Putting to death sins like those mentioned in verse five is vital because God will visit with his wrath those who continue to practice them."<sup>21</sup> Moo then positively remarks that "putting to death sins like these is possible (even natural) because God has given His people, through his Spirit, a new power to conform their conduct to God's holy demands."<sup>22</sup> Next, Paul reminds the Colossians that they once practiced these vices, before they were born again (3:7). Bruce holds that though the Colossian were once pagans, they were now "in Christ and Christ lived in them . . . if they looked on themselves as dead to their former desires and alive to God in Christ, then the Christian life now coming to maturity within them would manifest itself in a new pattern of behavior."<sup>23</sup>

After warning the Colossians against the sensual sins, Paul then focused on the dangers of five sins that have a bearing on social relationships that could endanger the community—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language (3:8). Paul commands them to "put off" these old habits, "just as you would discard an outworn suit of clothes which

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<sup>19</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 144.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 258.

<sup>22</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 258.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 145.

no longer fitted you.”<sup>24</sup> Anger and wrath (*orge*) are often used interchangeably in Scripture, but Schweizer argues that in this case “wrath denotes a continuous, smoldering condition and anger appears alongside it as suggesting the outbreak of this wrath.”<sup>25</sup> Malice (*kakia*) refers to an attitude or desire set on doing harm to someone. Anger, wrath, and malice often result in slander (*blasphemia*), which is directing insulting and disparaging remarks toward others. Moo points out that “Paul’s purpose is not to single out three specific sins but to use the three words together to connote the attitude of anger and ill will towards others that so often leads to hasty and nasty speech.”<sup>26</sup> Filthy language (*aischrologia*; literally, “shameful words”) refers to the use of coarse language when defaming another person.

The focus on sins of hateful speech is then reinforced by the new command, “do not lie to one another.” (3:9). Moo states, “Paul forbids Christians from lying to one another because he is preeminently concerned in this context with the health of the Christian community.”<sup>27</sup> This command, as well as the previous commands concerning sinful vices, is rooted in the reality of the “old man’s” removal and the “new man’s” installation in the life of believers (3:10). Concerning the renewal of the “new man,” Bruce contends that “the life and power of Christlikeness is being reproduced more and more in the believer’s life.”<sup>28</sup> He then points out that a result of putting on the new man is the receiving of a new knowledge, “accessible to those who, through their union with Christ, have been transformed by the renewing of their minds.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 193.

<sup>26</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 264.

<sup>27</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 265.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 146.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 148.

Being raised with Christ as a new creation not only does away with old sinful habits and attitudes, but the barriers that separated people from one another are done away with as well (3:11). Bruce points out four barriers that have been broken down as a result of the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>30</sup> First, Christ has broken racial barriers, like that between Greek (Gentile) and Jew. Second, a religious barrier has also been broken as the reference to circumcised and uncircumcised indicates. Third, cultural barriers divided Greeks, barbarians, and Scythians. Moo states that Paul “intends both barbarians and Scythian as further examples of the general category uncircumcised.”<sup>31</sup> Fourth, social barriers, such as between slaves and free persons, have also been broken down. Schweizer remarks that “Christ is all and in all” should be understood “in the sense that Christ, who has become human, has become everything, and in the cross and resurrection has overcome everything that could stand in opposition to being one.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Christian Life as Putting On the Virtues of the “New Man” (3:12-14)**

As new creations in Christ, believers should put on these traits of a holy one who has been sovereignly chosen and loved by God—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (3:12). Compassion (*splagchnizomai*—literally “bowels of compassion”) refers a deep and heartfelt compassion. Moo explains that “bowels” was “very often associated with the seat of the emotions and especially love.”<sup>33</sup> Kindness (*chrestotes*) refers to the human attribute of kindness that flows from first-hand knowledge of God’s kindness in Christ. Humility (*tapeinophrosune*) involves valuing others above self. Bruce remarks that “humility is especially fitting for the followers of Jesus, who was

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<sup>30</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 148.

<sup>31</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 271.

<sup>32</sup> Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 201.

<sup>33</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 277.

‘gentle and lowly in heart’ (Matt 11:29), and a community in which this grace is cultivated is likely to be free from the tensions which spring from pride and self-assertiveness.”<sup>34</sup> Gentleness (*prautes*), or meekness, expresses power with reserve. It is the “quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.”<sup>35</sup> Patience (*makrothumia*) refers to a God produced ability to hold back anger. Moo suggests that Paul is “using the list of virtues in verse twelve to draw a general picture of what a member of Christ’s new covenant community should look like.”<sup>36</sup>

Paul now shows that forbearance and mutual forgiveness should be the basis of the church’s relations with one another (3:13). Schweizer states that the five virtues in verse 12 “are intended to lead on from the way that God acts toward His people to the way that people act toward one another. Their forgiving should flow from the gracious way in which the Lord bestows forgiveness.”<sup>37</sup> Moo sees the demands to “bear with” and “forgive” as acknowledgement that “every Christian fellowship is made up of all kinds of people and for the sake of maintaining community, we will sometimes have to ‘put up with’ people with whom we would not normally choose to associate.”<sup>38</sup> Concerning mutual forgiveness, Bruce points out that “Paul reproduces Jesus’ insistence on the close relation between God’s forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others in a way that suggests he may have known the Lord’s Prayer.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 154.

<sup>35</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 278.

<sup>36</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 278.

<sup>37</sup> Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 207.

<sup>38</sup> Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 279.

<sup>39</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 155.



Paul writes that love should be “put on” over all these other layers of virtues, not as an additional virtue but as the highest virtue (3:14). Bruce states, “God’s love in Christ to human beings and their answering love to Him are presupposed here as the basis for that mutual love which readers of the letter are called to practice.”<sup>40</sup> This love binds the virtues together, creating perfect unity within the Christian community.

### **The Biblical Roles of Husbands and Wives in Christian Marriage (Eph 5:22-33)**

Paul’s purpose in writing to the Ephesians was to remind believers of the eternal riches found in the finished work of Christ (chaps. 1–3). Paul also describes how believers ought to live as recipients of those eternal riches (chapters 4–6). Ephesians 5:22-33 provides clear instruction on the biblical roles of husbands and wives in the marriage relationship. In this passage, wives are commanded to submit to their husbands as to the Lord, and husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Such a perspective shows that marriage, first and foremost, must be established on the lordship of Christ and then lived out in the biblically ordained wife/husband complementary roles.

### **The Biblical Role of Christian Wives (5:22-24)**

Following the call to a general mutual submission as the foundation of relationships among believers (5:21), Paul gives three specific examples where submission is not reciprocated—wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters (5:22–6:9). Concerning this, Harold Hoehner writes, “In each instance the one who submits is discussed first; namely, the wife, the children, and the slaves. Paul then discusses the responsibility of those in position of authority, namely, the husband, the parents, and the masters.”<sup>41</sup> This passage runs parallel with Colossians 3:18–4:1, but Bruce points out that

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<sup>40</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 112.

the “distinctive feature in Ephesians is that the relationship between husband and wife is treated as analogical to that between Christ and the church.”<sup>42</sup>

The segment begins with a command for wives to submit to their own husbands (5:22). Markus Barth observes that this verse refers to the special husband/wife relationship and “does not affirm that females (women) are inferior to males (men).”<sup>43</sup> Hoehner contends that while Scripture does teach that men and women are equal in standing before God (Gal 3:28), there is a “distinction between equality and lines of authority. For example, citizens of a country are equal, but there are also many different ranks in the power structure of the country.”<sup>44</sup> The second part of the verse states the motivation for wives to submit to their husbands—“as to the Lord.” The implication, according to Bruce, “is that Christian wives’ submission to their husbands is seen to have a counterpart in the church’s submission to Christ.”<sup>45</sup>

According to Paul, God has placed the husband as the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church (5:23). The term “head” can mean the source or origin of something, such as the headwaters of a river, but Bruce points out that “in this context the word ‘head’ has the idea of authority attached to it after the analogy of Christ’s headship over the church.”<sup>46</sup> Hoehner observes how Roman culture would have resisted Paul’s instruction of a wife’s submission to her husband and the authority of a husband over his wife.<sup>47</sup> Households in this context held to the father’s continual absolute power over the

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<sup>42</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 382.

<sup>43</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 34-34a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 610.

<sup>44</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 113.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 384.

<sup>46</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 384.

<sup>47</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 114.

family (*patria potestas*). This verse concludes with a reference to Christ as the “Savior of the body.” Bruce suggests that the analogy between the husband as head of the wife and Christ as head of the church continues here so that “a reference to the husband’s role as his wife’s protector may be implied, but anything more detailed is too difficult to discern.”<sup>48</sup>

Paul directly connects the church’s submission to Christ to wives’ submission to their husbands (5:24). The words “in everything” most likely refer the full submission of wives to husbands, but Hoehner argues the term “certainly would not suggest that a wife should submit to her husband in anything sinful. No Christian is to do something that is contrary to God’s commands or God’s will.”<sup>49</sup> This submission is not conditionally based on the husband’s expression of love; it is freely offered by the wife as obedience to Christ.

### **The Biblical Role of Christian Husbands (5:25-33)**

Similar to Colossians 3:19, husbands are instructed to love their wives, but here the sacrificial love of Jesus for the church is given as the example for the husband’s love for his wife (5:25). This is the only occasion in the New Testament where Christ’s love for the church is mentioned. Bruce remarks, “The believing community is here compared to a maiden for whom Christ laid down his life that she might become his bride.”<sup>50</sup> John Muddiman stresses that the practical expression of love by husbands, as well as the children of God as a whole, is rooted in their “imitation of Christ’s sacrificial love.”<sup>51</sup> Hoehner adds, “A husband’s love is an ongoing process, not governed by the vagaries of

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<sup>48</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 385.

<sup>49</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 115.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 386.

<sup>51</sup> John Muddiman, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 2001), 264.

emotion but rather by an act of the will and Christ's love for the church serves as the model."<sup>52</sup> This theme of the sacrificial love of Christ for the church and husbands for wives continues in the following verses.

Paul states that one of the benefits of Christ's sacrificial death is the sanctification and cleansing of the church (5:26). Bruce connects this to the bride's cleansing bath before she was dressed in her bridal array.<sup>53</sup> Hoehner traces this analogy to Ezekiel 16 where God entered into a covenant with Israel and "bathed her with water, anointed her with oil, and clothed her with the finest materials, making her exceedingly beautiful, fit to be a queen."<sup>54</sup> Muddiman relates "washing" and "with the word" to the "process of Christian nurture through preaching and teaching."<sup>55</sup> He also points to a similar idea in John's Gospel—"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (17:17).

