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BIBLICAL COUNSELING IN HOMESCHOOL
COOPERATIVES: BRINGING SCRIPTURAL
HELP TO HOMESCHOOL EDUCATORS
AND STUDENTS

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I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Jennifer, who has modeled the heart of biblical counseling while patiently homeschooling our eight children for more that twenty-five years. Her dedication to the Lord and her family has freed me to serve in ministry, to study, and to marvel at the gift of a godly wife.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Familiarity with the Literature.....	4
Introducing Biblical Counseling	4
Introducing Christian Education	6
Introducing Homeschool Education.....	9
Void in the Literature.....	12
Thesis.....	14
Outline of Chapters.....	14
2. THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING	16
The Lordship of Christ Impacts the Way Christians Live in the World.....	18
Introduction to Colossians 3:1-17	18
The Contrast between What Is Earthly and What Is Above: Colossians 3:1-2	20
Christians Must Be Ruled by Christ Above: Colossians 3:3-4, 15-16.....	21
Christians Must Be Renewed by Christ Above: Colossians 3:5- 10, 12-14.....	23
Christians Must be Unified by Christ Above: Colossians 3:11- 12, 14.....	25
Christ's Rule Has No Limitations: Colossians 3:17.....	26

	Page
Scripture Provides the Necessary and Authoritative Instruction for Dealing with Life's Problems	27
Introduction to 2 Timothy 3:10-17	27
An Argument against the False Teachers: 2 Timothy 3:10-17	28
False Teaching Is Not Effectual in Solving Life's Problems: 2 Timothy 3:7, 13	29
Paul's Model of Opposing False Teachers: 2 Timothy 3:10-14	29
Scripture Is Effective in Solving Life's Problems: 2 Timothy 3:15-17.....	31
The Authoritative Basis of Scripture Is God's Inspiration: 1 Timothy 3:16	32
The Holy Spirit Empowers Believers to Help One Another	33
Introduction to Galatians 6:1-5.....	33
All Christians Are Spiritual People Able to Help Others: Galatians 6:1a	34
Spiritual People Are Equipped with the Fruit of the Spirit for Helping Others: Galatians 6:1b	34
Spiritual People Fulfil Christ's Command to Help Others: Galatians 6:2.....	35
Spiritual People Must Be Humble in Their Efforts to Help Others: Galatians 6:3-4.....	36
Spiritual People Must Place Their Confidence in Christ: Galatians 6:5.....	37
Believers Must Recognize the Centrality of the Heart	38
Introduction to James 4:1-10.....	38
Selfish Hearts Fight and Quarrel: James 4:1-3.....	39
Christians Must Have Undivided Hearts: James 4:4-5	40
Christians Must Have Humble Hearts: James 4:6-7, 10	41
Christians Must Have Transformed Hearts: James 4:8-9.....	42
Conclusion	42

Chapter	Page
3. EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT FOR A HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE	44
All Education Is Religious Education.....	44
The Myth of Neutrality.....	44
Teaching Morality	46
The Whole Truth	47
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Is Founded on Biblical Principles	48
The Authority of the Bible	48
A Cooperative Mission Statement.....	50
Philosophy of Education	51
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Provides Support for the Church.....	52
The Primary Responsibility of Parents.....	52
The Role of the Local Church	54
Homeschool Cooperatives and the Mission of the Church	55
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Ministers to the Whole Family	56
<i>In Loco Parentis</i>	56
The Benefits of Teaching Experience	56
Benefits beyond Curriculum and Instruction	57
Conclusion	58
4. APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING IN A HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE	59
Content for Biblical Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative.....	59
The Need for Discernment When Looking for Answers	59
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Finds Answers in the Bible	62

Chapter	Page
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Relies on the Good News of Christ.....	65
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Integrates Biblical Reality in All Things	68
Competence for Biblical Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative	71
Christians Can Counsel in a Homeschool Cooperative.....	71
Christians Can be Equipped for Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative	72
Informal Settings for Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative.....	73
Formal Settings for Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative	74
Community for Biblical Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative	76
Christians Are Transformed Individuals	76
Christian Homeschooling Is Transformed Education	77
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Can Lead to Transformed Communities.....	78
A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Can Enjoy Transformed Counseling.....	79
Conclusion	80
5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH.....	82
The Opportunity for the Church	82
The Opportunity for Homeschool Cooperatives.....	85
Taking Advantage of These Opportunities	87
Examples of a Biblical Counseling Partnership	89
Serious Behavioral Issues.....	89
Grieving Family Issues.....	91
A Struggling Grandparent	91
Conclusion	92

Appendix	Page
1. BIBLICAL COUNSELING BOOKS FOR THE HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE LIBRARY.....	93
2. SAMPLE CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE CONSENT TO COUNSEL.....	95
3. SAMPLE BIBLICAL COUNSELING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

PREFACE

This thesis combines two things I care deeply about—Christian homeschooling and biblical counseling. Both have played a big part in my life. My wife Jennifer has homeschooled our eight children for over twenty-five years. Her service to our family in this way is invaluable and I can see the fruit of it in our children’s lives.

We have five homeschool graduates and three still studying at home. Our five graduates were all accepted for enrollment by colleges and universities. All five are happily married with children. All five are active in vibrant, Bible-believing churches. One joined the United States Navy, two are engineers, one owns a business, and another is preparing for missionary service. Glory to God for all this. There is no secret formula for producing children who love God. Nevertheless, I cannot help but say, homeschooling works!

In 2016, the newly formed board of directors at Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative took a chance hiring me to be their principal. We started classes with just over one-hundred students and about a dozen staff. Five years later, enrollment hovered around two-hundred and fifty students taught by twenty-five professional educators. Oak Grove was on the cutting edge of a homeschool cooperative boom that I think will continue for many years.

While serving at Oak Grove, I found myself often relying on the biblical counseling experience I had in my previous pastoral ministry. Parents, students, teachers, and staff could find answers to the common problems they faced in the pages of the Bible. It was a joy to point this out, especially in a world that assumes the necessity of seeking help from therapeutic experts. Participants in our cooperative were often

pleasantly surprised to learn that God has helpful answers for the challenges they faced.

When I began to look for resources on biblical counseling in Christian education, there were few. Factoring in the special mission of a homeschool cooperative further reduced the volume of available material. This led to the birth of an idea that is now this thesis. I believe the special nature of homeschool cooperatives make them a rich environment for biblical counseling. There are a lot of people who have helped me promote this idea. Already, I have mentioned my wife, Jennifer. My mom and dad, Bob and Susan St John have supported and encouraged me in my lifetime of studies and my eight children must surely be the most patient kids alive. Friends, fellow pastors, and the lovely members of four churches where I have served are all contributors to this work.

I have learned from many great teachers along the way. The biblical counseling faculty at Southern Seminary has been outstanding and my doctoral supervisor, Matthew Haste has shown such skill and gentleness in shepherding me through this writing. So many other teachers have contributed that I simply cannot begin to list them all. I will however, reference just one more who has served my writing and speaking for many years. His advice applies to this writing as much as anything else I have done. Robert Peterson, my systematic theology professor at Covenant Seminary said something along these lines to our class, “Men, when you write and speak, you are not making the definitive statement on a topic for all time—just your own humble contribution to the conversation.” That one sentence has inspired all my speaking and writing. And that is what this thesis is, just my humble contribution to what I hope is a continuing conversation about homeschooling and biblical counseling.

Stephen St John

Knoxville, Tennessee

September 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The world is changing. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth, and I smell it in the air.”¹ The words of Tolkien’s Treebeard could rightly be spoken of today’s cultural milieu. Assumptions about ultimate reality, the source of knowledge, the nature of mankind, and the purpose of life are no longer homogeneous in American culture. Carl R. Trueman agrees,

For many people, the Western world in which we now live has a profoundly confusing, and often disturbing, quality to it. Things once regarded as obvious and unassailable virtues have in recent years been subject to vigorous criticism and even in some cases come to be seen by many as more akin to vices. Indeed, it can seem as if things that almost everybody believed in as unquestioned orthodoxy the day before yesterday . . . are now regarded as heresies advocated only by the dangerous lunatic fringe.²

Trueman’s concern, expressed in 2022, is not new. Writing forty-two years earlier, Jay Adams declared, “For some time now, Western culture has been deteriorating at a frightening rate. Values, norms, and order all have been thrown into the air.”³

Adams, a co-founder of the Christian Counseling Educational Foundation (CCEF) in 1968, and later the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) in 1976, wrote extensively throughout the 1970s, motivated by his belief that “secularists had commandeered the domain of counseling, which rightly belonged to Christians.

¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, The Lord of the Rings, vol. 3 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1955), 281. Although the character Treebeard may have meant it as a positive statement, it is used negatively in popular culture and was presented that way by the character Galadriel in the 2001 Peter Jackson film *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings*.

² Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 19-20.

³ Jay E. Adams, *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1982), 1.

Because he believed this to be true and because the secular model for counseling was the dominate one, it was critical for Adams to make the case against it.”⁴

Adams extensive writing about biblical counseling overshadows his brief forays into educational philosophy that appear in chapter eleven of his landmark book *Competent to Counsel*⁵ and in his lesser known, *Back to the Blackboard*.⁶ In that short book, Adams promotes the importance of the Christian School movement with the same biblical and theological pathos he brought to counseling. It was a critical combination of two significant Christian movements, both responses to the rise of secular-humanist influence in the culture.⁷

A closely related response was the growth of homeschool education. J. Gary Knowles, Stacey E. Marlow, and James A. Muchmore outline multiple reasons for homeschooling’s increasing popularity from 1970 to 1990, but they acknowledge the largest group is made of “religiously motivated parents [who] tend to regard secular humanism and apparent student immorality as characteristics of public schools that they wish to counteract by operating homes schools for their children.”⁸ Thus, Christian homeschool education can be understood as a subset of the Christian Schooling movement Adams wrote to encourage. This is especially evident in the rapid popularity

⁴ Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 37.

⁵ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

⁶ Adams, *Back to the Blackboard*.

⁷ Of course, the practice of what we have come to call biblical counseling and Christian education predate the rise of secular humanism. Our primary focus here, however, is on 20th and 21st century American and Western culture. During this timeframe, the rise of secular-humanist influence on culture is evidenced everywhere. The U.S. Supreme Court provided notable examples just before and during the decade of Adams’ most productive writing. The June 25, 1962, *Engel v. Vitale* ruling prohibited voluntary prayer in public schools and the January 22, 1973, *Roe v. Wade* case ruled that abortion was a constitutional right. More recently, the June 26, 2015, *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling struck down any bans on same-sex marriage.

⁸ J. Gary Knowles, Stacey E. Marlow, and James A. Muchmore, “From Pedagogy to Ideology: Origins and Phases of Home Education in the United States, 1970-1990,” *American Journal of Education* 100, no. 2 (1992): 196.

of homeschool cooperatives witnessed in the early decades of the twenty-first century. These organizations are designed to “encourage, support and complement homeschooling families by creating a vibrant, cohesive and service centered community.”⁹

Adams says little or nothing about biblical counseling in *Back to the Blackboard*. This is surprising in a book written by the founder of CCEF and ACBC. It is typical, however. A survey of writing on Christian schooling shows little attention is given to addressing the common problems teachers, students, and their parents face by providing biblical counseling. The same can be said about the smaller amount of material available on Christian homeschool cooperative education.

Biblical counseling can be defined as “a subset of Christian discipleship [that] deals with the more problematic and difficult aspects of life to handle . . .”¹⁰ Counseling can take place in a formal setting or less formally as described by the Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC):

Biblical counseling occurs whenever and wherever God’s people engage in conversations that are anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ and the gospel, grounded in sound theology, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and prayer, directed toward sanctification, rooted in the life of the church, founded in love, attentive in heart issues, comprehensive in understanding, thorough in care, practical and relevant, and oriented toward outreach.¹¹

In summary, biblical counseling is the personal ministry of the Word of God in the lives on needy people. The purpose of this study is to show that there is a place for biblical counseling in Christian homeschool education, particularly in Christian homeschool cooperative education.¹²

⁹ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative. *Bylaws of Consensio Collective* (Knoxville, TN: Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, 2017), 4.

¹⁰ Deepak Reju and Mark Dever, “The Health of the Church in Biblical Counseling,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God’s Changeless Truth*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2021), 251.

¹¹ The Biblical Counseling Coalition, “The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition,” accessed September 6, 2022, <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Confessional-Statement-of-the-BCC.pdf>.

¹² There is a significant similarity between Christian day schools and Christian homeschool cooperatives as defined in this writing. Homeschool education, however, presents a more natural opportunity to provide biblical counseling for the whole family (parents, siblings, etc.). Homeschool

The BCC statement above, mentions that biblical counseling ought to be “rooted in the life of the church.” Emphasizing the importance of biblical counseling in homeschool cooperatives is not intended to suggest a homeschool cooperative (or another organization) can replace the indispensable role of the local church in shepherding its members. However, this writing is motivated by the opportunity afforded by biblical counseling in a cooperative and the responsibility that Christians must care for one another in all contexts. This includes Christian homeschool cooperatives.

Familiarity with the Literature

Literature relevant to this topic can be placed in three categories. First, books that introduce the practice of biblical counseling. Second, books that promote the importance of Christian education. Third, books that explain the principles and practice of homeschool education.

Introducing Biblical Counseling

The impact of Jay Adams on biblical counseling can hardly be overstated. Heath Lambert writes, “The absence of theology in counseling was the order of the day when, in 1970 Jay Adams published *Competent to Counsel*.¹³ In that book and many others in the 1970s Adams sought to alert Christians to their failures in the area of counseling and began pointing the way to the resources laid out in Scripture for helping people.”¹⁴ Although the practice of biblical counseling matured greatly over the past fifty years, *Competent to Counsel* remains a useful introduction. Adams covers the problems with psychiatry, the power of the Holy Spirit for help, the effectiveness of the Word, the role of pastors as counselors, the nature of sin, and practical ideas for a range of

cooperatives also represent an important area that is greatly underserved in Christian academics. These reasons, along with my personal experience homeschooling and leading a homeschool cooperative, motivate the narrow focus of this work on biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative.

¹³ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*.

¹⁴ Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, 36.

counseling situations. Adams wrote, “Much work yet remains to be done to construct a full and organized system of biblical counseling, but in this book I shall attempt to sketch the architectural preliminaries.”¹⁵ Time has proven he accomplished his goal.

Another significant introductory work on biblical counseling is David Powlison’s *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture*.¹⁶ Powlison who served as Executive Director of CCEF, provides a warm, practical, simple, and yet thoughtful method of biblical counseling. He wrote, “*Seeing with New Eyes*, focuses on the conceptual. It unfolds Scripture’s view of people and problems. It reinterprets common counseling phenomena through God’s eyes, as revealed in Scripture.”¹⁷ Powlison includes a chapter of “X-ray questions” intended to “help people identify the ungodly masters that occupy positions of authority in their hearts.”¹⁸ These questions have become a staple tool in nearly every biblical counselor’s desk.

Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change by Paul David Tripp is another foundational resource for biblical counseling.¹⁹ Published a year before Powlison’s *Seeing with New Eyes*, the two books demonstrate the maturing of biblical counseling since Adams inaugural work. Tripp encourages every Christian to do the ministry of biblical counseling. “Many of us would be relieved if God had placed our sanctification in the hands of trained and paid professionals, but that is simply not the biblical model. . . . The paradigm is simple: when God calls you to himself, he also calls you to be an instrument in his redeeming hands.”²⁰

¹⁵ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, xxi.

¹⁶ David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003).

¹⁷ Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 7.

¹⁸ Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 130.

¹⁹ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002).

²⁰ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, xi.

Tripp encourages believers to depend upon God and his Word, helping one another with life's common problems.

The biblical counseling movement also needed apologetical and systematizing works. One of these is John MacArthur's *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*.²¹ The book includes a collection of chapters by various authors, most of whom are faculty members at the Master's College and Seminary. The preface, co-written with Wayne Mack, outlines the foundational ideas and vision of the book: "*Counseling* is based on the convictions that (1) God's Word should be our counseling authority, (2) counseling is a part of the basic discipling ministry of the local church, and (3) God's people can and should be trained to counsel effectively."²²

*Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*²³ is published by the Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC) and edited by Bob Kellemen and Steve Viars. David Powlison explains the book in the foreword, "Think of this book as a scale model of biblical counseling, delineating key theological underpinnings and sketching key methodological implications."²⁴ *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* provides a helpful survey for understanding the why, what, and how of biblical counseling.

Introducing Christian Education

In the 1920s and 1930s, Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til delivered a series of lectures on Christian education. These lectures were later published as a book titled *Foundations of Christian Education: Addresses to Christian Teachers*.²⁵ Although

²¹ John MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 6th ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2005).

²² MacArthur, *Counseling*, xii.

²³ Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars, eds., *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2021).

²⁴ David Powlison, foreword to *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2021), 7.

²⁵ Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education: Addresses to*

they were working half a century before Jay Adams wrote *Competent to Counsel*, Berkhof and Van Til were already responding to humanism's grip on the culture with a call to establish or strengthen Christian schools. "Non-Christian education is *Godless* education. What is of most importance to us in education, that which is absolutely indispensable to us, is left out entirely."²⁶ The book presents the necessity of and the scriptural foundations for a distinctly Christian education. Readers who find Berkhof and Van Til somewhat obtuse or who object to their Covenantal theology will still find solid bedrock upon which to build their thinking about Christian teaching and learning.

George R. Knight's *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*²⁷ was originally published in 1980 and then expanded into a fourth edition at the start of the new millennia. Knight is thorough in laying out the impact of traditional, modern, postmodern, and contemporary philosophy in education. He then outlines a Christian approach to education. Knight explains his straightforward and comprehensive work, "The basic premise underling this book is the seemingly obvious proposition that individuals cannot arrive at their destination unless they know where they are going."²⁸

Mark A. Maddix and James Estep Jr. provide a helpful survey on the importance of Christian education in *Practicing Christian Education: An Introduction for Ministry*.²⁹ The short book covers a lot of ground, including biblical and theological principles for Christian education, a history of Christian education, and the importance of Christian formation. Maddix and Estep impress readers with the urgent need for Christian education,

Christian Teachers, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990).

²⁶ Berkhof and Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education*, 3.

²⁷ George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006).

²⁸ Knight, *Philosophy and Education*, xiii.

²⁹ Mark A. Maddix and James Riley Estep Jr., *Practicing Christian Education: An Introduction for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

Not practicing Christian education is *not* a viable option. It endangers our mission not only to “go . . . make disciples” but also to teach them (Matt 28:19-20). We cannot expect people to have a vibrant faith, nor the church’s health and vitality to be advanced, in the absence of an intentional, holistic approach to practicing Christian education.³⁰

Douglas Wilson’s *The Case for Classical Christian Education*³¹ provides a strong polemic for the necessity of Christian education and a helpful presentation of traditional liberal arts education. Wilson’s aggressive style can sometimes be off-putting, but he drives readers away from the presumption that education can be a neutral activity and to the important notion that we must look to the Scripture for instruction in forming educational philosophy and practice. Wilson writes, “Christians should *act* in obedience to the Word, not *react* to the various forms of disobedience around them.”³² Readers may object to Wilson’s strong Covenantal theology. Nevertheless, it is hard to walk away from his book unaffected and uninspired to pursue a more distinctly Christian approach to educating children.

*The Whole Truth: Classroom Strategies for Biblical Integration*³³ by Mark Eckel is a practical work designed to help Christian teachers and school administrators better understand how to apply Christian truth in education. It is a primer on Christian worldview in Christian schooling. Eckel writes,

Academies that exist for the right reasons will not simply baptize pagan beliefs with a Bible verse and then teach like everyone else. Christian schools will wed heavenly authority with earthly operation to properly explain reality. Biblical principles should permeate everything because everything is based on biblical principles.³⁴

Eckel takes the philosophy of Christian education and its worldview implications and skillfully lays out how those truths impact curriculum and instruction daily.

³⁰ Maddix and Estep Jr, *Practicing Christian Education*, 5.

³¹ Douglas Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

³² Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education*, 56.

³³ Mark Eckel, *The Whole Truth: Classroom Strategies for Biblical Integration* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2003).

³⁴ Eckel, *The Whole Truth*, 4-5.

Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition edited by David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan is a balanced survey of Christian education that includes writings from a wide range of authors.³⁵ Although the book is aimed primarily at post-secondary education, it includes principles and suggested practices that apply to teaching at all levels. Dockery casts a broad vision for Christian education, “Christian educators recognize that Christian faith is more than a moral faith of warmhearted devotional practices, for the Christian faith influences . . . what we believe, how we think, how we teach, how we learn, how we write, how we lead, how we govern, and how we treat one another.”³⁶

Introducing Homeschool Education

The influence of Charlotte Mason on homeschool education cannot be overstated. Mason established schools, taught teachers, wrote books, and spoke extensively about the role of mothers in education. Although she was not opposed to corporate education, she was a strong advocate for parents teaching in the home. In *Home Education*, a survey of her educational philosophy, Mason wrote,

It is the mothers who have the sole direction of the children’s early, most impressionable years. This is why we hear so frequently of great men who had good mothers—that is, mothers who brought up their children themselves, and did not make over their gravest duty to indifferent persons.³⁷

Mason was part of an educational reform movement in England at the turn of the century, and though a professing Christian, she occasionally seems to hold some unorthodox positions.³⁸ Nevertheless she makes Bible study and gospel proclamation foundational to

³⁵ David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan, eds., *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

³⁶ Dockery and Morgan, *Christian Higher Education*, 18.

³⁷ Charlotte Mason, *Home Education* (1935; repr., Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino, 2011), 6.

³⁸ For example, Mason wrote that children, “are not born either good or bad, but with possibilities for either good or evil.” However, Mason, also writes, “To laugh at ugly tempers and let them pass because the child is small, is to sow the wind.” Mason, *Home Education*, 14.

homeschooling. On the concluding page of *Home Education* Mason exhorts mothers to, “save Christianity for our children by bringing them into allegiance to Christ the King.”³⁹

Mason’s impact is proven by another important work on homeschool education, Susan Schaeffer Macaulay’s *For the Children’s Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School*.⁴⁰ Macaulay summarized many of Mason’s ideas in an updated and more thoroughly biblical fashion.⁴¹ She writes that her book “takes the accuracy of the Christian worldview for granted” and this is evident throughout.⁴²

Maccaulay makes a stronger argument for homeschooling than Mason. She shares the concern she had when her daughters attended a public school with a forty to one student teacher ratio, “Was this what a child’s life was meant to be? A drive to a closed-off cement area, a crowded room, a day so tiring that at the end Margaret and her younger sister came home taut with exhaustion?”⁴³

Andrew Pudewa, the founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW), has become a prominent advocate for homeschooling. In his popular article, book, and DVD set, *However Imperfectly: Lessons Learned from Thirty Years of Teaching*, Pudewa shares seven principles for good homeschool education.⁴⁴ Pudewa says his ideas about homeschooling began to take shape after reading a book by John Taylor Gatto.⁴⁵

³⁹ Mason continues with an illustration about a mother confronting her son with his sin. “‘My poor little boy, you have been very naughty today! Could you not help it?’ ‘No mother,’ with sobs. ‘No, I suppose not; but there is a way of help.’ And then the mother tells her child how the Lord Jesus is our Saviour, because He saves us *from our sins*.” Mason, *Home Education*, 174.

⁴⁰ Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, *For the Children’s Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1984).

⁴¹ Macaulay is the daughter of Francis and Edith Schaeffer. She grew up at L’Abri Fellowship in Switzerland and later served in a L’Abri ministry in England.

⁴² Macaulay, *For the Children’s Sake*, 1.

⁴³ Macaulay, *For the Children’s Sake*, 4.

⁴⁴ Andrew Pudewa, “However Imperfectly: Lessons Learned from Thirty Years of Teaching,” Institute for Excellence in Writing, accessed September 22, 2018, https://iew.com/sites/default/files/article/fileattachment/however_imperfectly_lessons_learned_thirty_years_teaching_plain.pdf.

⁴⁵ John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*,

As I absorbed Mr. Gatto's book, I realized my own childhood was less about learning and more about playing the mandatory game called school. I gained a fuzzy idea that there could be a different type of education, and that it might be better than what I grew up with.⁴⁶

Pudewa weaves his Christian philosophy of homeschool education into nearly all his popular IEW materials.

Homeschool cooperatives have grown significantly over the past twenty years.⁴⁷ Carol Topp has written one of the few books on the subject, *Homeschool Co-ops: How to Start Them, Run Them, and Not Burn Out*.⁴⁸ She defines a homeschool cooperative as “a group of homeschooling parents who join together to share teaching duties.”⁴⁹ Topp also explains, “My most valued benefits [of being in a homeschool cooperative] were the friends that I made and their support of my homeschooling efforts. I've shared burdens, ideas, and laughs. It helped me remember that I was not alone or isolated in my homeschool experience.”⁵⁰ Although she does not elaborate much further, Topp points to a major strength of homeschool cooperative education, the opportunity to help each other with life's common problems.

Special Collector's Edition (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 2005).

⁴⁶ Pudewa, “However Imperfectly: Lessons Learned from Thirty Years of Teaching.”

⁴⁷ Writers for the US Census Bureau report, “Homeschooling is a legal instructional option in all 50 states and national homeschooling rates grew rapidly from 1999 to 2012 but had since remained steady at around 3.3%. However, the global COVID-19 pandemic has sparked new interest in homeschooling and the appeal of alternative school arrangements has suddenly exploded.” Casey Eggleston and Jason Fields, “Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey Shows Significant Increase in Homeschooling Rates in Fall 2020,” *United States Census Bureau* (blog), March 22, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/homeschooling-on-the-rise-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>. Homeschool cooperatives continue to grow as well. Albert Cheng and Daniel Hamlin write, “Although conventional homeschooling in which parents provide all instruction at home remains prominent, approaches to homeschooling that combine parent-delivered instruction with digital learning, private tutors, homeschool cooperatives, university coursework, and part-time attendance at brick-and-mortar public and private schools seem to be increasing in popularity among homeschool families.” Albert Cheng and Daniel Hamlin, *Contemporary Homeschooling Arrangements: An Analysis of Three Waves of Nationally Representative Data* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, Department of Education Reform, 2021), <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1131&context=edrepub>.

⁴⁸ Carol Topp, *Homeschool Co-Ops: How to Start Them, Run Them, and Not Burn Out* (Cincinnati, OH: Ambassador, 2014).

⁴⁹ Topp, *Homeschool Co-Ops*, i.

⁵⁰ Topp, *Homeschool Co-Ops*, 1.

Homeschool education is best understood as a branch or variety of Christian education. Its many strengths do not mean it is the only legitimate or even the best way for Christian parents to educate their children. While this study is focused on homeschool education in cooperative settings, it is assumed many principles in this writing could be applied in a Christian day school or by Christian educators, parents, and students in a government public school.⁵¹

Void in the Literature

The literature readily demonstrates a close relationship between the foundational principles of biblical counseling and Christian education. Both represent efforts to establish a thoroughly Christian and biblical way of living in culture dominated by a secular-humanist worldview. The literature also shows how homeschool education focuses on the personality (or heart) of children and homeschool cooperative education is a natural setting for mutual support and encouragement among participants (teachers, parents, and children). Nevertheless, there is little or no intentional writing on why and how to do biblical counseling in homeschool educational settings.⁵²

Although Adams briefly dealt with education in *Competent to Counsel* and *Back to the Blackboard*, he did not expand his thoughts further, especially in the area of establishing biblical counseling's role in schooling. Powlison and Tripp, representing the generation of biblical counseling after Adams, demonstrate how the movement is maturing in positive ways, but has focused on the local church rather than parachurch ministry such as Christian education.⁵³ MacArthur, along with Kellemen, and Viars, highlights the need for biblical counseling and emphasize it as a response to the rise of

⁵¹ Although, there would be obvious legal risks involved in biblical counseling at public schools.

⁵² The same is true, of course, for corporate Christian day school settings.

⁵³ The phrase "after Adams" comes from Heath Lambert's book in which he describes the maturing of the biblical counseling movement. Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams*.

secular humanism's grip on the culture, but they fail to address the strong parallels between the growth of biblical counseling and the rise of Christian education over the past fifty years.⁵⁴

In their respective writings, Bekhof, Van Til, and Knight, lay strong Christian doctrine and worldview foundations for education. They express grave concern for the impact secular humanism has on teaching, learning, and thinking. Nevertheless, they do not make any strong pastoral application of Christian education's ability to help parents, teachers, and students face life's common problems with biblical counseling. Wilson gets closer in his analysis of the negative impact of public education on children, but he does not prescribe any principles or practices for biblical counseling in Christian schools. Eckel's biblical integration is well positioned to weave biblical counseling principles into curriculum and instruction, but he does not explicitly discuss counseling at all.

Mason and Macaulay come closer to the heart of biblical counseling, simply because homeschooling by nature has a greater focus on individual children. Both address the heart of a child and suggest educational remedies to problems of the heart. Neither however, explicitly address biblical counseling as a means of helping children. Pudewa has inspired many parents to pursue a different path from the surrounding culture and teach their children at home but says nothing about biblical counseling.

Interestingly, as Topp and others suggest, homeschool cooperative education is by nature a joining of resources for stronger homeschooling, but also a source of encouragement for teachers, parents, and students. There is an underlying assumption that participants in a homeschool cooperative are there to help each other with life's struggles. In a Christian homeschool cooperative that affirms the authority of Scripture, this help

⁵⁴ John MacArthur recently led Grace Community Church to establish two elementary schools as a response to problems with the public school system. Interestingly, these are hybrid schools that incorporate homeschooling as part of the main academic program. According to the definition used in this writing, they can be considered homeschool cooperatives. Olivia Cavallaro, "Grace Community Church to Launch Two Elementary Schools Because 'Public Schools Are Dangerous,'" *Christianity Daily*, April 7, 2022, sec. Church, <https://www.christianitydaily.com/articles/15513/20220407/grace-community-church-to-launch-two-elementary-schools-because-public-schools-are-dangerous.htm>.

can readily take the form of biblical counseling.