Jesus died to sanctify the church and thereby present to Himself a glorious church (5:27). Barth describes Christ's sacrificial love for the church as "the will and power to effect total transformation. He attributes qualities to her which she does not possess of her own."<sup>56</sup> Bruce remarks that Christ, as the Bridegroom, has removed the spiritual and ethical blemishes from His bride.<sup>57</sup> Hoehner explains, "Christ's love, as demonstrated in the redemption, sanctification, and presentation of the church to Himself, serves as an illustration of husbands' love for their wives. It is to this subject that Paul now returns."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 116.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 387.

<sup>54</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 116.

<sup>55</sup> Muddiman, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 265.

<sup>56</sup> Barth, *Ephesians*, 627.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 390.

<sup>58</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 117.

Paul's instruction for husbands to love their wives as they would their own bodies (5:28) is related to the commandment in Leviticus 19:18—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The use of "their own bodies" instead of "themselves" is influenced by Genesis 2:22-24 where God took from Adam to create Eve, making them one flesh. Bruce notes, "Since husband and wife are 'one flesh' or one body, to love one's wife is not merely a matter of loving someone as oneself; it is in effect loving oneself."<sup>59</sup> Hoehner adds that loving another in this way "does not present itself as a duty but as something that is consistent with its own nature."<sup>60</sup>

The husbands' call to nourish and cherish their wives as they would their own bodies is compared with Christ's loving treatment of the church (5:29). Muddiman believes this passage is instructing husbands to look after and attend to their wives' necessities of life.<sup>61</sup> Christ cares for the church because its members are in union with Him (5:30). In relation to the church's union with Christ, Barth notes, "Because and just as formerly divided and hostile Jews and Gentiles were united in 'one body' (2:16; 3:6; 4:4), the difference between male and female is no longer a hindrance for husband and wife to be united by love in one body."<sup>62</sup>

Paul reinforces his teaching concerning the unity between husbands and wives by quoting Genesis 2:24 (5:31). In doing so, Bruce states, "It is evidently by sexual union that husband and wife are viewed as becoming 'one flesh.' . . . The body language of Ephesians makes it natural for the union both of husband and wife and of Christ and the church to be equally expressed in terms of 'one body.'"<sup>63</sup> As a man leaves his parents and

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<sup>59</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 391.

<sup>60</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 118.

<sup>61</sup> Muddiman, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 267.

<sup>62</sup> Barth, *Ephesians*, 636.

<sup>63</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 393.

cleaves to his wife, Jesus left his heavenly home and came to cleave to his bride. Paul refers to the spiritual union of Christ and the church as a “great mystery” (5:32). Hoehner comments concerning this mystery: “The union of the husband and wife into one flesh (‘the two are united into one’) is a model for the union of Christ and the church” (5:31-32).<sup>64</sup> According to Bruce, in light of the saving work of Christ, “the hidden meaning of Genesis 2:24 now begins to appear: His people constitute His bride, united to Him in ‘one body.’”<sup>65</sup>

Having instructed wives (5:22-24) and husbands (5:25-32) on their roles and responsibilities, Paul concludes this segment with a summary statement (5:33). Paul reiterated the instruction for a husband to love his wife as he loves himself, but not the wife’s instruction to submit to her husband. Instead, the wife is instructed to fear, revere, or respect her husband. Hoehner describes this respect as “reverence for her husband’s position as head of the home.”<sup>66</sup> He then concludes by pointing out, “The primary goal of marriage is not to please oneself but to see God’s purposes work in and through each partner individually and corporately.”<sup>67</sup>

### **The Role of Parents in the Biblical Instruction of Their Children (Deut 6:1-9)**

The Book of Deuteronomy was the fifth book of Moses, written just before the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into Canaan. Moses exhorts them to love and obey God in order to enjoy His blessings and remain in the land. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 commands parents to regularly teach their children the ways of God. In this passage, parents are told to take advantage of every opportunity to disciple their children in biblical

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<sup>64</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 119.

<sup>65</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 395.

<sup>66</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 119.

<sup>67</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 120.

truth. Such a perspective shows that a parent/child relationship must be directed toward a relationship with God.

### **Exhortation to Observe God’s Commands, Decrees, and Laws (6:1-3)**

Moses begins this segment by pressing the urgency for Israel to observe all that God has commanded (6:1). Richard Nelson notes, “The phrase ‘statutes and ordinances’ describes and illustrates the content of the ‘commandment.’”<sup>68</sup> Nelson goes on to point out that “commandment” most likely refers to the Decalogue in chapter 5, while “statutes and ordinance” refers to the laws detailed in chapters 12–26.<sup>69</sup> J. G. McConville adds, “The phrase as a whole refers to the body of Mosaic teaching that is shortly to be given, and that is to be taught and to have validity for the life of the people in the land.”<sup>70</sup>

The people’s longevity of life is tied directly to their adherence to God’s commands throughout the coming generations (6:2). Eugene H. Merrill compares this passage with 5:32-33 where the exhortation “not to turn to the right or to the left” now becomes a command to fear the LORD: “A fear that results in obedience to the decrees and commands for generations to come.”<sup>71</sup> Peter C. Craigie writes, “The object of Moses’ teaching was the life-long fear (or reverence) of the Lord your God; the evidence of this reverence would be seen in the obedience of the Israelites to God’s law, and its fruit would be long life.”<sup>72</sup> The people’s longevity of life and multiplication is hinged on their hearing

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<sup>68</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster Knox, 2002), 88.

<sup>69</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 88.

<sup>70</sup> J. C. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2002), 140.

<sup>71</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 161.

<sup>72</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 168.

and observing God's law (6:3). Nelson states that Moses uses the traditional description of the Promised Land (Exod 3:8), as "a land flowing with milk and honey," to "inspire attention and obedience."<sup>73</sup>

### **Exhortation to Rightly Know and Love God (6:4-5)**

Moses urgently calls the children of Israel to hold tight to the confession of their monotheistic faith (6:4). Often referred to as the Shema, this verse exhorts the people "to hear," which according to Merrill is "tantamount to 'to obey,' especially in covenant contexts such as this."<sup>74</sup> McConville argues, "The LORD our God, the LORD is one" makes the relationship between Yahweh and Israel exclusive.<sup>75</sup> Craigie adds that the Shema "expresses not only the uniqueness but also the unity of God."<sup>76</sup>

God not only demands Israel's outward obedience to His commands, but also their wholehearted love and devotion (6:5). Nelson notes this love is "not sentimental, but concerns the loyalty and service one owes as a vassal to an overlord or as a child to a parent."<sup>77</sup> According to McConville this love is fleshed out as their "gratitude to Him for his special love towards and deliverance of them."<sup>78</sup> He goes on to describe the use of "heart," "soul," and "might" as a requirement for a devotion that is "single minded and complete . . . with a person's full capacity."<sup>79</sup> Craigie concludes that this "all-encompassing love for God was to find its expression in a willing and joyful obedience of the

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<sup>73</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 88.

<sup>74</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 162.

<sup>75</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

<sup>76</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 169.

<sup>77</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 91.

<sup>78</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

<sup>79</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.



commandments of God.”<sup>80</sup>

### **Exhortation to Instruct Future Generations (6:6-9)**

Moses stresses that the words of God’s commands, encapsulated in the Shema, must be on the heart of each Israelite (6:6). Craigie points out the people were to “think on them and meditate about them, so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based on understanding.”<sup>81</sup> Nelson adds that “these words” are to “permeate every sphere of life.”<sup>82</sup> This language also points to the covenant yet to come that will be written on the hearts of God’s people (Jer 31:31-34).

God commands the people of Israel to pass down these truths to their children and future generations through diligent instruction (6:7). Parents, primarily the father, were responsible for the ongoing biblical instruction of their children and were consequently responsible for the faithfulness of future generations. Merrill states that parents must “impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of their children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision.”<sup>83</sup> He then compares this to the process of an engraver etching words into a solid block of granite with hammer and chisel. Even though the work involved is exhausting, once done the message will remain. This is how the “generations of Israelites will come to receive and transmit the words of the Lord’s everlasting covenant.”<sup>84</sup> Craigie comments, “The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>81</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>82</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 91.

<sup>83</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

<sup>84</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

<sup>85</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

The people of Israel must actively remember the importance of God's demands (6:8-9). Jews have historically taken these verses literally and would tie little boxes containing them on their arms and foreheads and attach them to their doorposts. According to Nelson, "the balance between the metaphorical and the literal in these imperatives is hard to weigh, they nevertheless urge devout concentration on 'these words' using description related to actual, concrete practices."<sup>86</sup>

### **Knowing and Showing God's Comfort during Trials (2 Cor 1:3-7)**

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, in part, as a defense of his ministry in response to those who questioned the validity of his apostleship due to physical weakness and accounts of personal suffering. His defense is not for his own sake, but to strengthen the Corinthian church and secure the salvation of unbelievers. Paul envisioned his suffering not as a weakness, but as the opportunity to know and show the comfort of God. Suffering and trials are common to everyone, even Christians. Second Corinthians 1:3-7 provides a clear path for Christians to walk when facing grief and sorrow. In this passage, Christians are reminded that God is the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort, who provides comfort in all of life's tribulations. Such a perspective from this passage reminds Christians that God is ever-present and is able to comfort the hearts of His children.

### **God Is the Source of Genuine Comfort (1:3-4)**

Paul praises God for the mercies and comfort he has received in the midst of trials (1:3). Through personal experience, Paul acknowledges that all solace and encouragement come directly from God through resting in the lordship of Christ. Victor Furnish points out, "As the 'God of all comfort,' God can be counted on to act with

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<sup>86</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 92.

appropriate benevolence toward those who are in any kind of affliction.”<sup>87</sup> David Garland states that God’s comfort “strengthens weak knees and sustains sagging spirits so that one faces the troubles of life with unbending resolve and unending assurance.”<sup>88</sup>

Paul recognizes affliction as the opportunity for Christians to experience God’s comfort and share it with others (1:4). Scott Hafemann notes that Paul goes from a statement of who God is (the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, 1:3), to declaring what God does (comforts those in affliction, 1:4a), and His purpose for doing it (to comfort others, 1:4b).<sup>89</sup> Paul affirms God’s sovereignty in trials, the comfort God gives, and caring for others in the midst of personal affliction. Garland states that Christians can “experience God’s comfort by witnessing its power in seeing those undergoing trouble reaching out to comfort others.”<sup>90</sup>

### **God Comforts Those Who Share in Christ’s Sufferings (1:5-7)**

Paul encourages Christians who suffer due to their faith with the promise of God’s equal comfort (1:5). According to Garland, in describing his sufferings in Christ, “Paul pictures a balance sheet between two columns: sufferings of Christ versus comfort through Christ.”<sup>91</sup> Paul’s apostolic ministry brought agonizing suffering into his life, but God’s comfort always accompanied the pain. Hafemann writes, “The measure of God’s comfort matches the measure of Paul’s suffering, with the result that others may be comforted to the same degree. No matter how great the affliction, it has never outweighed

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<sup>87</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 32a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 117.