Thesis

Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. These cooperatives are rooted in biblical truth and therefore have a ready foundation for addressing problems faced by teachers, parents, and students. Homeschool cooperatives provide a context for Christian families to counsel one another. They also have the needed content, that is the Bible, including the gospel message. Born-again Christians in a homeschool cooperative are competent to counsel one another, and they enjoy the benefit of Christian community.

Although this thesis is directed at Christian families and professional educators who participate in homeschool cooperatives, it is hoped that many of the concepts outlined in the following pages can benefit families and educators in other settings as well. The focus on homeschool cooperative education here is not intended to suggest this is the only context for biblical counseling among students and teachers.

Outline of Chapters

The following chapters support this thesis by showing how biblical counseling can be applied in the educational context of a homeschool cooperative for the benefit of the church.

Chapter 2 will use four Scripture passages to demonstrate that Christians are helped by God and equipped by him to help each other with life's common problems. Exegesis of the passages will demonstrate that (1) the Lordship of Christ should impact the way Christians live, (2) Scripture provides the necessary and authoritative instruction for dealing with life's problems, (3) the Holy Spirit empowers believers to help each other, and (4) the heart is central in life transformation.

Chapter 3 will demonstrate that a homeschool cooperative is an effective context for biblical counseling. The chapter will point to (1) the reality that all education

is religious in nature, (2) that Christian homeschool cooperatives are founded on biblical principles, (3) that these cooperatives can provide support for local church ministry, and (4) minister to the whole family.

Chapter 4 will explore ways biblical counseling can be applied in the homeschool cooperative context. The chapter will point to (1) the importance of going to the Bible, the right source for counseling *content*, (2) *competence* for counseling in a homeschool cooperative with suggestions for programs of informal and formal counseling, and (3) the resulting transformed *community* within the homeschool cooperative.

Chapter 5 will demonstrate the implications of biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative for the church. The chapter will show (1) the opportunities homeschool cooperatives provide for local churches, (2) the opportunities local churches provide for homeschool cooperatives, (3) suggestions for taking advantage of these opportunities, and (4) examples of biblical counseling in partnership between a church and a homeschool cooperative.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries witnessed a massive shift in the way people perceive the world, themselves, and the problems they face in life.¹ Minimizing, or completely removing, the idea of a Creator God to whom all people are accountable resulted in a frantic effort to explain brokenness in the world without his Word. Western culture in particular shifted away from a Judeo-Christian worldview and adopted the perspective that scientific theory could provide answers to life's common problems. This led to the rise of the human "expert" who uses his or her own philosophy, observation, empirical data, biological knowledge, or religious assumptions to create therapeutic methods for helping others. This was not brought about by just one individual, but Sigmund Freud is undoubtedly a landmark figure. John MacArthur writes, "Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, was an unbelieving humanist who devised psychology as a substitute for religion. Freud's chief contribution was to define the human soul and the study of human behavior in wholly secular terms."²

Christians are not unaffected by this reality. Believers, influenced by the surrounding culture, have accepted many of its assumptions. Perhaps unwittingly, they embrace a dualistic view that says God is there for spiritual problems (such as preparing

¹ Arguably, the catalyst for these changes came in 1859 with Charles Darwin's seminal work. Heath Lambert quotes George Marsden, "The publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in 1859 had sparked an intellectual crisis for Christians that no educated person could ignore. Darwinism focused the issue on the reliability of the first chapters of Genesis. But the wider issue was whether the Bible could be trusted at all." George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 12-13. Quoted in, Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 30.

² John MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 6th ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 7.

the soul for the afterlife), but daily challenges need to be tackled with the help of an experienced expert. MacArthur writes, “The more secular psychology influences the church, the further people move from a biblical perspective on problems and solutions.”³ People involved in ministry, such as pastors, teachers, evangelists, and missionaries, have also ceded much of their responsibility for people-helping to others. It is not uncommon for Christian churches and schools to routinely refer hurting adults and children to counselors who are trained and licensed by secular authorities.⁴

This ought not be the case. God has given answers to life’s common problems in the pages of the Bible. In Scripture, he explains the origins of the world’s brokenness and outlines the gracious, wise, and accessible solutions provided in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scripture is also full of wisdom that flows from God’s common grace to all Creation. Paul Tripp writes, “God’s Word changes people dramatically. The rain that soaks the parched land always has an effect. It bathes soil, which feeds roots, which nourish plants, which produce flowers. So it is with the Word of God. It changes what it touches, producing beauty and fruitfulness in people’s lives.”⁵ The Scripture demonstrates that people can have hope no matter what they face.⁶ This hope comes from God who, through his powerful Holy Spirit and the believers’ faith in Christ, readies souls for a blessed eternity, and transforms lives in the here and now.

This chapter will demonstrate, from four Scripture passages, that Christian

³ MacArthur, *Counseling*, 14.

⁴ I am not suggesting that Christians should never seek the help of these counselors, just that it should not be the default or routine practice. If Christians do refer to an expert, then great care should be taken in selecting the counselor. David Powlison writes, “The decisive question when it comes to counseling help is not professional title or education, but ‘doctrine and life.’” David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003), 143.

⁵ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 23.

⁶ Tripp also addresses how the Scriptures are used in counseling, “Being biblical does not mean merely quoting words from within its pages. Being truly biblical means that my counsel reflects what the entire Bible is about. The Bible is a narrative, a story of redemption, and its chief character is Jesus Christ. *He* is the main theme of the narrative, and he is revealed in every passage in the book.” Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 27.

people are equipped to counsel. First, Colossians 3:1-17 shows how the Lordship of Christ impacts the way Christians live in the world. Next, 2 Timothy 3:10-17 shows that Scripture provides the necessary and authoritative instruction for dealing with life's problems. Third, Galatians 6:1-5 shows how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to help each another. And finally, James 4:1-10 shows that believers must recognize the centrality of the human heart in people's problems.

These Scriptures will demonstrate that Christians are helped by God and equipped by him to help each other with life's common problems through biblical counseling. In the historical context of the New Testament, the passages encourage believers to live for Christ in the world and care for one another in the local church. Since the purpose of this thesis is to show how Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling, it is important to note these Scriptures do not have homeschool cooperatives immediately in view. Nevertheless, they are brimming with important principles for Christian people in every context and clearly show how biblical counseling can impact homeschool families and educators.

The Lordship of Christ Impacts the Way Christians Live in the World

Introduction to Colossians 3:1-17

Paul writes to the Colossian Christians from prison. His goal is to strengthen the young church against the influence of the prevailing culture and Jewish false teaching. There is disagreement among scholars regarding the exact nature of the problems in Colossae. Past commentators suggested Gnosticism, but this view has not been sustained over time. Paul refers to “philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8).⁷ This has led some to suggest Greek philosophy and cultural norms had

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

infiltrated the church. Still others look to mystery religions as potential cause for concern. Margaret Y. MacDonald writes, “After decades of detailed analysis scholars have failed to arrive at a consensus about the shape of the Colossian ‘philosophy’ (2:8)” that threatened the church.⁸

However, the apostle’s exhortation to “let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a new moon or a Sabbath” (Col 2:16) appears to indicate false teaching with a distinctly Jewish background. F.F. Bruce writes, “To look to movements within Judaism for the sources of the Colossian heresy is a wiser procedure than to postulate direct influences from [other cultures].”⁹ The church likely faced a threatening mixture of Old Testament religion, human wisdom, and cultural assumptions. The young church was in danger of being led astray by these pressures. But the false teaching was not effective at bringing about life change and it threatened to draw the church away from the powerful gospel of Christ (Col 2:23). Paul writes to encourage the church to focus on the Lord and his work. David E. Garland explains that Paul’s goal is “to curb the insidious influence of a false ‘philosophy’ and to confirm the Colossians’ faith.”¹⁰

Today’s church faces similar challenges. Christians are surrounded by an increasingly secular humanist culture that makes its own attempt to explain the nature of reality, the problems faced by humankind, and solutions for those problems. Many believers have imported the cultural norms into their belief and behavior systems. One result is a dualistic Christianity that splits the sacred and secular. Christians trust Jesus to remove their sins and prepare their souls for eternity. However, if they have what is

⁸ Margaret MacDonald, *Colossians Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina, vol.17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 10-11.

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 23.

¹⁰ David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 28.

viewed as a real-life problem such as relational, financial, emotional, social, or behavioral struggles, they will go to a secular expert for help. A person's daily life is rarely two dimensional though. This means many Christians embrace a strange mixture of philosophies, therapies, behavior modification, and faith in Jesus. In this way, the modern milieu is similar to that of the Colossian church in Paul's day.

The Contrast between What Is Earthly and What Is Above: Colossians 3:1-2

Colossians chapter three begins with the understanding that Christian people are given new life in Christ. "If then you have been raised with Christ" (3:1) implies that a death has taken place. In this case, it is a spiritual death that results in putting off the deeds of the flesh and putting on the righteousness of Christ through faith. It is the transformation of a believer that is represented in baptism. Baptism shows how the believer's new life contrasts with the way he or she lived before. Garland explains,

Baptism marks the defeat of the powers that formerly held sway over us. Those who have died with Christ and have been raised with him no longer live under the old regime, where the authorities and powers hold sway. Baptism is the sign to the world that we are owned, secured, and empowered by Christ. Christians owe the authorities and powers of this world no allegiance, and in turn, the authorities and powers have no control over our lives.¹¹

The "hidden life" of the transformed soul is no longer to be ruled by the influence of unbelieving culture. Baptized Christians are to walk in a new way.

Paul directs the Colossian Christians away from the culture by telling them to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated, at the right hand of God" (3:1). In context, this is a redirecting of focus, away from the worldly influences (Greek and Jewish) and toward the enlightening influence of Christ. Christians are told, "Set your minds on things that are above" (3:2a). Garland writes, "Dying with Christ symbolizes a drastic split with the old life (3:2) and forms an essential part of Paul's warning against the rules of a hollow and deceptive philosophy. Being raised with Christ emphasizes a

¹¹ Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 169.

new status of believers which requires a new way of life.”¹² Christians make an intentional choice to think about the plan and purpose of Christ. The thinking mind of the Christian must aim to understand and enjoy the world through the lens of Christ’s reign in heaven rather than according to the “things that are on earth” (3:2b). Clearly, earthly things include any human philosophies, value systems, standards of behavior, and beliefs that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Earthly ideas about neutrality are excluded as well. A choice must be made. There is no space for setting the mind on things above and earthly things.

Christians Must Be Ruled by Christ Above: Colossians 3:3-4, 15-16

In the previous verses, the Christians were reminded of the resurrected life they enjoyed in Christ. This section begins with the phrase “for you have died” (3:3a). This is the Pauline theme of the old self that is put to death through faith in Christ. There is a new self who lives now “hidden with Christ in God” (3:3b). This new self is being conformed to the image of the Savior and one day will be glorified in the new heavens and new earth. This new life of sanctification now and glorification in the future is built on the completed work of Christ. Verse four reminds believers of his indispensable nature, “Christ who is your life.” By implication, there is no life without him. James D. G. Dunn writes, “What is in view is an identification between Christ and believers which in practice amounts to the complete submission of the believers’ selves to Christ as their Lord.”¹³

It is worth noting, that the pronoun “ὁμῶν” appears in some ancient manuscripts as the pronoun “ἡμῶν.”¹⁴ The meaning of the text is not greatly changed

¹² Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 201.

¹³ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 208.

¹⁴ R. McL. Wilson explains, “Several commentators (e.g. Lightfoot, Moule, Lohse, Dunn) take the view that an original ἡμῶν (supported by B Dc H K *et al.*) was altered by copyists to agree with the

either way, but the use of “our” may highlight the transforming effect of the gospel on the broader community of churches. The Christian life is not meant to be isolationist. Life transformation is worked out in relationships with others. Christ does rule over the individual members of his body, but he is head of and brings life to the entire body. R. McL. Wilson writes, “He is no mere subsidiary figure, but central to Christian faith and life, the source and inspiration for the life of faith, the supreme revelation of the grace and love of God.”¹⁵

As head of the body, Christ rules over it and Christians must readily submit to his rule. “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body” (3:15). Jesus made peace between God and man through his work on the cross. Likewise, Christian people are to live at peace with one another and as much as possible, with all mankind. This peaceful living is not the result of mere external behaviorism nor can it be conjured up through human effort. Dunn writes, “This is something the Colossians have not to accomplish but to let happen—to let go any attempt to control and manipulate and to let the peace of Christ be the determiner.”¹⁶ It comes when the affections of the human heart are ruled by Christ the King.

The reign of Christ in the human heart begins at the moment of regeneration. This is when the old self dies, and the new life hidden in Christ begins. This work of salvation is cause for thanksgiving and worship. Verse fifteen ends with the simple command, “And be thankful.” The following verse expands on that by encouraging believers to sing to the Lord. Along with being an insightful window into early church worship, first-century singing is an expression of thankfulness from hearts that are ruled

second person pronouns in the rest of the paragraph. Lohse writes quite simply ‘Christ is our life,’ and cites several further references: Phil. 1:21; 1 John 5:12; Ignatius, *Eph.* 3:2; 7:2; *Magn.* 1:2; *Smyrn* 4:1.” R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, The International Critical Commentary (London: Clark International, 2005), 240.

¹⁵ Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, 240.

¹⁶ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, 234.

by Christ.

Christ enacts his rule over believers' hearts through his Word. It is a rich treasure for his people to enjoy. As they share it with one another through "teaching and admonishing" (3:16) they grow wise.¹⁷

Christians who are serious about submitting to the rule of Jesus, will pay special attention to the Scriptures. They will look to the Bible as a source of instruction from their King that shows how they are to live in peace with him and others in community. The Scripture is a representation and means by which Christ will dwell among them. Garland explains, "The peace of Christ rules where the word of Christ dwells. The 'word of Christ' refers to the message about Christ. It contains the wealth of God's wisdom, which should guide the church's teaching and admonishing. Believers do not need special visions to enhance the wisdom they already have in word of Christ."¹⁸ Christ is present and ruling among Christians, through the Word.

Christians Must Be Renewed by Christ
Above: Colossians 3:5-10, 12-14

The "now but not yet" tension of the New Testament is on display in here. Paul has already said Christians have died and been raised in Christ. However, verse five commands them to "put to death therefore what is earthly in you." Believers, living in community with others, are not merely passive in their submission to Christ. They are to actively work against the vestiges of the sinful nature that remain in them. Again, Paul picks up on the baptismal imagery of death to life with the exhortation to kill sin. The

¹⁷ "Admonishing" here is the Greek *νουθετέω*. Jay Adams uses the word to explain his concept of biblical counseling as scriptural admonishment. He insists this is a task for every Christian minister, "Based on the fundamental Christian conviction that men can change as the Spirit works within them, we must insist upon the idea that every man who has been called by God into the ministry has been given the basic gifts for the pastoral ministry and therefore can do nouthetic counseling." Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 20.

¹⁸ Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, 212.

ESV footnote shares the manuscript evidence for the additional “your members.”¹⁹ This is a reminder that Christians must do battle with the sins of the flesh that threaten to rebel against the rule of Christ.

Five vices are listed as examples, “sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness” (3:5). These make a representative sample of the behaviors, attitudes and motivations that characterized the Colossian believers’ former manner of living (3:7). These and similar sins were so familiar, there was a temptation to minimize the offensiveness of them. Paul pushes against this with the reminder, “On account of these the wrath of God is coming” (3:6).²⁰ People who fix their minds on Christ no longer walk in these sins.

Paul uses the example of changing clothes. He may be continuing the baptism illustration, since it was the practice of the ancient Christians to change into special clothes after baptism in the first century. MacDonald writes, “Language of putting off and putting on clothes in the Pauline literature recalled the experience of baptism . . . where such natural actions came to take on deep significance for the process of change that the participant experienced.”²¹ Paul clearly lays out what is taken off, “anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk” and “lies” (3:8-9a). These represent the old self that is put away and replaced with better things as part of the renewed life (3:9b-10a). The apostle provides details for what to put on, “compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” characterized by forgiveness, love, and unity (3:12-14).

¹⁹ Bruce writes, “What we have here is rather an extension of the ordinary sense of ‘members.’ Since the people’s bodily members had been used as instruments of sin in their former life (c.f. Rom. 6:19), they are viewed here as comprehending the various kinds of sin which were committed by their means. In Rom. 7:23 Paul speaks of ‘the law of sin which dwells in my members,’” 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), 141.

²⁰ Paul is writing to believers who are tempted or committing sins. Though some translations add “on the sons of disobedience,” Bruce calls the addition “textually doubtful” and argues it “may have been imported from Eph. 5:6.” Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 144.

²¹ MacDonald, *Colossians Ephesians*, 136.

This renewed life is the result of God's forgiving sinners in Christ (3:13). The believers are to be conformed to his image (Rom 8:29). Perhaps this is the meaning of verse ten that describes the new self as "being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." A knowledge of Christ's rule above means Christians are transformed. In this way, setting the mind on things above results in changed living here below. Ironically, with their minds redirected from earthly things, believers do far better on earth. The old is dying away (put off) and the renewal has begun.

**Christians Must Be Unified by Christ
Above: Colossians 3:11-12, 14**

Christians are recipients of God's special grace in salvation. They are loved, chosen, and made holy by the work of Christ (3:12). The language Paul uses is reminiscent of Moses' words to the community of Israel, "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the people who are on the face of the earth" (Deut 6:7).²² All who are saved by Christ are to live together as a community representing him in the world. Christ is the bond that holds them together, "Christ is all, and in all" (3:11b). Salvation through faith in Christ comes to everyone in the same way. This is what Paul has in mind when he writes, "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free" (3:11a). Christian believers from all races, former religions, and socio-economic backgrounds are united in Christ.

Minds set on Christ, ruled by his word, and renewed in his image are unified. The love that God has shown us in Christ leads Christians to love one another. This love then becomes a bond of unity in the body of Christ (3:14). Though unity is a hallmark of the church, the united church does not stamp out diversity. Paul wants us to see a picture of this unity and diversity. He tells us that races and social standings do not matter in

²² Peter applies this verse to Christians in 1 Pet 2:9.

salvation, but at the same time the Christian community is not characterized by a boring monotone. Those who come to Jesus from different backgrounds create a beautiful harmony that brings glory to God (3:15). Bruce writes, “Natural and racial idiosyncrasies may survive, but in such a way as to contribute to the living variety of the people of Christ, not so as to create or perpetuate any difference in spiritual status.”²³

Christian community does not find its power in earthly motivations for progress and attaining likeminded goals. The genuine power of Christian community comes from the reigning Christ. Christians who want to grow closer to others ought not to look to their fellow men and women, rather they should look to Christ above.

**Christ’s Rule Has No Limitations:
Colossians 3:17**

In Colossians 3:1-16, Paul is thorough in his efforts to strengthen the Colossian Church against the influences of the prevailing culture and the Jewish false teaching. He does this by telling the Christians to focus on Christ. However, to ensure his point is not missed, he makes a grand conclusion in verse seventeen, “And whatever you do, in word, or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Wilson writes, “The final verse of this section condenses the whole range of Christian ethics into one single pointed and memorable aphorism.”²⁴ There is no aspect of life that is beyond the bounds of Christ’s reach. This is the core principle of the initial exhortation to “seek the things that are above” and set the mind “on things above and not on things that are on earth” (3:1-2). Christ, the creator, ruler, and sustainer of the universe intends to have sway over everything (Col 1:15-18). Abraham Kuyper explains, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”²⁵

²³ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 149.

²⁴ Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, 269.

²⁵ James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: W. B.

His Lordship impacts the way Christians live in community with one another. Focusing on him, they turn away from the ideals of the world. Their hearts are ruled by Christ the King. Their lifestyle submits to the will of Christ the King. And they are united by the love of Christ the King. Christ changes their words, their actions, their everything. His efficacious rule is compelling for Christians to seek help with life's problems through biblical counseling.

Scripture Provides the Necessary and Authoritative Instruction for Dealing with Life's Problems

Introduction to 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Paul writes to his young protégé Timothy who is serving the church in the city of Ephesus. It is generally agreed that Paul wrote from his second Roman imprisonment. If this is true, then 2 Timothy was his last writing. His goal is to encourage Timothy to continue standing against false teachers. George W. Knight explains, "As is often the case in Paul's letters (e.g., Colossians), one must put a number of pieces together in order to ascertain the nature of the false teaching. Paul is not interested in describing the teaching but in refuting it."²⁶

Along with 1 Timothy and Titus, the letter is an instruction manual for Christian ministry. It shows Timothy how he can best honor God and serve the needs of the community. Timothy is encouraged to follow Paul in "fighting the good fight" of the faith (2 Tim 4:7). To do this effectively, he must rely on the truth of the Bible and not "turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" (2 Tim 4:4).²⁷ The Scripture holds the answers Timothy and the Ephesian people need.

People today are presented with many ideas for dealing with common

Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

²⁶ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 11.

²⁷ Knight explains, "Myths,' τὸς μύθους, is used here, as elsewhere in the NT, to signify what is not true, is not historical, and lack reality." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 456.

problems that arise in life. There are endless secular theories on human behavior that shape a range of therapies and treatments for problems. Some of these develop out of professional research and some are based on pop-psychology. There are also new age and other religious systems that suggest answers to the struggles people face. These approaches can represent a modern day set of “myths” that draw Christians away from the message and power of the gospel. Like Timothy, Christians today must look to the Bible for answers. There is help and hope in the Scriptures.

**An Argument against the False Teachers:
2 Timothy 3:10-17**

Second Timothy 3:10-17 forms an argument against the false teachers in Ephesus. The chapter begins with the warning, “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (3:1). The last days refer to the New Testament age, including Timothy’s day and our own. Raymond F. Collins writes the New Testament age “will be perilous times for the household of God, the church. It will be beset by people who will hurt the faithful.”²⁸ Among those are people who will lead the weak astray. Paul gives the example of “weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions” (3:6). Sensibly, these women look for answers, but insensibly, they do not seek their answers from the Lord. They are either striving to come up with their own solutions or listening to the false ideas of others.²⁹

Timothy’s contemporaries were surrounded by plenty of false ideas that opposed God’s truth. Jannes and Jambres serve as historic examples, but there was no shortage of ungodly teachers in Ephesus while Timothy was pastoring there. The church was surrounded by “evil people and impostors [who] will go on from bad to worse,

²⁸ Raymond F Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 246.

²⁹ The example of Jannes and Jamres in 2 Tim 3:8 indicates the latter is most likely.

deceiving and being deceived” (3:13).³⁰ These people represented a worldly way of living that is contrary to God’s way. Paul writes Timothy and encourages him to take a stand against the worldly teachers by relying on the Scriptures.

False Teaching Is Not Effectual in Solving Life’s Problems: 2 Timothy 3:7, 13

Verse seven is an interesting commentary on the effectiveness of false teaching. The results are poor. As the “weak women” struggle with their burdens, they apparently sought help from the worldly practice of the people around them, their own hearts (“various passions”), or directly from the false teachers. Despite these efforts, the women are not helped but were “always learning and never able to arrive at knowledge of the truth” (3:7). The world’s way of dealing with problems can have “the appearance of godliness” (3:5) but it does not have the power to change people in the most significant way. Knight explains, “The terrible consequence of the false teaching is that these women, who are so burdened, never really learn the truth that can make them free.”³¹

As mentioned above, the false teachers in Ephesus were actively “deceiving and being deceived” (3:13). They became deluded by their own ideas and led others along after them. Despite the lack of results, worldly teaching self-propagates because it does not depend on the truth. It is teaching in rebellion against the wisdom of God. As Paul writes elsewhere, “For the wisdom of this world is folly to God” (1 Cor 3:19).

Paul’s Model of Opposing False Teachers: 2 Timothy 3:10-14

Paul demonstrates his commitment to the truth by facing persecution and suffering for truth’s sake. As an example, he mentions, “my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness” (3:10). Paul modeled how to oppose the

³⁰ Pronoun “who” added for clarity.

³¹ Knight adds, “εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν, ‘to come to the knowledge of the truth’ is associated with being saved . . . with repentance . . . with the faith of God’s chosen and with godliness.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 434.

worldly ideas that are so prevalent in the culture. As Calvin writes, the apostle does not “by words only, train and instruct his disciples, but, so to speak, opens his very breast to them, that they may know, that whatever he teaches, he teaches sincerely.”³² The phrase “my aim in life” (3:10) suggests Paul modeled a life plan that pressed him into conflict with false teachers. His firm commitment to this plan meant he was willing to suffer.

Paul outlines a few of his troubles in verse eleven. After declaring the truth of God, Paul and Barnabas were threatened and compelled to flee from Antioch and Iconium (Acts 13:15, 14:5-6). In Lystra, Paul was nearly stoned to death. In fact, he was presumed dead on the scene (Acts 14:19-20). Timothy, who was from Lystra, would have been familiar with these details. Paul’s ministry for the truth in opposition to false teaching was not merely theoretical and intellectual. He took a stand that cost him in blood and bruises. The apostle opposed worldly teaching with his life. Although he was an exceptional man, he does not suggest his experience ought to be exceptional. He tells Timothy, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (3:12). Knight reminds us this “is not a designation of a subgroup of Christians who desire a more godly life but rather a description of real Christians in distinction from those who follow false teachings.”³³

Paul bolstered his strong stand for the truth with strong teaching, mentioning it first in the list of examples he expected Timothy to follow (3:10). His goal is for Timothy to resist worldly pressures and ideas with the truth of God. “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it” (3:14). Here, he may be referring to his own teaching or perhaps that of Timothy’s mother or grandmother (2 Tim 1:5). Either way Paul is reminding Timothy of the source that brought the transforming grace of God to his life and that source was teaching from

³² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 243.

³³ Knight continues, “εὐσεβῶς ζῆν, ‘to live godly’ is a description of the condition that grace brings about in the life of the one saved by Christ.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 441.

the Scriptures, “from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings” (3:15a).³⁴

Scripture Is Effective in Solving Life’s Problems: 2 Timothy 3:15-17

Unlike the false teachings, the Scripture is effective in changing and shaping godly lives in this world and the next. Paul claims that God’s Word is “able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:15b). In an ultimate sense the Bible is sufficient to solve all the problems we face in life because through faith in Christ our sins are forgiven, and believers are made ready for an eternal future with God. This future will not include the sin, sorrow, and sickness people face in this world. In God’s eternal heaven, the problems of life are solved. Collins writes that Paul, “emphasizes that the Jewish Scriptures are capable of instructing Timothy (*sophisai*, literally, ‘making him wise’; see 2 Pet. 1:16) with regard to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”³⁵

In the meantime, however, the Scripture is useful for helping with troubles in this present world too. People who are made wise will find the words of the Bible “profitable for teaching, for reproof, of correction, and for training in righteousness” (3:16b). The Word of God, applied to the human heart by the Spirit, is effectual for life change. Human beings can be taught to know and understand God, themselves, their problems, and the solutions God provides in the pages of the Bible. They can find practical wisdom for correcting behavior, and they can learn how to grow progressively into the image of Christ through discipleship training. This is a process that will never be completed until heaven, but the Scriptures are able to effectively shape and help believers all along the way. They are sufficient for facing daily troubles and bringing about life change.

³⁴ Collins writes, “A rabbinic adage says that, ‘at five years old [one is fit] for [S]cripture.’” Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 262.

³⁵ Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 262.

The Scripture can help God’s servants to grow mature or “complete, equipped for every good work” (3:17). The phrase in verse seventeen, “man of God” likely refers to the Christian minister, Timothy in particular. However, by implication, the meaning applies to all who believe in Christ. Knight explains, “The sense of the passage is that [S]cripture is given to enable any ‘person of God’ to meet the demands that God places on that person.”³⁶ It is through the Bible that all Christians find the equipping and training they need to face all the world’s troubles.

The Authoritative Basis of Scripture Is God’s Inspiration: 1 Timothy 3:16

Although the truth of Scripture is far more effective at changing lives than worldly ideas and methods, it is not the results that give authority to the Bible. The real authority, and therefore the life-changing power comes from God’s authorship of the Scripture. Paul invents a word to explain this. The word is translated in the ESV as “breathed out by God” (3:16a).³⁷ Other translations say “inspired.”

The inspiration of Scripture refers to God’s mysterious and sovereign rule over the writing of the canonical books and the compilation of the Canon itself. The apostle Peter describes the process like this, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). In summary, what the Bible says, God says. This gives Scripture a special and supreme authority that no other writing can claim. And it is the reason for the Bible’s power to save souls and change lives. This makes biblical counseling an effective means for understanding and finding solutions to life’s common problems. Christians must go to God’s Word for help, rather than seeking answers in worldly wisdom.

³⁶ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 450.

³⁷ Knight writes, “θεόπνευτος (a biblical hapax) is a compound of the word for God, θεός, and the verb “breathe” πνέω, using the first aorist stem πνευσ-, with the verbal adjective ending –τος.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 446.

The Holy Spirit Empowers Believers to Help One Another

Introduction to Galatians 6:1-5

Although some commentators say Galatians was addressed to a region further north, Bruce writes, “The weight of the evidence . . . favours the South Galatian view.”³⁸ This means Paul wrote Galatians to the churches planted during his first missionary journey.³⁹ After he returned to his home church in Antioch, Paul learned that Judaizers had infiltrated the young churches and were teaching righteousness by works of the law. Paul writes to oppose these people, who Timothy George calls, “Jewish Christian teachers of a legalistic bent.”⁴⁰ His letter responds strongly against any notion of works-based righteousness. “We know a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16a). The apostle develops his argument through four and a half of the first five chapters. After this impassioned discourse on what Christians must believe, he finished his letter by addressing the way Christians ought to live. In Galatians 6:1-5, Paul shows that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to help one another.

The conversion of sinners and the transformation of lives through the simple preaching and teaching of the Bible is miraculous. The church’s growth in Paul’s day was the result of the Holy Spirit convicting sinners to repent and enabling them to obey the Word. The new Christian life was “begun by the Spirit” (Gal 3:3). The believers were then to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16). It was the power of the Spirit that brought people to Christ and changed them. The same Spirit works today. This means there is hope for lost people to be saved from sin and its curse. It also means there is hope for Christian

³⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 18.