<sup>88</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 60.

<sup>89</sup> Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 62.

<sup>90</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 65.

<sup>91</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 65.

the comfort.<sup>92</sup>

Paul is confident that God will use his personal sufferings to strengthen the Corinthian believers (1:6). He recognizes God's hand and redeeming purpose in all areas of his life. Ralph Martin notes that when "Paul undergoes apostolic sufferings, it is to benefit the churches . . . when God encourages him in trials the effect is seen in the strength also given to afflicted believers."<sup>93</sup> Furnish remarks, "As bearers of the gospel the apostles must inevitably encounter opposition and suffer many afflictions, but these are for the sake of the conversion and ultimate salvation of the unbelievers."<sup>94</sup>

Paul has an unshakeable hope for the Corinthians, knowing as they share in his sufferings that they will also share in his comfort (1:7). Garland writes, "Since the sufferings are connected to Christ, they will receive the same wealth of consolation that Paul has received."<sup>95</sup> According to Furnish, their sufferings can be endured "when they are understood as the sufferings of Christ—that is, the same sufferings which the apostles have known and through which the gospel has been proclaimed."<sup>96</sup> Because the Corinthians share in sufferings of Christ, they also share in Christ's comfort. Hafemann concludes, "Paul's hope for the Corinthians is certain because he knows that their participation in the sufferings of Christ, like his own participation in the sufferings of Christ, will never outdistance their common share of God's comfort."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 62.

<sup>93</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 10.

<sup>94</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 120.

<sup>95</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 69.

<sup>96</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 121.

<sup>97</sup> Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 63

## **Conclusion**

This chapter sought to present a biblical and theological basis for introducing a biblical counseling ministry for the purpose of providing care and discipleship within the local church context. The exegesis of four passages showed that (1) Christians must seek and set their minds on things above by putting off the characteristics of the old man, replacing them with the characteristics of the new man in Christ; (2) husbands and wives must live out their biblically ordained roles in order for their marriages to honor the Lordship of Christ; (3) the parent/child relationship must be directed toward a relationship with God; and (4) God is ever-present and able to comfort the hearts of His children and use them in the comforting of others. The next chapter will discuss theoretical, practical, and historical issues related to biblical counseling by showing specific ways believers are to care for one another, specifically with problems associated with grief and sorrow.

CHAPTER 3  
KEY ELEMENTS FOR INTRODUCING A  
BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY

**Introduction**

The purpose of this project was to introduce biblical counseling to the leaders and members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church and, thereby, create an atmosphere where biblical counseling principles may be incorporated into existing and future church ministries. This chapter will apply the previous chapter's theological foundations to the introduction and implementation of a church biblical counseling ministry. Christians who hold to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture will confidently come alongside others as they are equipped to counsel biblically. In chapter, I will focus on defining biblical counseling and stressing its importance and urgency, specifically in the problems associated with sorrow and grief.

**Biblical Counseling Fundamentals**

Over the centuries faithful students and practitioners of God's word passed down what we now know as biblical counseling. Unfortunately, liberal theologians and secular psychologists developed a strong hold over Christian counseling thought and practice during the 19th and 20th centuries. Even in the midst of doctrinal drought, many people still came alongside other Christians with biblical counsel in times of need. One man in particular, Jay Adams, began a movement in the late 1960s that prioritized the infinite power of the Holy Spirit and Scripture in recognizing root sin problems and providing hope and healing as biblical truth is applied and acted upon. Counselor and author, David Powlison notes that Adams recognized "counseling as radically dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the Word of God to people's lives: the promises

encourage and empower, the commands convict and guide, and the stories make application.”<sup>1</sup> Adams’ books, including *Competent to Counsel*, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, and *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, as well as the counseling ministries he established—Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation and National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, now Association of Certified Biblical Counselors—paved the way for further development and growth of the biblical counseling movement into the twenty-first century both nationally and internationally.

### **Why Biblical Counseling?**

Biblical counseling is rooted in the sufficiency of Scripture, which is the conviction that the Bible is enough or all that is necessary for the care of souls. The term implies that all that is needed for both salvation and sanctification are within the pages of the Bible. Concerning the sufficiency of Scripture, *The London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689* states, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things (Galatians 1:8-9) necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”<sup>2</sup>

The Bible clearly declares that its contents are sufficient for counseling because it came into existence by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). Following the instruction of Scripture will allow believers to be firmly planted in God’s truth and to live according to His will (Ps 1:1-3). The Bible guides believers to walk in the ways of God and warns against turning aside from them (Ps 3:15-17). The Bible is the source of the knowledge of salvation, sanctification, and Christian instruction and equipping (2 Tim

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<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, “Biblical Counseling in Recent Times,” in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John MacArthur (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2005), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Founders Ministries, “The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English,” accessed December 18, 2020, <https://founders.org/library/1689-confession/>.

3:15-17). The Bible contains the truth that produces godliness in the hearts and lives of believers and that progressively makes them holy (2 Pet 1:3-4).

Those who integrate Christian faith with secular psychology believe Scripture is insufficient in regard to counseling. The amplification of the mission statement of the Society for Christian Psychology states,

A Christian vision of human nature is shaped primarily by the Christian Scriptures, as well as Christianity's intellectual and ecclesial traditions. However, a Christian psychology will also be critically informed by other relevant sources of psychological truth, particularly its own reflection, research, and practice, but also the psychological work of other traditions (e.g., secular psychology), philosophy, human experience, and the other human sciences.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding integrational counseling, John Street writes, "Trying to keep one foot in the Bible and another in the intrusive discipline of psychology presents a precarious balancing act. Those who do not slip from the Christian faith are often torn apart."<sup>4</sup>

Concerning the sufficiency of Scripture, theologian Wayne Grudem explains, "Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemption history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."<sup>5</sup> Steve Viars and Rob Green point out, "Yes it is true that God's Word allows us to interpret the data around us and make (hopefully) wise observations. But we must never confuse the value of our observations with the plain truth of Scripture."<sup>6</sup> According to Samuel Stephens, when integrationists say things like "all truth is God's truth," they are

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<sup>3</sup> The Society of Christian Psychology Facebook Page, "Amplification of the Mission Statement," accessed December 18, 2020, [https://www.facebook.com/Society-for-Christian-Psychology-444904762297500/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/Society-for-Christian-Psychology-444904762297500/?ref=page_internal).

<sup>4</sup> John Street, "Why Biblical Counseling and Not Psychology?," in MacArthur, *Counseling*, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

<sup>6</sup> Steve Viars and Rob Greene, "The Sufficiency of Scripture," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 100.



implying that all disciplines, regardless of origin, share an underlying unity of truth. As biblical counselors, we must realize that psychotherapeutic theories and methods are not neutral. These are systems of thought that may seem to hold some observations in common with a general Christian view of man, but they actually promote a Godless worldview (Col 2:4-8).<sup>7</sup>

### **What Does Biblical Counseling Entail?**

Biblical counseling affirms that God created people in His image with great value and dignity (Gen 1:26-27; Ps 139). However, due to sin, that image has been marred. The biblical counselor's goal is to come alongside counselees in the midst of their current problems and help them deal biblically and decisively with their issues. In a nutshell, biblical counseling uses the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to people. Powlison states, "Counseling aims to illuminate the heart, to help people see themselves as they are in God's eyes, and in that to make the love of God a sweet necessity."<sup>8</sup> Bob Kellemen defines biblical counseling as "the equipping of God's people to promote personal change centered on the Person of Christ through the personal ministry of the Word."<sup>9</sup> God's Word alone offers help for people to truly understand their problems and provides the pathway for lasting change. John Henderson concludes, "For the counsel to be *biblical* it must be rooted in God, exalting of Jesus Christ, enabled by the Holy Spirit, and offered in love."<sup>10</sup>

The ultimate goal of biblical counseling is to help Christians grow to be more like Christ in every area of their lives (Eph 4:22-24). Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju

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<sup>7</sup> Samuel Stephens, "General Revelation: A Decisive Doctrine for the Biblical Counseling Movement," Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, November 29, 2018, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/general-revelation/>.

<sup>8</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 158.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Carson and Bob Kelleman, "Introduction: Speaking Christ's Truth in Love," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 16.

<sup>10</sup> John Henderson, "A Definition for Biblical Counseling," Association of Biblical Counselors, January 31, 2017, <https://christiancounseling.com/blog/definition-biblical-counseling/>.

break this down into three simple goals. First, counselors need to address the counselee’s presenting problem in a Christ-centered and Word-driven manner—the counselor strives to help struggling people respond wisely to their troubles. Second, counselors need to display the relevance of the gospel to the counselee’s problem—the counselor strives to expose the self-reliant lies counselees often tell themselves concerning their problems and point them instead to the finished and sufficient work of Christ. Third, counselors need to help counselees grow in Christlikeness—the counselor strives to reveal the redeeming power of God’s grace to faithfully develop Christians in and through life’s difficulties (Phil 1:6).<sup>11</sup>

With counseling goals established, Pierre and Reju then lay out three core elements of biblical counseling methodology used to “uncover, weigh, and offer redemptive insights for the troubles in people’s lives.”<sup>12</sup> First, counselors need to listen intently in order to understand the context of the counselee’s life and troubles (Jas 1:19). As counselors listen, they focus on the perceived impact that circumstances, other people, self, and God have had on the presenting problem. Second, once counselors are aware of the problem, they need to consider how the counselee’s heart is responding to God, to self, to others, and to circumstances (Prov 20:5). The counselee’s heart will either respond in faith or in ways that are characteristic of unbelief—anger, fear, bitterness, and the like. Third, counselors must speak the truth in love as they offer counselees instruction, correction, and encouragement from Scripture (Eph 4:15; 2 Tim 3:16, 17). Biblical counselors seek to challenge counselees to faith-centered heart responses and thereby help them learn to rightly respond to life’s problems (Heb 11:6).<sup>13</sup>

Biblical counselors endeavor to teach counselees what God says about the issues

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<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 36-38.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 48-51.

in their life, help them recognize their need for change, and then develop a plan of action for change according to biblical principles. Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp describe the process of biblical change in four key concepts: Heat, Thorns, Cross, and Fruit.<sup>14</sup>

First, the heat of circumstances forms the backdrop of counselees' responses.

Circumstances should not be seen as excuse to sin because "the Bible teaches again and again that our circumstances don't cause us to act the way we act. They only expose the true condition of hearts, revealed in our words and actions."<sup>15</sup> Second, the thorns point to the reality that "as sinners, we tend to respond sinfully to circumstances of life."<sup>16</sup> Third, the cross points to the believer's new identity in Christ (Gal. 2:20) and "cross-centered living gives a purpose and direction to all our actions and words. No longer motivated by our own agenda, by God's grace, we now want our lives to reflect what God is doing in us."<sup>17</sup> Fourth, the fruit is the result of a new heart and new identity in Christ, which is a work of God's grace. Lane and Tripp state, "Fruit grows out of a heart that drinks in the gospel. The Christian life is so much more than obeying the rules. It is lived in relationship with the living Christ. When we trust and obey, we honor God, we are given more grace, and others are helped along the way."<sup>18</sup> In summary, biblical counselors must properly utilize Scripture in guiding counselees to change by helping them identify their heat filled circumstances, confess their thorny responses, recognize their identity in the cross, and work to bear fruit in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>14</sup> Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2008), 83.

<sup>15</sup> Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 113.

<sup>16</sup> Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 117.

<sup>17</sup> Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 153.

<sup>18</sup> Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 181.

## Who Should Counsel?

As shepherds, overseers, and elders, pastors have been called to the public preaching ministry of the Word, but the personal counseling ministry of the Word is equally essential (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-2). Powlison writes, “The public and private ministries of preaching and devotional study are but two legs of a three legged stool. Interpersonal ministry of the Word is the third leg. It’s the proof of whether or not the furniture can bear the weight.”<sup>19</sup> According to Pierre and Reju, this “personal ministry involves three elements: (1) identifying with the weakness and sin of people, (2) speaking to God on behalf of people, and (3) speaking to people on behalf of God.”<sup>20</sup> Along with the pastoral role of biblical counseling, pastors are also called to directly equip church members to counsel (Eph 4:11-16). Equipping occurs through a pastor’s public preaching and teaching, formal counseling training, inviting members to observe counseling, and modeling the application of Scripture in everyday life.

According to Jay Adams, “God calls every Christian to counsel some people, somewhere, at some time about something, but He does not call him to counsel every person, under every situation, at all times about everything.”<sup>21</sup> Kellemen states, “Christ’s grand plan for His church is for every member to be a disciple-maker by speaking and living gospel truth to one another.”<sup>22</sup> Numerous verses of Scripture concur with Adams’ and Kellemen’s quotes. Christ calls his followers to make disciples and teach them to obey his commands (Matt 28:18-20). Paul urges believers to be full of goodness, knowledgeable of the Word, and competently instruct one another (Rom 15:14), to comfort

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<sup>19</sup> David Powlison, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2005), 108.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 28.

<sup>21</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Ready to Restore: The Layman’s Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1981), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Robert W. Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church: The 4E Ministry Training Strategy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 49.

one another (2 Cor 1:3-4), and to restore those who have been caught in a sin (Gal 6:1-2) through speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15). The writer of Hebrews instructs believers to daily encourage one another (Heb 3:12-14) and to spur one another toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24-25). James writes that someone should bring back one who has wandered from the truth (Jas 5:19-20). Finally, Jude urges his readers to be merciful to the doubting and strive to rescue others from dangerous situations (Jude 22-23).

Biblical counseling strives to help counselees view their problems through the lens of Scripture. The target of biblical counseling is not merely a change in outward behavior, but a change of the heart that flows from trusting in the finished work of Christ. The gospel makes it possible for believers to live in hope no matter what problems they may face.

### **Grieving with Hope**

Loss and the accompanying seasons of sorrow are common to everyone. Each person's life will consist of wonderful heights of joy and profound depths of agonizing grief. No expression of grief is deeper than the grief that accompanies the death of a loved one. During these times it is necessary to consider how Christians, in particular, grieve while facing such painful loss. Proponents of popular psychology regularly claim that there is no right or wrong way to grieve,<sup>23</sup> but this is not true for Christians. The Bible clearly teaches that believers should grieve differently than unbelievers (1 Thess 4:13-14). Because of faith in the finished work of Christ, Christian grief should be rooted in the hope of His death, resurrection, and second coming.

When Christians drift into despair and hopelessness, they run the risk of responding sinfully to their pain because they are vulnerable to temptations they might normally resist. During seasons of grief, God will often reveal life dominating sins that

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<sup>23</sup> Laurie Meyers, "Grief: Going Beyond Death and Stages," Counseling Today, October 27, 2016, <https://ct.counseling.org/2016/10/grief-going-beyond-death-stages/>.

have taken root in a believer's heart. God uses Scripture to point out these sins, deal with sinful patterns of grief, and bring beautiful comfort to hurting hearts.

Pastoral ministry and biblical counseling present numerous opportunities to walk alongside grieving church members. While in many instances the pain seems almost unbearable, the ultimate goal is to lovingly offer comfort to hurting families. Often, families will greatly benefit from learning and walking through the process of lament. Lamenting is admitting that grief and sorrow are more than sufferers alone can bear. Lamenting is recognizing one's desperate need for God's power, kindness, and grace in the midst of suffering. Lamenting is how Christians express grief with hope. To lament is to talk to God openly and honestly about the pain associated with grief. According to Mark Vroegop, "lament gives voice to the strong emotions that believers feel because of suffering. It wrestles with the struggles that surface. Lament typically asks at least two questions: (1) 'Where are you God?' (2) 'If you love me, why is this happening?'"<sup>24</sup> Lament is the pathway that leads from heartbreak to hope. The Bible is filled with examples of lament; in fact, over a third of the Psalms are laments. Vroegop points out the essential elements of lament in the Psalms: turn, complain, ask, and trust.

First, the Psalms of lament focus on a continual turning to God in prayer. Vroegop writes, "Lament begins with an invitation to turn to God while in pain."<sup>25</sup> Believers who are languishing in grief are invited to cry out to God (77:1-2). Believers can boldly pray their struggles (77:2-4) and their questions (77:7-8). Vroegop encourages grieving believers to base their questions, pain, and heartache in the cross of Christ: "The cross shows us that God has already proven himself to be for us and not against us."<sup>26</sup> Lament opens the door for believers to pray in faith while enduring pain.

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<sup>24</sup> Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 28.

<sup>25</sup> Vroegop, *Dark Clouds*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Vroegop, *Dark Clouds*, 37.

Second, the Psalms of lament encourage believers to share their complaints with God. More than a sinful rehearsing of anger, Vroegop stresses that, through godly complaint, Christians are able to express their disappointment and move toward resolution: “We complain on the basis of our belief in who God is and what he can do.”<sup>27</sup> Grieving Christians are invited to bring their challenging questions (10:1) and their frustrations (10:2-11) before God. Vroegop challenges believers to bring complaints by incorporating the Psalms of lament in their prayers with honesty and humility. Real pain and suffering happen in life, and believers can cry to God in desperation even when he seems far away.

Third, the Psalms of lament invite believers to boldly ask God for help while in pain as an act of faith. Concerning the psalmists, Voegop explains, “They call upon God with such authority that it seems as if they are commanding God to act. Their confidence in God’s character and their knowledge of his past deliverance compel them to make bold requests.”<sup>28</sup> Grieving Christians are encouraged to bring their bold requests to God (22:11, 19-21), knowing they can rely on him to act. Lament invites those who are hurting to dare to hope in God’s promises as they request his help.

Fourth, the Psalms of lament urge believers to choose to trust God with a renewed confidence. Vroegop states that lament “has the possibility of providing a pathway and a language that allow people not only to deal with the reality of their pain but also to be refocused on the trustworthiness of God. We keep trusting by lamenting.”<sup>29</sup> Concerning the Psalms of lament, Vroegop points out, “Words like *but*, *however*, and *yet* mark the intentional shift from the cause of the lament to trusting in who God is, what he has done, and the promises of Scripture.”<sup>30</sup> As believers move through a process of lament, they learn to place on God the full weight of their grief and sorrow.

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<sup>27</sup> Vroegop, *Dark Clouds*, 44.

<sup>28</sup> Vroegop, *Dark Clouds*, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Vroegop, *Dark Clouds*, 75.

<sup>30</sup> VroeGop, *Dark Clouds*, 76.

Biblical lament is an avenue believers walk while enduring grief and sorrow. To fully benefit from lament, Christians need a framework to properly engage their grief. J. Alasdair Groves and Winston T. Smith state, “Engaging grief will mean reconnecting to everything the loss touches upon in a new way. You will have to reconsider and reacquaint yourself with everything that you associated with what has been lost in a way that connects you to God and others.”<sup>31</sup> Groves and Smith lay out four specific steps of proper grief engagement: identify, examine, evaluate, and act.

Grief engagement begins with identifying the loss and sharing it people who care. Groves and Smith point out, “We identify and begin to absorb the loss by exploring and naming the contours of what was there, emotionally pressing into the grooves and holes left behind, and sharing the experience with others who love us well.”<sup>32</sup> The process of healing begins as believers learn to identify the grief associated with loss and stay connected to people who are willing to walk alongside them.

The next step is to examine it through the lens Scripture where “from beginning to end, we witness terrible loss, the bereavement and groaning of God and his people, and the certain hope that renewed life follows these losses.”<sup>33</sup> Groves and Smith examine David’s life experiences to show the various forms of grief.<sup>34</sup> David was stricken by the grief of guilt after Nathan confronted him concerning his sins of adultery and murder (Ps 51). David also deeply grieved the illness and imminent death of his baby son (2 Sam 12:15-23). David was also very familiar to the grief associated with personal betrayal (Ps 55). Finally, David understood that grief is often painted with broad brushstrokes and is not limited to a small number of situations (Ps 31).

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<sup>31</sup> J. Alasdair Groves and Winston T. Smith, *Untangling Emotions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 188.

<sup>32</sup> Groves and Smith, *Untangling Emotions*, 189.

<sup>33</sup> Groves and Smith, *Untangling Emotions*, 190.