³⁹ Bruce adds, “If the Epistle to the Galatians was indeed addressed to the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, then we have important historical, geographical, literary and epigraphic data which will provide material for better understanding.” Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 18.

⁴⁰ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 56.

people who are facing a wide range of problems. In fact, the Holy Spirit can enable every Christian to provide help for their brothers or sisters.

All Christians Are Spiritual People Able to Help Others: Galatians 6:1a

All Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and therefore able to help one another with life's problems. Verse one says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him." It is commonly understood that Paul's point is to limit the ministry of confronting sinners to those who are mature in the Lord. Although there is wisdom in that and it may be wise to consider one's readiness for that ministry, this common understanding is incorrect. Hansen writes, "The *spiritual* are not some elite group of spiritual giants. All the way through the letter, Paul has been emphasizing that all his converts in Galatia have received the Spirit."⁴¹ Every Christian is spiritual. Paul writes elsewhere, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3b). Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Spiritual People Are Equipped with the Fruit of the Spirit for Helping Others: Galatians 6:1b

In verse one, Paul tells the Christians to restore the one caught in transgression with a "spirit of gentleness." This is possible because Christians possess the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The likelihood of an offending brother or sister receiving correction well is greatly enhanced if the confronter approaches in a gentle manner. Hansen writes, "Even when sinful actions are scandalous and harmful, the emotions of the gentle person are under control and the will of the gentle person is devoted to loving the sinner all the

⁴¹ G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 184.

way to total recovery. Only the Holy Spirit can empower a person to respond in such a ‘spirit of gentleness.’”⁴² The use of gentleness is not about style or manipulation, but a spiritual gifting that comes from God.

The fruit of the Spirit is not only given to help individual believers, it exists so individuals are enabled to serve others. Along with gentleness, each Christian enjoys love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. The fruit is a gift from God that not only empowers Christian people to face challenges in their personal lives, it equips them for helping their brothers and sisters with troubles.

Spiritual People Fulfil Christ’s Command to Help Others: Galatians 6:2

In verse two, Paul exhorts the Galatian Christians to “bear one another’s burdens.” Although salvation through faith in Christ is personal, the Christian life is not lived in isolation from others. We are commanded to help the believers (and others) around us. This is consistent with the example of Christ, who “came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). Bruce says, “to bear the burdens of others is a divine quality.”⁴³

Bearing the burdens of others is also clearly obedient to the teachings of Christ. Paul tells the Galatians that doing this will “fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2). He does not specify exactly what he has in mind here, but in the previous chapter he wrote, “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14).⁴⁴ This is the commandment that Jesus declares to be like the commandment to love God “with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind” (Matt 22:37-38). It is also consistent with the new commandment of Jesus in John 13:34.⁴⁵

⁴² Hansen, *Galatians*, 185.

⁴³ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 260.

⁴⁴ Bruce explains, “In fine, ‘the law of Christ’ is for Paul the whole tradition of Jesus’ ethical teaching, confirmed by his character and conduct.” Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 261.

⁴⁵ “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you

Burden bearing can include all kinds of help, such as relief for the poor and healing for the sick. The context, however, tells us the Galatians' commandment to bear burdens and show the love of Christ extends to speaking truth into the lives of others. Verse one spoke of correcting someone who is caught in sin. Christian people have a responsibility to provide godly counsel to others. It is a Christian duty to lovingly confront people in sin and encourage restoration with God and others. This is one of the reasons God has provided the fruit of his Holy Spirit for Christians.

**Spiritual People Must Be Humble in
Their Efforts to Help Others:
Galatians 6:3-4**

Paul wants the Galatian believers to correct one another, but he does not want them to be tempted by pride. There is a danger of helpers thinking they are better than those they help. Paul warns against this, "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted" (6:1b). Since all Christians are recipients of God's unmerited grace and able to serve only because of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, it is not true they are greater than the needy people they help. George writes, "All Christians have burdens, and . . . none are sufficient unto themselves to bear burdens alone."⁴⁶ Every Christian helper needs help too.

Paul is blunt, saying, "For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (6:3).⁴⁷ The apostle's point is not intended to be derogatory. There is a true sense in which Christians cannot be called "nothing." Believers are "fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17) and "children of the living God" (Rom 9:26). However, without Christ, believers certainly are nothing. This means a

also are to love one another."

⁴⁶ George, *Galatians*, 414.

⁴⁷ This self-deception can be manifested in at least a couple of different ways. Hansen suggests Paul has in mind "those who thought so highly of their own status that they were unwilling to take the role of servants to carry the burden of others." Also, however, were those who did carry the burdens but with, "angry condemnation toward those who sinned." Hansen, *Galatians*, 189-190.

haughty attitude toward other sinners is ridiculous. Those who think themselves better than others are disregarding the truth of their situation. It is only because of the Spirit's work that believers can help those around them.

Rather than comparing themselves to others, Paul says a believer must "test his own work" (6:4). Continuing this thought, he adds that testing will give the Christian a "reason to boast in himself alone and not in his neighbor" (6:4b). George writes, "God does not hold you accountable for the gifts he gave to someone else. Don't compare yourself to Pastor Jim or Deacon Smith or Sister Jones. God wants you to bring your own life before the open pages of his Holy Word."⁴⁸

The boasting of 6:4 is not the boasting of a proud person. In context, it is the honest assessment of a person who recognizes the good work of the Spirit in his or her life and gratefully celebrates that instead of comparing with another person. Christians who bear the burdens of others must never do so in a condescending and prideful way. That would be inconsistent with the Spirit who empowers them to help.

Spiritual People Must Place Their Confidence in Christ: Galatians 6:5

There appears to be a contradiction between verse 5 and verse 2. On the one hand Christians are to "bear one another's burdens" (6:2) and on the other hand "each will have to bear his own load" (6:5). The answer to the apparent dilemma is found in the aim and goal of the Christian life. Christianity is not about comparing with others, but about enjoying a good conscience and confidence in Christ's righteousness on the day of judgement. Bruce elaborates, "In the 'day of Christ' [Judgement Day] Paul would not be asked how his achievement compared with Peter's: his *καύχημα* would be the quality of those who had been won to Christ through his own ministry (Phil. 2:16)."⁴⁹ Boasting is

⁴⁸ George, *Galatians*, 417.

⁴⁹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 263.

done in the work that Christ accomplishes through his Spirit's gifts. Christians will bear their own load before the judgement seat of Christ, but only because of the gracious work of the Spirit.

Paul writes elsewhere that Christ "saved us, not because of work done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 2:5). The Holy Spirit not only enables and equips Christians for ministry, he helps them finish well. The same Spirit that works through believers' efforts to restore others, prepares believers to stand before the judgement seat of Christ as washed, renewed, and righteous souls. Biblical counselors are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be effective instruments for helping people who struggle. And the Holy Spirit empowers strugglers to gain victory in the face of life's common challenges.

Believers Must Recognize the Centrality of the Heart

Introduction to James 4:1-10

James, the brother of Jesus, wrote to Jewish Christians scattered throughout the world. His goals are to remind them of Christ's teaching, encourage them to treat others with love, and equip them to live faithfully in the world. James' letter has been called the Proverbs of the New Testament because of its bold application of Christian wisdom to daily living. Luke Timothy Johnson writes, "The wisdom character of James and its multiple connections to the biblical wisdom tradition are recognized by virtually all commentaries."⁵⁰

Historically there is a focus on the supposed tension between the writing of James and Paul. It is said that James focuses primarily on works while Paul focuses on salvation through faith. This is unfair to both writers. Douglas J. Moo writes, "James by no means has a 'sub-Christian' or 'sub-Pauline' view of faith. In fact, James and Paul

⁵⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James*, The Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 37a (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 33.

appear to be in complete agreement. For Paul also, in the famous words of Gal. 5:6, it is ‘faith working through love’ that secures the inheritance of God.”⁵¹ Paul dedicates major sections in each of his letters for instruction in Christian behavior and James goes beneath mere surface actions. James 4:1-10 unites the motives of the Christian heart with behavior.

Today’s culture swings to extremes in thinking about how to deal with life’s problems. On the one hand, many experts (inside and outside the church) focus on external behavior modification as the key for overcoming life’s problems. On the other hand, expert people helpers obsess over internal motivations and experience as more significant than what a person actually does. The Bible, however, addresses the human heart and actions together. The two are connected. God transforms believers from the inside out.

Selfish Hearts Fight and Quarrel: James 4:1-3

James begins with a question in verse one, “What causes fights and quarrels among you?” His readers, both modern and ancient, expect an answer detailing various external forces that lead to arguments and dissensions, but James surprises by telling them these troubles come because “your passions are at war within you” (4:1b). The Greek word translated as passions here, is *ἡδονή*, from which we get the English, hedonism. Ralph P. Martin writes, “Though neutral in meaning, it is used here in the negative sense of ‘sinful passion.’”⁵² This passion resulted in interpersonal trouble among the Christians. Martin continues, “These passions—lust for power, popularity, authority—had caused the wars and fightings within the ranks of the members of the

⁵¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 38.

⁵² Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 145.

church.”⁵³ James writes, “You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel” (4:2). The outward behaviors flow from inward dispositions.

James goes even deeper by adding that the objects of desire are not always sinful. Christians could have them if they asked. However, even their asking is spoiled by evil motivations (4:3). Mitton tells us, “People ask for things God might well be ready to give, except that they ask for them for wrong reasons—not to please God better or be more effective in His service, but to gain status over others, comfort, ease, praise.”⁵⁴ It is the selfish focus of the inward heart that introduces these troubles. This is the source of conflict among all people, whether they are believers or not. It is, however, especially troubling when manifested in the life of a person who claims to belong to Jesus Christ.

Christians Must Have Undivided Hearts: James 4:4-5

In verses 4, James calls his readers “adulterous people.” He borrows the phrase, used often by the prophets and familiar to his primarily Jewish Christian readers. Moo writes, “The prophets frequently compare the relationship between Yahweh and his people to a marriage relationship. See, for instance, Isa. 54:5-6: ‘For your maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.’”⁵⁵ By calling the believers unfaithfulness, “adulterous,” James shows the ugliness of their belonging to God and giving their hearts to something else. God is a loving and jealous husband watching over his work in the believers’ lives (4:5). He does not intend for his people to give themselves to him and another. The great tragedy of Israel’s history in the Old Testament arose from their

⁵³ Martin, *James*, 145.

⁵⁴ C. Leslie Mitton, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1966), 151.

⁵⁵ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 187.

adulterous desire to serve both the Lord and the false gods of the surrounding nations.

James further develops his point with a second illustration, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” (4:4). Friendship with the world may be observed through external actions, but its roots are in the heart. The Jewish Christians were familiar with the first commandment, “You shall have no other God’s before (or beside) me” (Exod 20:3) and the words of David in Psalm 86:11, “give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (NIV). James may have the teaching of Jesus in mind here, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt 6:24). The Christian heart must be wholly devoted to Christ. Moo continues,

We have no evidence that James’s readers were overtly disclaiming God and consciously deciding to follow the world instead. But their tendency to imitate the world by discriminating against people (2:1-13), by speaking negatively of others (3:1-12), by exhibiting “bitter envy” and “selfish ambition” (3:13-18), and by pursuing their own destructive pleasures (4:1-3) amounted to just that.⁵⁶

Christians Must Have Humble Hearts: James 4:6-7, 10

James does not leave his readers without solutions. He reminds them God “gives more grace” and shares good news from Proverbs 3:34, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (4:6). In this statement, James sounds like Paul. Mitton writes, “Here ‘GRACE’ appears to be used in a sense similar to that which is characteristically Pauline, of God’s generous, active, effective help to man, far beyond anything the man deserves or can rightly expect.”⁵⁷

Christians (and others) have hope before God and can take action to correct their spiritual adultery (4:8). James instructs them, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (4:10). Turning away from the internal, selfish passions of the

⁵⁶ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 187.

⁵⁷ Mitton, *The Epistle of James*, 156.

human heart and submitting to the loving rule of the Lord is key to ending external strife and finding victory over evil (4:7). God wants his people to turn away from the world and the devil. Martin writes,

Both [“the world” and “the devil”] are terms of opposition to the divine purpose, and both must be resisted, if in different ways. “The world” is that system of moral values which tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11//Luke 4:1-3) and which he resisted by a clear-sighted recognition that God’s kingdom can only be served by a loyalty that puts him first (Matt 6:24, 33) and turns aside from all lesser allegiances, however plausible they seem to be at first glance.⁵⁸

Although James is often misrepresented as overly focused on external works, an emphasis on the centrality of the heart is paramount to his teaching on the Christian life. The greatest danger James’s readers face is God opposing them because of their proud hearts.

Christians Must Have Transformed Hearts: James 4:8-9

James exhorts his readers saying, “purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep” (4:8c-9a). This is a different posture before God than the passionate heart that demands its way. The humble heart is the springboard to clean hands, to improved outward behavior (4:8b). The fights, quarrels, and wars threatening to damage the young Christian church can end. It is even possible for Christians to ask and receive when their hearts are right before God (4:2b-3). A transformed heart leads to a transformed life. It cannot happen the other way around. Biblical counselors know this and recognize the importance of addressing the problems of the heart rather than merely seeking to change surface level behaviors.

Conclusion

In this chapter, four passages demonstrated that Christians are helped by God and equipped by him to help each other with life’s common problems. Exegesis of the

⁵⁸ Martin, *James*, 157.

passages demonstrated that (1) the Lordship of Christ should impact the way Christians live, (2) Scripture provides the necessary and authoritative instruction for dealing with life's problems, (3) the Holy Spirit empowers believers to help each other, and (4) the heart is central in life transformation. These principles apply to the thesis of this project, that Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. The next chapter will show how Christians can learn to use the Bible to help one another address life's common problems through Biblical Counseling in a homeschool cooperative education context.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT FOR A HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE

The previous chapter showed how Christians are helped by God and equipped by him to help each other with life's common problems. This chapter will demonstrate that a Christian Homeschool Cooperative can be a strong context for biblical counseling. A homeschool cooperative is an educational organization designed to “encourage, support and complement homeschooling families by creating a vibrant, cohesive and service centered community.”¹ This community is an excellent context for helping homeschool students and families who are struggling with behavioral, emotional, relational, or social problems.

This chapter explains this context under four headings. First, the chapter addresses the religious nature of all education. Second, the chapter shows that Christian homeschool cooperatives are founded on biblical principles. Third, the chapter addresses how a homeschool cooperative can support local church ministry. Finally, the chapter shows that a homeschool cooperative ministers to parents and children.

All Education Is Religious Education

The Myth of Neutrality

All forms of education have a religious element. This comes as a surprise to many who have embraced what Doug Wilson calls, “the myth of neutrality.”² This myth

¹ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative. *Bylaws of Consensio Collective* (Knoxville, TN: Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, 2017), 4.