<sup>34</sup> Groves and Smith, *Untangling Emotions*, 190-92.



The third step is to evaluate the way God's people are to respond to it. Referring to 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Groves and Smith state, "In Christ, no matter what we've lost, no matter how severe the grief, we have hope. In short, our hope is this: Jesus was raised from the dead and so conquered death."<sup>35</sup> Believers can fully experience grief without falling into despair and hopelessness because they cling to the resurrection of Jesus.

The last step in grief engagement is learning to properly act in response to it. Grief is not a problem to be fixed but a journey that leads to healing. Groves and Smith write, "Engaging grief wisely requires us to be flexible and make room for varied experiences, especially when different people are grieving the same thing at the same time but in different ways. Remember that Jesus has overcome every loss and gives us his power and love to find life even after the most terrible losses."<sup>36</sup> Christians are directed to comfort one another with the comfort received from Christ as the ultimate response to grief (2 Cor 1:3-7).

The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, in part, as defense of his ministry in response to those who questioned the validity of his apostleship due to physical weakness and accounts of personal suffering. Suffering and trials are common to everyone, even Christians. Second Corinthians 1:3-7 provides a clear path for Christians to walk when facing grief and sorrow. In this passage, Christians are reminded that God is the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort, who provides comfort in all of life's tribulations. Such a perspective from this passage reminds Christians that God is ever-present and able to comfort the hearts of His children.

Concerning the comfort discussed above, Joni Eareckson Tada urges believers to notice that "when Christ enters with his comfort, he turns our suffering inside out,

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<sup>35</sup> Groves and Smith, *Untangling Emotions*, 193.

<sup>36</sup> Grooves and Smith, *Untangling Emotions*, 195.

raising sad spirits, inflating collapsed hearts, and bolstering weak wills with his perseverance and hope. It is the nature of Christ's comfort not only to feel sympathy, but to redeem."<sup>37</sup> Tada shares three ways recipients of God's comfort can effectively comfort those who hurt. First, we comfort others through intercession: "When we pray, as sufferers, for fellow sufferers, we pray with greater insight, and specificity, and perhaps more earnestness."<sup>38</sup> Second, we comfort others through the sharing of God's promises in Scripture. Tada recalls from her own suffering how the promises of God did not take away her afflictions, but she gained God's courage for her journey. Third, we comfort others with the bigger picture. Referring to the story of Joseph in Genesis, Tada urges believers to remember how God has providentially used their own seasons of sufferings to convince others of his saving power. God desires that believers share his encouragement through their own brokenness.<sup>39</sup>

Believers grieve with hope as they walk through a process of biblical lament, properly engage their grief, and strive to comfort others who are hurting. Christians must not grieve as unbelievers do. The apostle Paul taught that there is a distinctly Christian way to express grief—with hope (1 Thess 4:13). Paul pointed back to the death and resurrection of Christ and forward to his second coming as the reasons for this hope. According to Tim Challies, "Christians experience grief but without despair, sorrow but without defeat, sadness but without hopelessness. It's true sorrow and true hope. These things don't cancel out one another."<sup>40</sup> Robert Kellemen adds, "The world can hope for changed circumstances and changed feelings, but for those who place their sure hope in

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<sup>37</sup> Joni Eareckson Tada, "Broken to Comfort the Broken: How Quadriplegia Prepared Me to Carry Others," *Desiring God*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/broken-to-comfort-the-broken>.

<sup>38</sup> Tada, "Broken to Comfort the Broken."

<sup>39</sup> Tada, "Broken to Comfort the Broken."

<sup>40</sup> Tim Challies, "How to Grieve Like a Christian," September 10, 2017, <https://www.challies.com/articles/how-christians-grieve/>.

Christ and His resurrection power, the casket of loss is never final.”<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, believers can fall into patterns of hopeless expressions of grief, which may lead to sin.

What biblical counselors may describe as hopeless and possibly sinful expressions of grief, secular and integrationist counselors, using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, may diagnose as Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder (PCBD). According to the American Psychiatric Association, a PCBD diagnosis may be assigned to individuals who experience an unusual disabling or prolonged response to bereavement.<sup>42</sup> Formerly known as Complicated Grief Disorder, PCBD causes sufferers to feel extreme yearning for a deceased loved one, usually over a prolonged period. Feelings of longing are often accompanied by destructive thoughts and behaviors, as well as general impairment in resuming normal life.<sup>43</sup> The *DSM-5* makes some accurate observations about the problems associated with hopeless grieving, yet it fails to express, identify, or grasp the heart issues associated with hopelessness.

Even though God has provided biblically sound resources to help believers grieve with hope, many will drift into hopeless and sinful practices. Paul David Tripp warns grieving believers that they are vulnerable to four particular temptations normally resisted. Satan will take advantage of weak moments to target struggling hearts.<sup>44</sup> First, Tripp warns grieving believers of the temptation of doubt and unbelief: “When you are shocked and dismayed at the death of someone you dearly love, it can be tempting to

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<sup>41</sup> Robert W. Kellemen, *God’s Healing for Life’s Losses: How to Find Hope When You’re Hurting* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2010), 101.

<sup>42</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 811.

<sup>43</sup> Kevin Fleming, “Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder DSM-5,” Theravive, accessed August 16, 2021, <https://www.theravive.com/therapedia/persistent-complex-bereavement-disorder-dsm--5>.

<sup>44</sup> Paul David Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 11.

doubt God’s goodness, mercy, faithfulness, and love.”<sup>45</sup> Alister McGrath points out that the temptation of unbelief can flow from the unrealistic need to know everything with absolute certainty and a weak and immature faith that refuses to grow up.<sup>46</sup> Tripp encourages believers not to doubt God’s goodness by holding on to believing in His love more than ever before.<sup>47</sup>

Second, believers need to be careful that a natural anger at death does not degenerate into a sinful anger with God.<sup>48</sup> Robert Jones answers the question, “Is it okay to be angry with God?,” with a big No! Jones explains, “To be angry with God is to perceive some wrong in God, to apprehend some evil in his ways.”<sup>49</sup> When tempted to be angry with God, Jones adds, “We need not settle for cold stoicism or hot blasphemy. God opens doors for us to lament, to bring him our doubts and questions—wisely, humbly, and honestly.”<sup>50</sup> Tim Keller points to a right response to God’s sovereignty in the midst of suffering: “Because God is sovereign we are to thank him. We are to thank him for whatever he sends us, even if we don’t understand it.”<sup>51</sup>

Third, believers should resist the temptation of becoming envious of others while grieving the loss of a loved one.<sup>52</sup> Death often makes hurting Christians feel singled out for a particular suffering and desire to switch lives with someone else. Tripp

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<sup>45</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

<sup>46</sup> Alister McGrath, “When Doubt Becomes Unbelief,” Ligonier, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/when-doubt-becomes-belief/>.

<sup>47</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

<sup>48</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

<sup>49</sup> Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2005), 115.

<sup>50</sup> Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 128.

<sup>51</sup> Timothy Keller, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 302.

<sup>52</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

states, “Envy is rooted in a personal and heartfelt disappointment with God ‘You didn’t give me what I wanted!’”<sup>53</sup> Envy will prevent believers from dealing their loss in biblically beneficial ways.

Fourth, believers must avoid the tempting depths of self-pity.<sup>54</sup> Often those in pain are tempted to move God out of the center of their lives and make themselves and their pain the focus. Tripp explains, “No one’s loss is as great as your loss. No one’s pain is as great as your pain. You give yourself to a level of self-pity and self-absorption that you wouldn’t have tolerated before. This is how you feel, but resist setting aside those two great commands: love God, love others.”<sup>55</sup>

Puritan Pastor John Flavel was very familiar with sorrow and grief. Two years following his second wife’s death in 1674, Flavel wrote *A Token for Mourners*, which was recently republished as *Facing Grief: Counsel for Mourners*.<sup>56</sup> In the third chapter Flavel describes the sorrow that is allowed to the Christian mourner. First, “the afflicted must be allowed an awakened and tender sense of the Lord’s afflicting hand upon them”<sup>57</sup> (Jer 5:3). Flavel considers it stupidity to make light of God’s corrections. Second, “we must allow the mourning, afflicted soul a due and comely expression of his grief and sorrow in his complaints both to God and men.”<sup>58</sup> Flavel points out that there is no sin in complaining to God, but it is extremely wicked to complain of him. Third, “the afflicted person may (ordinarily) accuse, judge, and condemn himself, for being the cause and procurer of his

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<sup>53</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

<sup>54</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

<sup>55</sup> Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” 11.

<sup>56</sup> John Flavel, *Facing Grief: Counsel for Mourners* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010).

<sup>57</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 16.

own troubles.”<sup>59</sup> Flavel contends that when God is smiting, believers should be searching and examining their hearts (Job 10:2). Fourth, “the afflicted Christian may, in a humble, submissive manner, plead with God, and be earnest for the removal of his affliction.”<sup>60</sup> Flavel explains that even as Jesus in the garden poured out his soul with cries and tears to the Father, so should his children in their troubles.

In chapter 4, “When Sorrow Becomes Sinful,” Flavel shares seven ways sorrow becomes sinful when it is excessive. Modern minds may find many of these blunt and insensitive, but Flavel, who truly understands sorrow, is writing as a pastor to his flock. Flavel explains that sorrow becomes sinful when the following issues occur.

“First, it causes us to slight and despise all our other mercies and enjoyments as small things, in comparison with what we have lost.”<sup>61</sup> Focusing so much on what was lost may lead to focusing very little or not at all on what remains is evidence of ignorance, ingratitude, and a great provocation to the Lord.

“Secondly, when they so wholly engulf our hearts that we either mind not all, or are little or nothing sensible of, the public evils and calamities which lie upon the church and the people of God.”<sup>62</sup> It is sinful sorrow when sufferers have little to no regard for the miseries of others, but are wholly committed to their own afflictions.

“Thirdly, when they divert us from, or distract us in our duties, so that our intercourse with heaven is stopped and interrupted by them.”<sup>63</sup> Afflicted believers who neglect prayer, Bible reading, and service will not experience the comfort and relief God gives through them.

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<sup>59</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 18.

<sup>60</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 25.

“Fourthly, when they so overload and oppress your bodies as to endanger your lives, or render them useless and unfit for service.”<sup>64</sup> It is sinful and displeasing to God when believers are so consumed with grief that they abuse their bodies or neglect to care for their physical health and wellbeing.