² Douglas Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 35.

has become a central assumption of many parents. The assumption is that God can be removed from an educational context while the work of education continues. However, all forms of education have religious elements. It is necessary for teachers to show students a right way and (at least an implied) wrong way to do almost everything. They must also demonstrate why something is right or wrong. This requires appealing to an ultimate authority. It may be possible to remove the God of the Bible from education, but some other “god” must enter his place.

Christian thinkers are not the only people who realize this. Educational psychologist David C. Berliner—who is not a proponent of Christian education—writes, “As Dewey noted decades ago, schooling is life itself—not a separate life. Thus students learn a lot more than reading, writing, and arithmetic in the schools they attend.”³ Joshua P. Starr, another strong advocate for secular public education agrees, “What we teach reflects what we believe students should know and be able to do when they graduate and go on to the next step in their lives. Additionally, what we decide to teach depends on our definition of the common good . . .”⁴

It is interesting that many Christian parents believe the myth of neutrality when these influential proponents of public education do not. It is impossible to educate children without passing on some values. Stanford education professor David Tyack wrote, “Schooling is and always had been intrinsically value-laden.”⁵ And Berliner gives his opinion on which values are best when he says secular public-school students are

³ David C. Berliner, “The Scandalous History of Schools That Receive Public Financing, But Do Not Accept the Public’s Right of Oversight,” in *Public Education: Defending a Cornerstone of American Democracy*, ed. David C. Berliner and Carl Hermanns (New York: Teachers College Press, 2022), 281.

⁴ Starr, Joshua P., “Horace Mann and a New Common Good”, in *Public Education: Defending a Cornerstone of American Democracy*, ed. David C. Berliner and Carl Hermanns (New York: Teachers College Press, 2022), 190.

⁵ David Tyack, “Introduction,” in *School: The Story of American Public Education*, ed. Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 7.

likely to be “less racist, sexist, and prejudiced than those attending . . . religious schools.”⁶

These public educators know they are teaching more than bare information. They are passing on values. Carl R. Trueman highlights this trend, using public education’s normalization of sexual activity outside marriage as an example, “Contemporary education has become in some quarters preoccupied with the liberation of children’s sexual instincts and the elimination of any religious influence whatsoever. Today’s education as therapy exhibits these two pathologies: a liberation from traditional sexual codes . . . and liberation from religion.”⁷ This is not neutral. Secular humanist education is religiously anti-religious.

Teaching Morality

The elimination of traditional religious values in education must result in the promotion of some other values. Trueman tells us these contemporary values come from the influence of Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin who were convinced that “morality is always a social construct and cannot be read back into the state of nature in any pure primeval form.”⁸ The values of an educational system that purposely excludes God will be determined by the people who run that system. They will choose their own morality. Wilson writes, “Education is fundamentally religious. Consequently, there is no question about *whether* a morality will be imposed in education, but rather *which* morality will be imposed.”⁹

Christians, however, can only accept morality that is consistent with the teaching of the Bible. This teaching is different than what is assumed by the non-

⁶ David C. Berliner, “The Scandalous History of Schools That Receive Public Financing, But Do Not Accept the Public’s Right of Oversight,” 282.

⁷ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 223.

⁸ Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 222.

⁹ Wilson *A Case for Classical Christian Education*, 26.

Christian culture that dominates much of education today. George R. Knight writes,

While most non-Christians hold that the present condition of humanity and earthly affairs is the normal state of things, the Bible teaches that human beings have fallen from their normal relationship with God, other people, their own selves, and the world around them. From the biblical perspective, sin and its results have altered people's nature and affected their ideals and the valuing process.¹⁰

True values and true morality can only come from God. He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe who insists that humans are to have no other gods (Exod 20:3). The Lord's standards—his morals—are not to be pushed aside or placed on par with any other ultimate standard. Nevertheless, public education today does just that. Adams saw this when he wrote, "The one area in which humanism has been most successful [is] . . . in the public school system. Allied with humanistic Supreme Court rulings, this system has been purging itself of every vestige of Christian teaching, ethics and morality."¹¹

The Whole Truth

God's common grace in creation makes it possible to learn without reference to him, but if he is left out, the education provided falls short of the whole truth. Eckel writes, "Sin fragments the truth and leaves humans with only pieces when there should be a whole."¹² The way to restore the whole truth is to include the full revelation of God. This revelation is seen in his creation, but its fullest representation comes in his Word. While secular humanist education removes the Word of God, Christian education is founded on the Word. Cornelius Van Til views godless teaching as falsehood, "Nothing can be taught unless it is taught in relation to God, nothing can be taught unless it is taught with [God's] authority."¹³ Genuine truth in education comes from teaching

¹⁰ George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in the Christian Perspective*. 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 184.

¹¹ Jay E. Adams, *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1982), 6.

¹² Eckel, *The Whole Truth: Classroom Strategies for Biblical Integration* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2003), 3.

¹³ Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education: Addresses to*

founded on a Scriptural Christian worldview.

Christian homeschool cooperatives and schools recognize this and work to include the Creator God in curriculum, instruction, and every other aspect of education. It is obvious that Christians would include biblical teaching in their curriculum. Including God, however, goes far beyond adding Bible and theology lessons. Every subject is rooted in the reality of a Creator God, a fallen world, the plan of redemption, and the hope of eternity. This is truth and it impacts everything.

In addition to shaping curriculum and instruction, the whole truth of God shapes the way parents, teachers, and students face life's common problems together. This means, in a Christian homeschool cooperative, there is a built-in expectation that answers to life's common problems will be addressed with reference to and dependence on God. With this foundation in truth, a homeschool cooperative provides an excellent context for biblical counseling.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Is Founded on Biblical Principles

The best Christian homeschool cooperatives look to God's Word as the ultimate authority. The Scriptures shape the mission of the cooperative and create structure for educational philosophy. Everything a Christian homeschool cooperative does ought to be founded on biblical principles.

The Authority of the Bible

Since a Christian homeschool cooperative is founded on the idea that life and learning must take place within a Christian worldview, its educational ministry must be founded on Scriptural principles. Tim LaHaye writes, "The reverential fear of the Lord is the beginning or foundation of wisdom. If the educational foundation is in error, the

Christian Teachers, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), 24.

education itself will be in error.”¹⁴ As with Christian day schools, it is important for a Christian homeschool cooperative to have a statement of faith that affirms the foundational beliefs for everything the cooperative does. A good statement of faith will include essentials such as the authority of the Bible, the Trinity, sin and salvation, the church, the Second Coming, and the need to share the gospel.

A well written and clearly communicated statement of faith can create a consistent Christian culture among cooperative homeschool families. James E. Plueddemann writes, “. . . culture describes characteristics that are shared by a group of people. Cultural values provide the structure for how people get along with each other, how they relate to their environment, how they think, feel, and behave. The influence of culture pervades every aspect of life.”¹⁵ As we have seen, education today is largely dominated by secular humanist values. It is important for Christians to understand the clear difference between the dominant view and the kind of education their children will get in a homeschool cooperative setting. The aim is not to engage in so called culture war with others, but to know on whose authority Christian homeschool education is founded—God’s authority.

Material produced by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) highlights the necessity of a clearly understood and communicated statement of faith. “Since values and communication modes reboot about every five years, educators feel they are constantly twisting in societal winds.”¹⁶ In contrast to an ever-shifting educational context, a Christian homeschool cooperative with a solid statement of faith

¹⁴ Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Public Schools: Humanism's Threat to Our Children* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1983), 241.

¹⁵ James E. Plueddemann, *Teaching Across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 37.

¹⁶ William E. Brown, Joel R. Gaines, and Dhugie Adams, “Making Sense of Culture for the Christ-Centered School,” in *Pivot: New Directions for Christian Education*, ed. Lynn E. Swaner William E. Brown, Connie Z. Mitchell, and Beth Ackerman (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2017), 15.

provides consistent foundational context for parents, children, and teachers. Out of this foundation, Christian homeschool families can know and promote their mission.

A Cooperative Mission Statement

Genuine faith must impact behavior. A homeschool cooperative's statement of faith shapes its activity, its mission. Macaulay writes, "Christians can't develop a Christian view of education by accepting the usual aims and views of our society and then adding a 'Christian message' or interpretation."¹⁷ The aims and view of a Christian cooperative must be shaped by Christian faith and articulated in a clear mission statement.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses provides an educational mission statement for the people of Israel:

Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This statement shows how the faith of God's people clearly impacts the way they teach their children. Adams writes, "The parental teaching of the lambs in God's flock is not arbitrary, casual, take-it-or-leave-it activity; it is vital and important. It is done in fulfillment of a divine command."¹⁸ These verses declare what is to be taught, how it is to be done, and why it is important.¹⁹

Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative in Knoxville, TN provides a good example of a mission statement: "Desiring that our children reach their maximum God-

¹⁷ Macaulay, *For the Children's Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1984), 7.

¹⁸ Adams, *Back to the Blackboard*, 102.

¹⁹ Adams, *Back to the Blackboard*, 102-103.

given potential, we are a supportive community of homeschool families seeking to give our children a rich and full education through the best of classroom and homeschool instruction.”²⁰ The mission of the cooperative grows out of an educational philosophy that is founded on Scripture. The statement shows what is to be done (a rich and full education), how it ought to be done (as a supportive community . . . through the best of classroom and homeschool instruction), and why (desiring that our children reach their maximum God-given potential).

Philosophy of Education

When a Christian homeschool cooperative has a clear understanding of its mission, the context is ripe for developing a useful philosophy of education. This last foundation piece is important for maintaining the distinctive Christian context of the cooperative. Good Christian education does not mean simply adding Bible classes. Michael S. Lawson warns, “A genuinely Christian school recognizes the Creator in every subject and applies Christian values to every practice or policy.”²¹ The aim is to provide the superstructure for building the curriculum, instruction, and even administration of the cooperative. To accomplish this, according to Lawson, a philosophy of education must address theological, philosophical, educational, and contextual categories.²²

The context must be impacted by educational philosophy, but context can also have a shaping influence on that philosophy. This is especially obvious in homeschool education. Macaulay speaks for homeschool parents when she writes, “Educational

²⁰ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, “Our Values,” accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.oakgrovecoop.net/school-info/our-values/>.

²¹ Michael S. Lawson, *The Professors Puzzle: Teaching in Christian Academics* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 4.

²² Lawson provides this framework in the first chapter of his book and includes a helpful illustration on page 4. Lawson, *The Professors Puzzle*, 1-31.

institutions make poor substitute mothers, fathers, and homes.”²³ For homeschoolers, education begins at home and intentionally continues there. A homeschool cooperative, however, recognizes the limitations that individual parents and homes may have and seeks to combine the giftings and resources of homeschool families so they may serve and support one another. The goal in cooperative education is to enjoy the best of both worlds—homeschool and classroom instruction.

The *Oak Grove Philosophy of Education* states, “All truth is God’s truth. We want to help students understand how all subject areas are connected under God’s truth.”²⁴ This declaration demonstrates the theological foundations for Christian homeschool cooperative education. The document also outlines the context by stating that the cooperative,

is able to offer the various benefits of a classroom experience, while recognizing the God-given privilege and responsibility of the home teacher. With this vision of teaching in partnership, [the cooperative] provides a quality educational framework for home education with classroom and community support.²⁵

More than learning and instruction is going on here. This philosophy provides a rich context for biblical counseling among parents, students, and teachers.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Provides Support for the Church

The Primary Responsibility of Parents

Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children. Louis Berkhof writes, “It is a striking fact that even the Old Testament, in which God deals with the nation of Israel more than with the individuals that belong to it and consequently speaks primarily in national terms, always refers to or addresses the parents as the

²³ Macaulay, *For the Children’s Sake*, 10.

²⁴ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, “Oak Grove Philosophy of Education Statement,” accessed September 24, 2020, https://www.oakgrovecoop.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1799106&type=d&pREC_ID=1968903.

²⁵ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, “Oak Grove Philosophy of Education Statement.”

responsible educators of children.”²⁶ The New Testament also established parents as educators. Paul instructs fathers to bring up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4b).

The immediate goal of Christian parents teaching their children is for the children to know God. Andreas Köstenberger tells us, “Christian parents have the mandate and serious obligation to instill their religious heritage in their children. . . . Parents must never go back on their God-given responsibility.”²⁷ However, the whole of Scripture, and especially the Proverbs make it obvious that parental teaching should also prepare children for other areas of life. Köstenberger writes, “by example and explicit instruction, parents are to teach their children and youth a wide array of positive attributes.”²⁸ Parental obligations to educate children includes passing on their Christian faith, but also preparing them for a fruitful future. Fathers and mothers may delegate the responsibility of educating their children to schools and homeschool cooperatives, but the task is laid primarily at the feet of parents.

This reality is acknowledged by educators in many different contexts and often when they express a desire for parents to be more involved. Public and private school teachers indicate that struggling students could perform better if parents were more supportive of their children’s education. Ken Zeichner describes how struggling public schools are forced to shift “from family and community involvement to family and community engagement.”²⁹ A major strength of homeschool cooperative education is the

²⁶ Berkhof and Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education*, 29.

²⁷ Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 94.

²⁸ These attributes include: Diligence and industriousness, justice, kindness, generosity, self-control, righteousness, truthfulness and honesty, discretion in choosing friends, caution and prudence, gentleness, contentment, integrity of character, humility, graciousness, forthrightness, restraint, faithfulness in friendship, purity, vigorous pursuit of what is good and right, skillfulness in work, and patience. Köstenberger and Jones, *God Marriage and Family*, 95.

²⁹ Zeichner continues, “Decades of research on school improvement and policy efforts show that authentic engagement of families and communities from the very beginning of school improvement work, and mutual trust between families and communities and schools, are important features of

clear acknowledgement that parents are responsible and involved.

The Role of the Local Church

While parents are primary, the local church has a role in childhood education as well. Köstenberger writes, “Believing parents have an important role to play, but this does not alter the fact that it is the *church* that was given the charge to disciple individuals and to teach them to obey all the Lord Jesus Christ commanded them to do (Matt. 28:20).”³⁰ The great commission leaves the church with the task of teaching all disciples, including children. This makes it appropriate for churches to develop ministries for children such as Sunday schools and youth groups.

Faithful churches also train and support parents to fulfill their responsibility in the home. Ministries must be developed to promote strong marriages and encourage godly parenting. These ministries must give parents a vision to give God first place in the family. J. T. English writes, “If we give people better ministry programs but fail to give them a radically God-centered vision for their lives, then we have failed miserably.”³¹ The church can create this vision for parents to carry out in the home. This can result in parents assuming the primary role in their children’s education with the church supporting in a secondary fashion. Köstenberger agrees, “It goes without saying that due to the vital importance of marriage and family in God’s plan from the beginning, the church should do everything it can to strengthen the marriage bond and family ties.”³²

The church’s secondary role is not passive. The church can actively promote

improvement efforts that result in positive outcomes for students.” Ken Zeichner, “Tensions Between Teacher Professionalism and Authentic Community Voice in Public Schools Serving Nondominant Communities,” in *Public Education: Defending a Cornerstone of American Democracy*, ed. David C. Berliner and Carl Hermanns (New York: Teachers College Press, 2022), 179.

³⁰ Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 255.

³¹ J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 21.

³² Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 257.