“Fifthly, when affliction sours the spirit with discontent, and makes it inwardly grudge against the hand of God, then our trouble is full of sin, and we ought to be humbled for it before the Lord.”<sup>65</sup> Whatever God does in the lives of believers, they should maintain good thoughts of Him and His works.

“Sixthly, our sorrows exceed due bounds when we continually excite and provoke them by willing irritations.”<sup>66</sup> Over delighting in the memories of loved ones may lead believers to downplay the workings of God in the midst of their grief.

“Lastly, our sorrows may then be pronounced sinful when they deafen our ears to all the wholesome and seasonable words of counsel and comfort offered us for our relief and support.”<sup>67</sup> Often self-isolation in times of sorrow is actually a sinful refusal to receive and adhere to godly counsel and comfort.

May these words written hundreds of years ago serve as a warning against falling into sinful patterns while expressing sorrow. Christians ought to grieve when loved ones die, but not as those who have no hope. God has blessed his people with biblical resources, like lament, to help them grieve with a hope that flows from Christ’s death, resurrection, and second coming (1 Thess 4:13-18). As Keller points out, “If the death of Christ happened for us and he bore our hopelessness so that now we can have hope—and

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<sup>64</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 27.

<sup>65</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 31.

<sup>67</sup> Flavel, *Facing Grief*, 33.

if the resurrection of Jesus Christ happened—then even the worst things will turn into the best things, and the greatest are yet to come.”<sup>68</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter sought to provide an overview of the biblical counseling movement, including a brief history, definitions, and distinctives. The chapter also featured a biblical breakdown of grief and sorrow, lament, as the biblical model of expressing grief, and the dangers of unbiblical expressions of grief. The next chapter will discuss the implementation of this ministry project. The discussion will include the development and implementation of an Introduction to Biblical Counseling class to increase the knowledge about biblical counseling to the members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church.

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<sup>68</sup> Keller, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, 318.



## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this project was to introduce biblical counseling at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Green Cove Springs, Florida. The first chapter of this project gave a brief overview of the history and present needs of the congregation. Chapter 2 focused on the biblical and theological foundations for a biblical counseling ministry. Chapter 3 concentrated on the fundamental components of a biblical counseling ministry, specifically related to problems associated with sorrow and grief. This chapter will describe the development and implementation of the “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” ministry project

#### **Preparing the Project**

The development and implementation process of the seminar included four significant steps. The first step included changing my original plan for chapter 3 and the curriculum following conversations with Dr. Plummer, my project supervisor. The second step was to develop a rough outline for the curriculum with input from two certified biblical counselors. The third step was to develop an amplified outline which was evaluated and approved by the expert panel. The fourth step included writing the curriculum, planning the dates, times, and location for the seminar, publicizing, and teaching the six-week “Introduction the Biblical Counseling” curriculum. I will elaborate on these steps in more detail in this section.

**Step 1—Setting the Seminar Curriculum**  
**Direction: January 2021**

Originally, chapter 3 and the project seminar curriculum were to include introduction to biblical counseling principles followed by implications to the areas of marriage, parenting, and sorrow and grief. I chose these areas because they are common concerns for members of the congregation. Believing this was an overextension of content for chapter 3 and the project, Dr. Plummer recommended focusing on just one of the areas.

After further evaluation of the ages (65 +) and needs (widowed, declining health, etc.) of the majority of the congregation, I decided to focus on how biblical counseling principles help those struggling with sorrow and grief. I then decided to aim for a six-session seminar that would include three weeks dedicated to teaching basic biblical counseling principles, followed by three weeks applying those principles to the problems associated with sorrow and grief. This proved to be a good decision because it allowed the class to spend quality time on one counseling issue instead of rushing through three.

**Step 2--Formalizing the Seminar**  
**Curriculum Outline Content:**  
**January–February 2021**

The rough curriculum outline consisted of six session title ideas with corresponding bullet points. During the rough outline process, I made appointments to meet with two local biblical counselors for feedback and input. These appointments proved most helpful as the rough outline became more formalized. I met first with Jim Parrish, a certified biblical counselor who leads Shepherd’s Help, an encouragement and counseling ministry for pastors. After going over the outline, Parrish suggested that I add discussion on addressing heart issues related to biblical counseling in general and sorrow and grief specifically. He recommended adding an overview of the “Three Trees Diagram” to help class members understand the connection between behavior and the heart. This diagram will be discussed in the summary of week three below.

Second, I met with Ernie Baker, who serves First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida, as Pastor of Counseling and Discipleship and directs The Grace Center for Biblical

Counseling. While discussing practical ways of coming alongside people enduring grief, Baker suggested adding a section on proper communication. He stressed that class members should be given examples of appropriate phrases to say to the grieving, as well as examples of what not to say. Baker also recommended that I add a segment on the importance of learning to listen well and offered other tangible ways to care and bring comfort to the hurting.

**Step 3--Developing an Amplified Outline  
for Expert Panel Review:  
February--March 2021**

Once the rough outline was complete, I began to create the amplified outline, which was a synopsis of the completed seminar curriculum content. The first session served as a basic introduction to biblical counseling, including a brief history and definitions. The second session gave an overview of biblical counseling foundations and distinctives. The third session included a detailed explanation of the Three Tree Biblical Counseling Model, including a class practice activity using a biblical case study. The fourth session presented a biblical overview of grief and loss, including examples of tangible ways to care for grieving. The fifth session presented lament as the biblical model for expressing sorrow and grief, including steps to engage grief biblically. The sixth session presented a warning against ungodly expressions of grief and gave a recap of the course by applying learned material to a realistic case study situation.

Upon completion, the amplified outline, along with an evaluation rubric, was presented to three pastors who agreed to serve as the project's expert panel. The evaluation rubric measured the curriculum's biblical faithfulness, content scope, methodology, and practicality. Scoring options for each category were 1=insufficient; 2=requires attention; 3=sufficient; and 4=exemplary. Each of the evaluation indicators on all returned curriculum evaluation rubrics were marked at either sufficient or exemplary. The expert panel included Chris Bonts of First Baptist Church in Middleburg, Florida; David Tarkington of First Baptist Church in Orange Park, Florida; and Shane Waters of Sovereign Grace Baptist

Church in Jacksonville, Florida. Chris Bonts observed, “This curriculum provides a great introduction to the idea of biblical soul care and provides basic tips to encourage other believers who are experiencing the pain of grief and loss.” According to David Tarkington, “The course contains clear biblical content throughout and provides an excellent overview of the basics of biblical counseling.” Shane Waters stated, “The references used and biblical counseling definitions were very helpful. This outline presented a clear path to introducing biblical counseling to a local church.”

**Step 4—Writing Curriculum and  
Completing Planning Process:  
March–April 2021**

Once the amplified outline was written and approved by the expert panel, it was time to expand the outline into the full class curriculum and plan seminar logistics. Each session in the student class notes included blanks to fill in, room for notes, and resource footnotes. I sought to include enough teaching material for a ninety-minute class timeframe. I also included follow up reading assignments given out at the conclusion of each session. I created a class notes coversheet which included the seminar title of “Introduction to Biblical Counseling Class,” church logo and name, space for the participant’s name, and each of the session dates—April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25, and June 1.

I originally planned to begin the seminar in early April, but as I was about to announce seminar information to the congregation in mid-March, my wife and I tested positive for COVID19. This diagnosis caused me to push the seminar to begin April 27 and conclude on June 1, running six consecutive Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00. I prepared a sign-up list and made it available to the congregation on Sunday, April 11, and placed seminar information in the church bulletin on April 11, 18, and 25, uploaded information on the pre-service information slideshow, and announced it from the pulpit. The church fellowship hall was selected as the seminar location because it was on the main floor of the building, near restrooms, contained tables and chairs, and had plenty of room for social distancing. By April 25, 14 church members had signed up for the class,

one of whom did not attend any sessions.

### **Teaching the Seminar Curriculum**

The final six weeks of the project were spent teaching the seminar curriculum. In preparation, I copied and stapled class notes for each participant with their names printed on the cover sheet. The fellowship hall was arranged with two chairs per six-foot table, spread out for social distancing purposes, facing the wall mounted white board. Extra pens and blank paper were available as needed. I set up a recommended biblical counseling book table at the front of the room for participants to thumb through. Each session began promptly at 6:30 with prayer followed by a brief recap of the previous session and reading assignments. The material was presented in a lecture format with times for questions between session segments. Follow up reading assignment articles were handed out at the conclusion of each session. Arrangements were made to connect with absent participants to receive reading assignments and review the missed session content. The first and last sessions of the seminar included data collection using the pre- and post-seminar survey.

#### **Seminar Week 1**

During the first ten minutes of week 1, class members completed the pre-course Agreement to Participate Survey. I emphasized the need for each participant to check the “I agree to participate” line. They were also instructed to place a four-digit ID number on the survey they would easily remember in six weeks for the post-course survey. An elderly participant required assistance from his table neighbor in filling out the survey. Thirteen participants returned completed surveys.

I began the class by reading Romans 15:14: “I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.” I shared that in calling the Christians in Rome to instruct one another, Paul was encouraging them to warn, rebuke, encourage, and counsel one another

biblically. I then stated that the purpose of the course was to help participants learn to do the same with the people God has placed in their lives.

The session explored a brief history of biblical counseling: 1) the Protestant Reformation theology of human nature; 2) the Puritan focus of soul care; 3) the gradual decline in biblical soul care and rise of psychology in the church; and 4) the resurgence of biblical counseling in the church. I shared key figures and influential books from each historical period. I then shared five helpful definitions of biblical counseling from current practitioners. The session concluded with four reasons from Scripture why biblical counseling is the best way for Christians to counsel one another.

Participants were given the following article reading assignments: “Critiquing Modern Integrationists” by David Powlison and “What is Biblical Counseling, Anyway?” by Ed Welch.<sup>1</sup>

## **Seminar Week 2**

With twelve participants present and one absent, the session began with prayer followed by participant feedback from the previous week’s lesson and reading assignments. Overall, the class enjoyed reading the articles. I found it encouraging to see that many had highlighted sections and took notes in the margins. The class then focused on biblical counseling foundational truths such as the necessity of the gospel, Scripture, and the Holy Spirit for lasting heart change and progressive sanctification (Col 2:6; John 17:17; Phil 2:12-13; Heb 10:24-25). Next, the session covered several distinctives that are unique to biblical counseling, such as sufficiency of Scripture (Ps 19:7-14), sound theology (Phil 1:9-11), and truth spoken in love (Eph 4:15).