Christian education, not only through Sunday schools, but by establishing Christian day schools and homeschool cooperatives. These educational ministries support the church's ministry. LaHaye writes, "Churches have been the principal sponsors of these [Christian] schools because they view education as part of their God-given mandate to teach."³³

Homeschool Cooperatives and the Mission of the Church

A homeschool cooperative, therefore, can be an extension of the church's supporting ministry to families. If a homeschool cooperative belongs to a church, this extension is obvious, but even if the cooperative does not belong to a particular congregation, it can support the ministry of local churches. For example, Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative in Knoxville, Tennessee, serves over sixty different churches.

Christian Homeschool Cooperatives can advance the mission of local churches by encouraging the faith of Christian students and their parents. As their faith in Christ is strengthened through Christian worldview education, they become stronger contributing members of their churches. In this way homeschool cooperatives build families into their churches. A clearly communicated commitment to the historic Christian faith that includes a statement of support for local churches furthers this goal.³⁴

Independent homeschool organizations can provide resources to support education that would be difficult even for a large church to manage. In this way,

³³ LaHaye, *The Battle for the Public Schools*, 253.

³⁴ For example, Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative clearly communicates this in its policy book. "Oak Grove is an interdenominational Christian Homeschool Cooperative. We desire to continually discuss God's truth in relation to the materials being taught in the classroom. The Co-op is designed to serve the entire community without reference to the denomination or church affiliation of the child. Though we represent a number of denominations, each staff member and board member must agree to support the basic doctrines summarized in the Oak Grove Statement of Faith. We will approach spiritual and academic instruction from this Christ-centered worldview. Individual families will address specific denominational issues beyond the details of the Oak Grove Statement. We ask that this be an environment of love and respect, welcoming families of all backgrounds and beliefs. However, the program will be Christian without apology." Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, "Oak Grove Policies and Procedures for the 2020-2021 Academic Year: Elementary School Parent-Student Handbook," accessed September 24, 2020, https://www.oakgrovecoop.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1772301&type=d&pREC_ID=1997573.

Christian Homeschool Cooperatives can be a genuine ministry partners for pastors and other church leaders who want to help families grow strong in the Lord. This makes homeschool cooperatives excellent supporters of local church ministry.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Ministers to the Whole Family

In Loco Parentis

It is obvious that the point of schooling is to help children. However, schools and homeschool cooperatives exist to support parents as well. “*In loco parentis*” is a hallmark of teacher education and practice. Berkhof writes that, “parents are the proper educators of the children and are most of all responsible to God for the faithful performance of their duty. The complexities of modern life make it necessary, however, that they call in the help of professional teachers.”³⁵ Homeschool parents may not agree that it is always *necessary* to call in the help of professionals, but the rapid growth of homeschool cooperatives does show how helpful this can be.

A homeschool cooperative allows a classroom teacher to stand in the place of a parent and teach math, science, history, or any other subject. Normally, the cooperative teacher is only doing part of the educational work because they have the student for one to three days out of a five-day week. This means they are working in partnership with the parent-teacher who is teaching the child on the other days. Thus, homeschool cooperatives clearly demonstrate how classroom teachers serve and support students and their parents. The cooperative classroom serves the entire family.

The Benefits of Teaching Experience

In a homeschool cooperative, the parents are the “official” teachers, and the

³⁵ Berkhof and Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education*, 112.

classroom teachers support the work the parents are doing at home.³⁶ These experienced (and sometimes professionally trained) classroom teachers are equipped to help homeschool parents address the learning needs of their children. Homeschooled children who attend cooperatives, “can benefit greatly from taking a class with someone who has a passion for the subject as well as experience to guide them.”³⁷ When the homeschool mom of a second grader sees her child struggle with reading for the first time, her child’s cooperative teacher is likely to have seen similar issues dozens of times. This makes the classroom teacher’s experience a great resource for the parent.

Most homeschool parents are not opposed to professional education. Turn of the century homeschool champion Charlotte Mason was a professional teacher and school administrator. She wrote, “For thirty or forty years I have labored without pause to establish a working and philosophic theory of education . . .”³⁸ Parents who participate in homeschool cooperatives are seeking the benefits of two worlds—homeschool education and experienced classroom education. They recognize the usefulness of experienced teachers and know the whole family benefits from their work.

Benefits beyond Curriculum and Instruction

There is, of course, more going on in the classroom and homeschool than learning from planned curriculum. Children face many personal challenges. Biblical counselor Amy Baker writes, “For children, the struggles, desires, and hopes are no

³⁶ Many state laws refer to the homeschooling parents as the “teachers of record.” Although classroom teachers in a homeschool cooperative often take a lead role, especially in the higher grades, they are technically “tutors” helping mom or dad. Ben Mullins, a specialist in homeschool legal counsel writes, “. . . at the discretion of the parent-teacher, a tutor . . . may be employed by the parent teacher.” Benjamin Mullins, *General Overview of Homeschool Cooperative Legal Issues* (Knoxville, TN: Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, 2018), 4.

³⁷ Carol Topp, *Homeschool Co-Ops: How to Start Them, Run Them, and Not Burn Out* (Cincinnati, OH: Ambassador, 2014), 11.

³⁸ Charlotte Mason, *Home Education* (1935; repr., Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino, 2011), 2.

different than for those of us who are adults. . . . Children, like adults, wrestle with profound thoughts and questions and need to see how the gospel connects to them in their current struggles.”³⁹ Families participating in homeschool cooperatives have access to help from other parents and cooperative teachers. These other adults can help parents when their children face a range of behavioral, social, emotional, or spiritual challenges. This help can be fortifying for families walking through a difficult time because life’s common problems often leave children and their parents feeling lonely and uncertain what to do.

The help of others in a Christian homeschool cooperative is further augmented by the cooperative’s affirmation of the religious nature of all education, the authority of the Bible, and the important ministry of the local church. These things combine to make biblical counseling a natural choice for helping cooperative students and parents face life’s common problems. The homeschool cooperative is a great context for counseling and, thankfully, with God’s Word we have the needed content.

Conclusion

Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. This chapter supports that thesis by demonstrating that a homeschool cooperative is an appropriate context for biblical counseling. The chapter pointed to (1) the reality that all education is religious in nature, (2) that Christian homeschool cooperatives are founded on biblical principles (3) that these cooperatives can provide support for local church ministry, and (4) minister to the whole family. With the context set, the next chapter will point to the application of biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative.

³⁹ Amy Baker, *Caring for the Souls of Children: A Biblical Counselors Manual* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020), 2.

CHAPTER 4

APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING IN A HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE

The previous chapter outlined the educational context that supports biblical counseling in a Christian homeschool cooperative. This chapter will demonstrate how biblical counseling can be applied in a homeschool cooperative. First, the chapter will show the importance of going to the right source for counseling *content*, the Bible. Second, the chapter considers *competence* for counseling in a homeschool cooperative with suggestions for programs of informal and formal counseling. Third, the chapter discusses the resulting transformed *community* within the homeschool cooperative and how that can impact the church and the broader community.

Content for Biblical Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative

The Need for Discernment When Looking for Answers

When faced with problems in life, people look for solutions. It is important to consider the source of those solutions. In the context of childhood education, there are many dangers present. In American education today, the public-school system is dominated by a secular-humanist philosophy. Wilson writes, “Despite the best efforts of parents, educators, and administrators, worldliness seeps into our schools. In a significant number of cases, worldly thinking *floods* into our schools.”¹ The Creator God of the Bible is ignored, and Darwinian evolution is assumed. William E. Bennett writes, “Because it is widely regarded as a central organizing theory of biology, most schools do

¹ Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 101.

teach evolution. This is a reasonable position for educators to take.”² Aside from the scientific problems with that assumption, it also removes many foundational arguments of ethics and morality.³ This leaves the door open for a relativism that is unable to guide people through troubled times or for a dictatorial agenda driven by whatever cultural assumptions are in vogue.

The massive influence of public education in American society cannot be overestimated. Even parents whose children attend private Christian schools or who homeschool are tempted to look to public education as a standard or resource for guidance. The joint statement of four major Christian school associations acknowledges this reality,

There is no indication, at this point that the CCSS [Common Core State Standards] will be directly imposed on Christian or other private schools, but as the CCSS become the “national consensus core curriculum,” parents and supporters will ask about how the [Christian] school curriculum and achievement results align with the standards.⁴

As the culture moves increasingly further away from biblical truth, this becomes a massive problem. It is dangerous for the soul care of children and has the potential to infect Christian communities with many ungodly ways of thinking and acting.

Outside of education, it is not uncommon for people struggling with behavioral, emotional, relational, or even spiritual problems to seek help from secular counselors or Christian integrationist counselors who are heavily influenced by secular thinking.⁵ These counselors will often diagnosis common problems as diseases to be

² William J. Bennett, Chester E. Finn, and John T. E. Cribb Jr., *The Educated Child* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 391.

³ The point here is not that Christian education ought to simply dismiss and ignore the various theories of evolution, but they must be evaluated intelligently and in light of God’s revelation in the Bible rather than simply assumed as fact. Likewise, Christian homeschool cooperatives must evaluate counseling in light of God’s revelation in the Bible.

⁴ Wildwood Christian Academy, “Association of Christian Schools International Position Statement on Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI).” accessed on September 20, 2022, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/588f81b9e4fcb5920cf37371/t/588fc63c1b631bae057ccbe8/1485817405010/ACSI_Position_on_Common_Core_State_Standards.pdf.

⁵ A Christian integrationist counselor tries to combine biblical principles with the principles

treated with medicine or therapy. Creating a diagnostic scheme is not necessarily a bad thing. Michael R. Emler writes, “Everybody ‘makes’ diagnoses. Everybody. Interpreting—or diagnosing—our experiences is unavoidable. Part of being human is classifying, organizing, and interpreting our world. This is an echo of God’s ‘organizing’ speech, as he created something meaningful out of chaos (Genesis 1).”⁶ There are however, risks involved. Emler goes on to explain that “some psychiatric diagnoses redefine behavior that Scripture would characterize primarily as sin.”⁷

When problems that stem from mankind’s rebellion against God are labeled as merely medical issues, then people struggling with those problems can be led away from God’s gracious solutions. John Michael Massey Sr. highlights the problem:

The common approach by secular counselors, and unfortunately adapted by many Christian counselors, is to deal with the issues of a man’s soul apart from his Creator. They make such artificial distinctions by calling what is a spiritual issue a mental health issue or disease. Such methodology is futile at best and destructive at worse. The biblical counselor understands these are inseparable, and to understand man rightly, he must be understood in light of his relationship with God.⁸

God’s common grace means secular and integrationist counseling sometimes yields positive results, but the risks of embracing ungodly philosophies about life are high. David Powlison writes, “All systems of psychological thought are affected by sin and must be critiqued by Scripture’s view of the human condition and its cure. God’s gaze

and practices of secular counseling. Stanton Jones explains integrationist counseling practice, “Grounded in Christian truth, we nevertheless recognize that even our understandings of biblical truth are subject to our finiteness and sinfulness as human beings, and thus are potentially correctable by knowledge from any source, including the findings of science.” Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 40.

⁶ Michael R. Emler, *Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses & Medications* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017), 6.

⁷ Emler, *Descriptions and Prescriptions*, 29.

⁸ John Michael Massey, Sr., “Restoring Confidence in the Sufficiency of the Scriptures for the Soul Care of God’s People in Selected Southern Baptist Churches in Shawnee, Oklahoma” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

and intentions are fundamentally different from those of fallen man.”⁹

In addition to these formal systems of handling life’s problems, there are a myriad of pop psychologies available in print, online, and on television. These sources may represent the conventional wisdom of a group or the latest fad for dealing with a problem. Pop psychology does not have a coherent base on which to build its suggestions. John MacArthur writes that these and other “psychologies” refer to “a plethora of theories and systems, current, and past.”¹⁰ This means, while there might be some good advice included, anything goes as well. Many myths abound and there is no certainty that biblical truth will be supported by this source of solutions. Christian people ought to look elsewhere.¹¹

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Finds Answers in the Bible

A Christian homeschool cooperative has the distinct advantage of appealing to the Word of God for answers to life’s common problems. This is best expressed in the cooperative’s Statement of Faith, Philosophy of Education, and Mission Statement. This should mean that a student, parent, teacher, or staff member facing relational, emotional, learning, or other common problems, will naturally look to biblical truth for help. This is not guaranteed to happen, however, without some intentionality. Howard Eyrich and Jonathan Holmes affirm this, “Today . . . we need a clear strategy. We must know what is

⁹ David Powlison, *Speaking Truth In Love* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 158.

¹⁰ MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 6th ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 36.

¹¹ For more on this, see “Introduction” and “Part I: The Historical Background of Biblical Counseling” in MacArthur, *Counseling*, xi-47. In developing an argument for biblical counseling, MacArthur, Powlison, and John Street address the many problems with popular and secular psychology. MacArthur summarizes, “Psychology was thus ideally suited for an increasingly secular age. By the middle of this century, the new discipline was accepted by the popular mind as a full-fledged science, even though the movement was already beginning to fragment into dozens of competing schools and philosophies and even though its hypotheses could not be tested or its results verified through any of the traditional means of true science.” MacArthur, xii. For a case study on problems with Christian pop psychology, see “Love Speaks Many Languages Fluently” in Powlison, *Seeing With New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003).

foundational to our practice and ministry, the nonnegotiables, and align our practice accordingly.”¹²

Many Christians today are so deeply impacted by cultural norms rather than biblical truth that they will not readily consider the Bible as a source of answers to problems. Even among Christian homeschool families, there is a troubling pattern of parents quickly turning to secular-humanistic experts for advice on how to help their children.¹³ This causes them to miss helpful wisdom in the Scripture and, even more dangerous, it may lead them to miss the good news of forgiveness through faith in Christ. Christian parents—and educators who support them—are wise to evaluate their problems and any solutions offered in light of God’s Word.

There are many excellent and helpful books in the world. The message of the Bible, however, is the only message that mankind simply cannot do without. Jeremy Pierre writes,

The Bible does not tell you everything you need to know for your seventy—or eighty—year journey in this world. Extrabiblical knowledge is necessary to function as a human being . . . But extrabiblical knowledge is not sufficient for you to know who you are or why you do what you do. God designed you to need *Him* to tell you about *His* world so you can understand your own observations of it.¹⁴

¹² Howard Eyrich and Jonathan Holmes, “The Legacy and Future of Biblical Counseling in the Local Church,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care Through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 409.

¹³ This is illustrated in many small ways, such as parents making use of modifications like redirection, where a misbehaving child is simply distracted from disobedient or disruptive activity with something more interesting. This practice of “redirection” is common in education and in homes. While its use may not be wrong in every case, it avoids addressing the heart of the problem with misbehavior. A more extreme (and real) example involves a child who attacked his teacher, knocking her down. His parents took him to a professional therapist who specializes in children’s issues. In the weeks that followed, many conversations took place between the parents, the therapist, and me. Although I mentioned it on a few occasions, no one wanted to discuss the boy’s responsibility in the event. It was obvious the boy’s situation involved some malady beyond the norm, but does not violently attacking his teacher necessitate addressing the sinfulness of those actions at some point in the process? The boy’s parents are Christians, and he attended a Christian homeschool cooperative, but it seems the Bible’s teaching about personal sin and the need for confession, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation was easily cast aside when those pathways of grace and peace were needed most. Tedd Tripp writes, “[A child’s] behavior does not just spring forth uncaused. His behavior - the things he says and does - reflects his heart. If you really want to help him, you must be concerned with the attitudes of heart that drive his behavior.” Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press 1995), 20.