Participants were given the following article reading assignments: “95 Affirmations for Gospel-Centered Counseling” by Bob Kellemen, based on the Biblical

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<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, “Critiquing Modern Integrationists,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 24-34; Ed Welch, “What is Biblical Counseling, Anyway?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 1 (Fall 1997): 2-6.

Counseling Coalition’s Confessional Statement, and “8 Things You Need to Know About Counseling” by Jeremy Pierre.<sup>2</sup>

### **Seminar Week 3**

With twelve participants present and one absent, the session began with prayer followed by participant feedback from the previous week’s lesson and reading assignments. Participants considered Pierre’s article to be a helpful overview of a personal ministry of the Word. Robert Jones’ version of the Three Tree Model and Six Box Version was then introduced to class members as a biblical counseling model used to understand the connection between behavior and the heart (Luke 6:43-45). This model illustrates how evil heart desires and resulting fruit (first tree) are exposed by situational heat, the need for repentance and trusting God’s provision in Christ (cross, second tree), and the resulting heart change and resulting fruit (third tree). Participants’ notes included the diagram, filled in six-box model, and a blank six-box model. The class worked through the blank six-box model of the Three Tree using Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1-21 as a case study.

Participants were given the following article reading assignment: “X-Ray Questions: Drawing Out the Whys and Wherefores of Human Behavior” by David Powlison, and “Seven Principles of Repentance” by Richard Owen Roberts, adapted from chapter 5 of *Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Kellemen, “95 Affirmations for Gospel-Centered Counseling,” RPM Ministries, October 16, 2017, <https://rpmministries.org/2017/10/95-affirmations-gospel-centered-counseling/>; Jeremy Pierre, “8 Things You Need to Know About Counseling,” Southern Equip, March 25, 2020, <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/8-things-need-know-counseling/>.

<sup>3</sup> David Powlison, “X-ray Questions: Drawing Out the Whys and Wherefores of Human Behavior,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 2-9; Richard Owen Roberts, *Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 105-32.

## **Seminar Week 4**

For week 4, twelve participants were present and one absent. Following the opening prayer, I asked participants to share insights from the “X-Ray Questions” reading assignment. Several shared how useful the questions were in probing the root causes of their own behavior as well as others. One participant shared his appreciation for the Bible references connected to each question along with follow-up details to each question. This session began the shift from an introduction to biblical counseling to applying principles to the problems associated with grief and sorrow.

In this session, participants were given an overview of grief and loss, including definitions (sadness or anguish due to loss of someone or something of value), examples (death of loved one, divorce, declining health, terminal illness diagnosis, loss of possessions, romantic break up, job loss, etc.), and biblical references (Rom 12:15; 2 Cor 1:2-12; 1 Thess 4:13-14). This session also covered the importance and practice of actively listening to the grieving, with Bible references. The session concluded with a discussion of several tangible ways to care for the grieving, including examples of what not to say and what to say. One participant, who works as a funeral director, offered great input here.

Participants were given the following article reading assignment: “Grief: It’s Not About a Process; It’s about The Person” by Paul Randolph, and “Six Lessons in Good Listening” by David Mathis.<sup>4</sup>

## **Seminar Week 5**

With twelve participants present and one absent, the session opened with prayer and little participant discussion regarding the reading assignments. One participant did admit that she needed to work more on actively listening to others instead of mentally preparing a response. In this session, participants were presented the biblical model of

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Randolph, “Grief: It’s Not About a Process; It’s About the Person,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 14-20; David Mathis, “Six Lessons in Good Listening,” *Desiring God*, April 3, 2004, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/six-lessons-in-good-listening>.



lament, which recognizes our desperate need for God’s power, kindness, and grace amid suffering and talking to God openly and honestly about pain associated with grief.

We reviewed a selection of the Psalms of Lament (77; 10; 22; 13) and recognized their four basic elements: (1) turn to God while enduring pain; (2) share complaints with God; (3) ask God for help in the midst of pain; an (4) trust God through the pain. Participants then practiced recognizing the elements of lament with their table neighbors using Psalm 86 as a case study. After about ten minutes, I read the Psalm aloud and we identified the elements together. The class then discussed a few steps to engage grief properly, such as learn to identify the grief, evaluate grief response, and examine grief through Scripture. The session concluded with a discussion on ways believers can comfort one another (2 Cor 1:3-7).

Participants were given the following article reading assignment: “Helping Those Who Grieve” by Karen McMahan, “When Your Song Is a Lament, Sing It with Your Whole Heart” by Betty-Anne Van Rees, and “Dare to Hope in God: How to Lament Well” by Mark Vroegop<sup>5</sup>. Copies of a case study for the final session were also handed out.

## **Seminar Week 6**

With eleven participants present and two absent, the session opened with prayer and an encouraging discussion of the previous session and assigned readings on lament. Many in the class were unaware of the biblical teaching concerning lament and were thankful for this information. One participant stated that the Psalms of Lament had

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<sup>5</sup> Karen McMahan, “Helping Those Who Grieve,” Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, May 15, 2020, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/helping-those-who-grieve/>; Betty-Anne Van Rees, “When Your Song Is a Lament, Sing It with Your Whole Heart,” Biblical Counseling Coalition, October, 15, 2015, <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2015/10/13/when-your-song-is-a-lament-sing-it-with-your-whole-heart/>; Mark Vroegop, “Dare to Hope in God: How to Lament Well,” Desiring God, April 6, 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/dare-to-hope-in-god>.

positively changed the way she viewed God in light of sorrow and grief.

The session continued with a discussion of the dangers of ungodly expressions of grief and sorrow: i.e., doubt and unbelief directed toward God; seething anger and resentment directed toward God and others. I stated that God has provided His Word to help believers recognize and avoid temptation and to restore and comfort those who have fallen into sinful patterns.

The final part of the session served as a seminar overview using the “Susan” case study provided after the previous session. Participants were instructed to pair up with their table neighbors, briefly read through the case study together, and work through the blank Six-Box Diagram (provided in their notes) discussed in session 3. Using session 4 notes, participants discussed effective ways to listen to Susan and some tangible ways to care for her. Using session 5 notes, participants discussed how biblical lament would help Susan go through her grief and discuss ways she could properly engage her grief. Participants were also encouraged to refer to reading assignments. I walked around the room as the groups discussed how they would counsel Susan through grief using a rubric to measure their counseling methodology, focus, and content. I was impressed by some of the group conversations. After about thirty minutes, each table shared how they would come alongside Susan. Overall, participants did an outstanding job of utilizing all that was covered during the seminar.

The session concluded with a time for questions, and I shared options for further training with local Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) certified training centers—Grace Center for Biblical Counseling at FBC Jacksonville and The Hope Center at Christian Family Chapel in Jacksonville. A few indicated they were interested. I then handed out copies of the post-seminar survey and reminded them to use the same four-digit ID number as before. The two absent participants filled theirs out the next night at mid-week Bible study.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the project went smoothly. I set out to present a biblical and practical introduction to biblical counseling for the members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church and that was accomplished. I am grateful for Jim Parrish and Ernie Baker for listening to my early ideas and providing wise insight and feedback. I thoroughly enjoyed preparing the project sessions and then presenting them to the participants, many of whom have indicated they are looking forward to the next class. I pray they will continue learning how to counsel others biblically.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

When I began this project, the members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Green Cove Springs, Florida had little, if any, knowledge of biblical counseling. The ministry project involved the development of an introductory biblical counseling seminar that would teach basic counseling principles with applications to the problems associated with sorrow and grief. Chapter 4 described the project's implementation process, which involved creating and evaluating seminar curriculum, recruiting and surveying participants, and teaching the curriculum. This chapter explores the project's overall effectiveness by evaluating its purposes and goals through an analysis of the data collected from the pre-and post-seminar surveys. It also describes project strengths and weaknesses and what I would have done differently, as well as my theological and personal reflections on the project.

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

The purpose of the project was to introduce biblical counseling at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Green Cove Springs, Florida. To accomplish this purpose, I wrote and taught a curriculum focused on the subject and directed toward the needs of the congregation. Thirteen participants attended the first session of the seminar, and all participated throughout the six weeks and completed the pre-and post-seminar survey in such a way that their responses could be tabulated and analyzed. As stated in chapter 4, the teaching of the curriculum resulted in participants learning basic principles of biblical counseling and their applications to the personal ministry of the Word.

On the final evening of the seminar, I asked class members to share their thoughts concerning the previous six weeks at the bottom of the post-seminar survey form.

The following anonymous quotes serve as confirmation that the project accomplished its purpose:

This has been so beneficial, not just in dealing with grief, but also for all Christians who grieve sins and/or mistakes they have made in their lives. Thank you for taking the time to provide all the great tools to walk alongside someone.

Thank you for the heartfelt advice of this class. It has opened my eyes and my heart. May God bless me as I strive to instill His hope in others.

I enjoyed the class. I not only learned some basics of counseling, but also a lot about myself in the reading assignments.

This course helped to reinforce my awareness for the need of consistent and careful study of Scripture and how helping someone dealing with grief must not be taken lightly.

This class has been a blessing to me. I would recommend all Christians learn how to care for others thru true biblical counseling.

I know I still have growth to do in these areas, but these last six weeks have been super helpful. Thank you!

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

Three goals were implemented to determine the effectiveness of the project: increase the knowledge of the need for an effective biblical counseling ministry among church members, develop an "Introduction to Biblical Counseling" curriculum for the equipping of church members in biblical counseling, and equip church members to begin the process of counseling one another biblically. Each of these goals will be evaluated below.

#### **Increase Knowledge**

The first goal of the project was to increase the knowledge of the need for an effective biblical counseling ministry among HGBC members. This goal was measured by administering a pre-and post-survey, which used a six-point Likert Scale to measure participants' change in knowledge of a needed biblical counseling ministry after completing the "Introduction to Biblical Counseling" seminar.<sup>1</sup> The goal was met when a

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

*t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre-and post-survey scores:  $t = 3.992$ ,  $p = .0008$ . This data is shown in table 1.

Table 1. *T*-test analysis

	<i>PRE-TEST</i> <i>TOTAL</i>	<i>POST-TEST</i> <i>TOTAL</i>
Mean	46.53846154	52.92307692
Variance	20.1025641	14.07692308
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.027436474	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-3.991799613	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000893945	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00178789	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

### **Develop Seminar Curriculum**

The second goal was to develop an “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” curriculum to disciple HGBC members in the foundations of biblical counseling. The goal was successfully met when the curriculum was evaluated by an expert panel and when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.<sup>2</sup> All of the evaluation criteria was judged by the expert panel to rate a value of “3” (sufficient) or “4” (exemplary). Therefore, the goal was sufficiently met. As well as filling out the rubric, each member offered words of encouragement and advice on ways to improve the curriculum. I greatly benefited from their feedback, and I am thankful for their willingness to work with me through this process. Table 2 shows the summary of scores on each criterion from each member of the panel.

<sup>2</sup> The rubric used for evaluating the curriculum can be found in appendix 2.

Table 2. Summary of scores for each criteria

Evaluator	Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3	Criteria 4	Criteria 5	Criteria 6	Criteria 7	Criteria 8
Chris Bonts	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3
David Tarkington	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4
Shane Waters	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4
Average	3.67	4	3	3.33	3	3.33	3.3	3.67

### **Equip Members to Counsel**

The third goal was to equip HGBC members with the “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” curriculum to begin the process of counseling one another biblically. This goal was measured during the Introduction to Biblical Counseling seminar, which included one informal case study practice during session 4 and one formal case study practice during the final session. The class was grouped in two’s during both counseling practices. This goal was successfully met during the formal counseling practice in the final session when each participant scored at the sufficient level or above on the evaluation rubric.<sup>3</sup> I evaluated each group’s discussion during the thirty-minute activity using the rubric and each group scored a combination of sufficient and exemplary. This rubric measured participant counseling methodology, skills, and content.

### **Strengths of the Project**

This project had a number of strengths. First, it addressed HGBC’s need for a biblical counseling ministry as part of an ongoing revitalization process. This project defined what biblical counseling is, how it functions in the church, and showed that God has called all believers to counsel one another biblically. This project successfully served as an entry point into a biblical counseling ministry that will help the church move forward effectively.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 3 for the rubric used to evaluate participant counseling.

A second strength of this project is that it equipped participants to help others experiencing difficulties, especially problems associated with sorrow and grief. The project provided participants with both biblical and practical material. A few participants shared their past reluctance to offer comfort to others due to fears, such as saying the wrong thing, or a lack of biblical understanding. As the sessions progressed, many participants shared opportunities to use curriculum content in conversations with family and friends.

A third strength of this project is that it left open the opportunity for future biblical counseling seminars. My original plan was to include sessions on marriage and parenting in the seminar curriculum, but I instead focused primarily on sorrow and grief. Several participants indicated a desire for seminars covering a biblical approach to depression, anxiety, supporting caregivers, and marriage, parenting, and grand parenting. Seminars dealing with these issues and others will hopefully pique the interest of other church members.

A fourth strength of this project is the ability for the curriculum to be reformatted for use in other churches. One of my goals in writing the curriculum was to help other local pastors introduce biblical counseling principles to their congregations. Members of the expert panel, as well as two other pastors, asked about the possibility of using the curriculum at their churches.

### **Weaknesses and Project Improvements**

The project could have been stronger in a few ways. Delivering missed content to absent participants proved to be challenging. I found myself merely filling in their empty blanks without the supporting details the present participants received. Looking back, I should have made video recordings of each session that could be emailed or placed on a thumb drive for absentees. Future seminar recordings could be used for this purpose as well as for homebound members and those serving in the military.

Another project weakness involves the process of filling in the blank spaces of the participants' class notes during sessions. When I shared the word(s) to write, I often



had to repeat it or write it on the white board. Unfortunately, that was usually unhelpful due to my messy handwriting. This confusion would have been avoided if I had prepared PowerPoint slides of session notes that class members could easily follow.

I also should have placed the class notes and weekly reading assignments in a binder for each participant, instead of handing out the assignments each week. As it was, participants had to keep up with their stapled class notes and individual assignments for the six-week duration. I had to make extra copies on occasion for participants who misplaced their articles.

### **Theological Reflections**

This project reinforced my confidence in the primacy and sufficiency of God's Word. The Bible clearly declares that its contents are sufficient for counseling because it has come to be by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). Following the instruction of Scripture allows believers to be firmly planted in God's truth and to live according to His will (Ps 1:1-3). The Bible guides believers to walk in the ways of God and warns against turning aside from them (Ps 3:15-17). The Bible is the source of the knowledge of salvation, sanctification, and Christian instruction and equipping (2 Tim 3:15-17). The Bible contains the truth that produces godliness in the hearts and lives of believers and that progressively makes them holy (2 Pet 1:3-4). This project was designed to help participants understand that everything necessary for their salvation, growth, and service has been fully revealed and is entirely contained within the pages of Scripture.

I was also reminded of the importance of local church membership and the place biblical counseling has within the church. As a body of believers, the local church is responsible to care for the various needs of its congregants and to provide ongoing opportunities for biblical discipleship (Rom 15:14; 1 Thess 5:14). Instead of seeking counsel from secular or non-biblical Christian counseling settings, Christians ought to be able to turn to their local church for godly counsel. The church has been given everything necessary by God to help believers through the counseling process.

I wanted class participants to understand that the local church has been called to provide soul care for its members through informal and formal means. Formal soul care refers to a counselor/counselee relationship that may consist of regular appointments over a long period of time, while informal soul care may consist of a quick conversation over coffee. The project primarily introduced participants to informal soul care, with the hope that some would desire further training in formal soul care at a local Association of Certified Biblical Counselors' training center. Soul care offers hope from God's Word to those who are discouraged or overwhelmed by their current or past life situation. As members of a local church, participants have been given the responsibility to equip and encourage believers to serve Christ through the ministry of biblical counseling (1 Thess 5:14).

### **Personal Reflections**

My journey through the Doctor of Educational Ministry process began in January 2018 while attending the annual pastor's conference at First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. Being a 1995 graduate, I dropped by the Southern Seminary booth and casually looked through brochures and talked with the admissions representatives about the different Doctor of Ministry options. Having gone through training with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors and sensing a call of God to serve Him in this way, I was intrigued by the biblical counseling concentration. I took some info and continued my day at the conference. Later, when I spoke to my wife about my Southern Seminary booth visit, she broke down in tears. She said this was an answer to our prayers concerning pursuing biblical counseling to better pastor my congregation. Through further prayer and wise counsel from trusted friends, I began the admissions process.

I have been so blessed to sit under some amazing biblical counseling professors and practitioners—Dr. John Street, Dr. Robert Jones, Dr. Stuart Scott, and Dr. Jeremy Pierre—as well as Dr. Joe Harrod and Dr. Matt Haste. Each book, assignment, class lecture, and conversation left behind a lasting impression on my ministry and personal

devotion. The project process has been both challenging and rewarding. There have been moments when I was not sure if I would make it, but my project supervisor, Dr. Rob Plummer, encouraged me to keep writing. I am thankful for the seminar curriculum feedback from the expert panel and each participant who committed six weeks of their lives to learning how to better counsel and comfort others during seasons of sorrow and grief. I am excited about the prospect of future training seminars and the development of biblical counseling ministry that will serve the Hickory Grove Baptist Church family and our community.

### **Conclusion**

This project introduced biblical counseling principles with applications to common problems associated with sorrow and grief to the members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church. The project curriculum consisted of biblical and practical lessons to help participants learn to effectively counsel others biblically. Participants found the weekly seminar sessions and reading assignments to be understandable and useful. I pray that this project will continue to bear fruit in my own Christian walk and in the lives of the participants.

## APPENDIX 1

### INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING SURVEY

The following instrument is the Introduction to Biblical Counseling survey composed of questions using a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose is to assess each participant's level of understanding regarding the need for biblical counseling.

## Agreement to Participate

Hickory Grove Baptist Church is committed to impacting the Green Cove Springs community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. A biblical counseling ministry will play an essential role as the church continues ministering effectively. The goal is not for just an additional ministry of biblical counseling, but that all existing and future ministries begin to embrace a heart for biblical counseling.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify your current understanding in biblical counseling. This research is being conducted by Russell Franklin for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

I agree to participate: \_\_\_\_\_

I do not agree to participate: \_\_\_\_\_

Please designate a four-digit ID# \_\_\_\_\_ (usually the last 4 digits of SSN or phone number)

**Directions:** Please mark the appropriate answer. The questions will ask you to give your opinions using the following scale:

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

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I have a good understanding of what biblical counseling is all about.               | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I have positive view of biblical counseling.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. I believe the Bible deals with personal problems in ways secular psychology cannot. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I can effectively care for the spiritual needs of other church members.             | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I believe the Bible sufficiently helps believers faithfully live a godly life.      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. I believe the Bible teaches that there are godly expressions of grief.                            | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I believe the Bible teaches that there are sinful expressions of grief.                           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I can use the Bible to comfort someone who is living with grief due to a loss.                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I can use the Bible to lead a grieving person through a biblical process of grief.                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I can use the Bible to lovingly restore someone who is caught up in sinful expressions of grief. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

## APPENDIX 2

### INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel consisting of three individuals who evaluated the course material to ensure it was biblically faithful, adequately thorough, and applicable to ministry settings.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

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

<b>Introduction to Biblical Counseling Curriculum Evaluation</b>					
<b>Lessons to be Evaluated:</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The curriculum is biblically and theologically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted and explained.					
The material is clearly relevant to the issue of biblical counseling.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum covers the basics of biblical counseling.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses the steps of introducing a biblical counseling ministry.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning styles, such as lecture, discussion, case study, reading, writing, and homework.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum includes opportunities to practice biblical counseling with.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better care for fellow church members.					



### APPENDIX 3

#### INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING CURRICULUM PARTICIPANT EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation rubric was used by the course instructor to evaluate the competency of participants as they engaged in various counseling scenarios throughout the course.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of counseling situation:

<b>Counselor Evaluation Form</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Counseling Methodology</b>					
<b>Counseling Focus/Skills</b>					
<b>Counseling Content</b>					

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## ABSTRACT

### INTRODUCING BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IN GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert L. Plummer

The purpose of this project was to introduce members at Hickory Grove Baptist Church of Green Cove Springs, Florida to biblical counseling. Chapter 1 introduces the project by presenting its purpose, goals, rationale, definitions, limitations, delimitations, and research methodology. Chapter 2 focuses on the biblical and theological foundations for a biblical counseling ministry. Chapter 3 concentrates on the fundamental components of a biblical counseling ministry, specifically related to problems associated with sorrow and grief. Chapter 4 describes the development and implementation of the six-week “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” seminar curriculum taught at Hickory Grove Baptist Church of Green Cove Springs, Florida. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project, including strengths, weaknesses, theological reflections, and personal reflections.

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BA, Baptist College of Florida, 1992

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Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church, Folkston, Georgia 1995-1999

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