¹⁴ Jeremy Pierre, “Scripture Is Sufficient, But to Do What?,” in *Scripture and Counseling: God’s Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

This means that we must depend on the Bible when looking for answers to life's common problems. Without the Bible, we cannot know our ultimate needs nor God's ultimate help. However, God has revealed himself to us in the Bible so we may know and find answers to the most significant human challenges. Wayne Grudem writes, "When we are facing a problem of genuine importance to our Christian life, we can approach Scripture with the confidence that from it God will provide us with guidance for that problem."¹⁵ It may take considerable effort to discern the way forward in the face of our troubles, but we have the right roadmap in the Bible.

The testimony of Christian experience and more importantly the Scripture itself is that God does use the Bible to effectively accomplish change in people's lives. Every Christian testimony is proof of this fact. The Word of God, when applied to the human heart by the Holy Spirit produces results. Paul Tautges and Steve Viars explain, "While the Bible is constantly, actively alive, it is also productive. Scripture is the Holy Spirit's instrument for producing spiritual results."¹⁶ This means families, teachers, and leaders of Christian homeschool cooperatives may confidently use the Scriptures for counseling.

It must be acknowledged that effective understanding and use of the Scripture is a gift of God's grace through faith. While Christian people claim to trust Jesus Christ with their souls for eternity, many will go to a secular psychologist, social worker, or psychiatrist for help with what they consider to be "real problems." As people made in God's image and by his common grace, these experts may offer some relief. However, when Christians indiscriminately bypass the wisdom of God in the Bible and embrace

2014), 94.

¹⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2007 Edition (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 131.

¹⁶ Paul Tautges, et al., "Sufficient for Life and Godliness," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kelleman and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 57.

practices rooted in a system that denies God’s existence this betrays a disturbing lack of faith or at least understanding of the God they claim to trust and to whom they must give account. Jay Adams writes,

All blame-shifting and excuses will evaporate on that day before the searching gaze of the One whose eyes are “as a flame of fire.” The sophisticated Freudian or behavioristic theories that now seem so conveniently plausible and that are used to justify and excuse men of their responsibility to God will be shown to be futile and false. In His presence, men in anguish will wonder at the naivete that they once called sophistication.¹⁷

Christian people must look with faith for God’s answers in the Bible. God is the ultimate source for help with life’s common problems.

Christians participating in a homeschool cooperative are looking to God for eternal salvation. Likewise, they must look to him for help with temporal problems. This makes biblical counseling a natural and necessary part of homeschool families’ efforts to support each other in a cooperative context.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Relies on the Good News of Christ

When Christian parents who face challenges rush to expert professionals for help, they are rarely instructed to consider the issues of a child’s heart needing the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Following expert advice can result in embracing practices that prove effective in alleviating the short term challenges a parent or teacher faces, but that may lead a child away from dealing with sin in his or her life. Linda J. Rice explains, “Can secular programs ‘work,’ as in improve the child’s behavior? Yes, but they cannot ‘work,’ as in produce permanent spiritual and eternal change. Secular approaches fall short because they do not lead to salvation that provides the child with a cleansed heart through forgiveness in Christ (Heb 10:22).”¹⁸

¹⁷ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 3-4.

¹⁸ Linda J. Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on Reactive Attachment*

Modifying or eliminating harmful or wrong behavior in a child is a good goal. It is incomplete, however, if the child's heart is not addressed. Tedd and Margy Tripp write, "According to the Bible, the [ultimate] problem we have is too profound to be corrected externally. The root problem is not the wrong that we do. It is the source of that wrong—our hearts."¹⁹ Our hearts are sinful, but the topic of human sinfulness is anathema in most of the non-Christian literature that pertains to educationally challenged children.

This is not to suggest that children do not suffer from genuine trauma or that the myriad of diagnoses given to children are fabricated or phony. The reality is significantly more complex. Clearly there are physiological issues that affect human behavior, and this reality should never be ignored. A diagnosis can be a description of behaviors that exist regardless of how they came about. Trauma and deprivation do lead to childhood problems. Denying this is unhelpful and even cruel. Jesus does not ignore problems of human suffering, and neither should we. Of course, this issue is complicated by misdiagnosis, overdiagnosis, and the sometimes unhelpful way accurate diagnosis are treated.²⁰

These complications result in some Christian therapists avoiding any discussion of a child's need to repent of sin. For example, Karyn Purvis and David Cross have become leading authorities on the topic of dealing with traumatized children. Their books and Purvis' videos are promoted by Christian ministries and often presented at Christian conferences and seminars.²¹ Although the material is full of helpful tips for

Disorder (O'Fallon, IL.: SeedSown Press, 2012), 275.

¹⁹ Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008), 181.

²⁰ Mike Emlet argues for the wise application that does not ignore the benefits of diagnosis or the risks, "We need a balanced, biblically (and scientifically!) informed approach that is neither too warmly embracing nor to coldly dismissive. Striking this balance is important." Emlet, *Descriptions and Prescriptions*, 8.

²¹ Jim Daly, "Dr. Karyn Purvis, a Champion for 'Children from Hard Places,' Dies at 66,"

dealing with educationally challenged children and the warm loving approach is commendable, parents are continually warned to avoid considering the sinfulness of the child's heart.

Purvis writes that a child's, "acting out can mask a variety of traumas and heartaches, as well as keen loneliness and real sadness."²² Addressing manipulative behavior in a child, she writes, "This is not an indictment of her character. It is a habit learned from adversity and necessity."²³ It is hard to argue with these statements when dealing with hurting children, especially in the light of Purvis' passionate concern to bring love and kindness into their broken lives, but there is real danger that these approaches insulate children from learning about sin and therefore from learning the good news of Jesus Christ. This insulation does them harm. Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp write, "To the degree that you forget you are a sinner, you will underestimate your daily need for Christ."²⁴

A correct understanding of the sinful nature in every human heart is essential to the gospel. When a person recognizes his or her guilt before Almighty God, then he or she is primed to rightly understand the good news of Christ and experience his saving power. This born-again experience can become the catalyst of lasting life change. Paul David Tripp writes, "This is where the message gets so exciting. Jesus is saying, 'Because I have come, lasting heart change *can* take place.' Yes, the world is terribly

Daly Focus (blog), April 13, 2016, <https://jim Daly.focusonthefamily.com/dr-karyn-purvis-champion-children-hard-places-dies-66/>.

²² Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007), 95.

²³ Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 95.

²⁴ Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change*, 2nd ed. (Greensboro, N.C.: New Growth Press, 2008), 14.

broken, but the King has come, bringing the power and glory of his kingdom with him!”²⁵

The goal in Christian education, including Christian homeschooling, is for students to know Christ and keep him at the center of their lives. George R. Knight warns against losing sight of this, “If any activity in the Christian School comes to the place where it holds the center stage instead of Christ, we may be sure, according to both the first great commandment and the Ten Commandments (Matt 22:37; Exod 20:3), that we have lost our Christian perspective.”²⁶ This is true, even of activity that is intended to help students struggling with life’s common problems. It is a tragedy that Christ is often left out of plans to care for needy students (and their parents) in the very situations in which his gospel is the greatest solution. As educational communities rooted in biblical truth, Christian Homeschool Cooperatives are well suited to apply the gospel to the heart issues of children and parents who are facing life’s common problems.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Integrates Biblical Reality in All Things

Whether a Christian homeschool cooperative has a Bible curriculum built into its scope and sequence or not, one aim of Christian cooperative education is to incorporate God’s truth into every subject through the practice of biblical integration. Biblical integration aims to present each subject and lesson in the light of a Christian worldview. D.P. Johnson provides a definition while comparing effective biblical integration to the weaving of a fine rug, “Biblical integration is weaving the biblical worldview into the subject and lives of students. The act of weaving involves interlacing

²⁵ Ted Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed), 6.

²⁶ George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 224.

multiple threads together, so they form one unified whole. A biblically integrated lesson is like that.”²⁷

Bible verses are not merely tagged onto a math or science lesson, but all instruction in math and science is intertwined with the doctrine of the Creator God who made the world to function according to natural laws and processes. For example, when a high school student reads about micro-evolution, he or she can understand this within the bounds of Scripture’s teaching. Cornelius Van Til explains, “To be conscious of these distinctions does not mean that we must spend much more time on the direct teaching of religion than on the teaching of other matters. If we teach religion indirectly everywhere and always, we may need less time to teach religion directly.”²⁸ One of the great benefits of Christian worldview education is the way students begin to see every subject—and all of life—through the lens of biblical truth.

Biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative setting can function in a similar way. It should be natural for students, parents, and teachers to consider life’s common challenges within the framework of the Christian worldview. They may or may not make use of a formal counseling program, but they must always begin with biblical assumptions about God, humans, sin, redemption, etc. Effective biblical counseling must be integrated into the cooperative community life just as Bible doctrine is woven into the curricular program. The Oak Grove Philosophy of Education states, “We want to cultivate a habit in our students of noticing and paying attention to God’s truth and activity in the world.”²⁹ This should be true, not only when applied to lessons, but also

²⁷ Integration here is not to be confused with the integrationist approach to Christian Counseling. The point here is to show how God’s truth is integrated into an academic program. D. P. Johnson, *Truth Weaving: Biblical Integration for God’s Glory and Their Abundant Living* (Kuala Lumpur: Walking Elm Press, 2015), 17.

²⁸ Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education: Address to Christian Teachers*, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), 4.

²⁹ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, “Oak Grove Philosophy of Education Statement,” accessed September 24, 2020,

when seeking answers to life's common problems.

Homeschool cooperatives that integrate biblical truth into their academic program are fertile settings for the integration of biblical truth in counseling. Students, parents, and teachers who are used to assuming God has an opinion about every academic subject will be inclined to assume he has an opinion about learning delays, classroom misbehavior, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal conflict. In the same way that an entire academic program can be Christian even without Bible classes, people helping, and counseling can be biblical without an prearranged program.

Nevertheless, for God's truth to remain foundational for counseling in a Christian Homeschool Cooperative there must be a clear distinction between worldly sources and biblical sources. Tripp and Tripp write, "The secular culture we live in understands the need to saturate us with its message."³⁰ Homeschool parents must respond by saturating their thinking with the message of the Bible and cooperatives must be intentional about helping them do this.

Many families have never considered the importance of biblical sources for answers to behavioral or learning problems, but rather assume the need to look at secular sources. Christian homeschool cooperatives can encourage parents and teachers to seek out biblical resources by addressing the issue as part of yearly home-teacher training days held before school begins. Cooperatives could also write and post articles and other information that highlight Scripturally based resources on the internet.

A homeschool cooperative is an excellent context for encouraging biblical counseling among parents, students, and teachers and God has provided the content for counseling in the pages of Scripture. The next section will show how people participating in homeschool cooperative can be competent to counsel.

https://www.oakgrovecoop.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1799106&type=d&pREC_ID=1968903.

³⁰ Tripp and Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart*, 16.

Competence for Biblical Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative

Christians Can Counsel in a Homeschool Cooperative

Christian people are competent to counsel each other and are encouraged in Scripture to do so.³¹ Adams writes, “The Holy Spirit expects counselors to use his Word, the Holy Scriptures. We shall see . . . that he gave it [Scripture] for such a purpose, and that it is powerful when used for that purpose.”³² Christian homeschool parents and teachers can confidently rely on God and the Bible as they do the work of counseling in a homeschool cooperative.

Adams writes about the opportunity Christian day school teachers have to serve students,

Christian school teachers feel helpless, fearing to discipline their students lest they injure them psychologically. So they tend to rely on specialists . . . without recognizing that in their classrooms they have one of the finest opportunities for counseling available—the daily contact affording nearly ideal conditions for change and growth.³³

Adams is right to point out that these Christian teachers can counsel more effectively than experts brought in from outside. Arguably, a homeschool cooperative, with the high level of parental involvement and the use of classroom teachers creates even better conditions for biblical counseling.

This counseling can take place *informally* though simple words of encouragement spoken to a friend over coffee or *formally* in a planned session with a trained counselor. Both settings are necessary and helpful, and both must be intentionally encouraged. Homeschool cooperatives should strive for a culture among parents and students that equips and inspires them to engage in biblical counseling. This biblical

³¹ See Chapter 2.

³² Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 23.

³³ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 18.

counseling will prove useful in helping families and individuals, because biblically informed Christians are competent to counsel one another.

In fact, it is not an option for Christians to simply hand the care of their needy brothers and sisters to other people. This is especially troublesome if those other counselors are espousing a worldview that is not shaped by God's truth. The gospel is intended to answer the deepest needs of the human heart. Brokenness, sin, repentance, faith, salvation, and help for daily living are addressed in the pages of the Bible. The Holy Spirit illumines the hearts of believers so they can understand these things. It is not necessary to look elsewhere for answers to many of the common challenges faced by students, parents, and teachers, in a homeschool cooperative.

Christians Can be Equipped for Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative

Acknowledging that Christian people are competent to do biblical counseling does not mean there is no benefit from a structured program of training to counsel in a homeschool cooperative setting. It is not a given that cooperative members will assume responsibility to counsel others or do so from a biblical point of view. Therefore, general encouragement to tackle the work of biblical counseling must be coupled with an intentional program of preparation to counsel.

Roy and Tim Allchin's writing for churches could be applied to biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative as well, "Now is the time for churches to reclaim this responsibility to counsel! A thriving counselling ministry flows from taking the time to lay a proper foundation through intentional preparation and continuing to nurture all those involved through perpetual discipleship."³⁴ Christian homeschool cooperatives

³⁴ Roy Allchin and Tim Allchin, "Equipping Biblical Counselors for Your Church," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care Through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 209.

must create an emphasis on biblical counseling. This can be built into the routine work of parents, students, and classroom teachers in the cooperative.

The aim is to create a cooperative culture that naturally does what Paul Tripp suggests when he writes, “Our relationships do not belong to us; they belong to the Lord and are holy, God daily gives us opportunities to serve the troubled, angry, discouraged, defeated, confused, and blind. This is the way he works and he calls each of his children to be part of it.”³⁵ Every member of a homeschool cooperative could receive a limited amount of training in the concepts of biblical counseling and a small group of members could receive more specialized training. This would prepare all the cooperative participants to think biblically about helping one another with problems and resolving conflicts while making a specially trained group available to address cases that need a more focused approach.

Informal Settings for Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative

People helping each other is already part of the group ethos in a homeschool cooperative. Homeschool cooperatives create polices for dealing with conflict, systems to facilitate communication, and social events to build relationships. Each of these elements provide a platform for biblical counseling in a relaxed and informal setting.

For example, many cooperatives use a Matthew 18 policy that encourages members to go directly to a person with whom they have a problem and seek some resolution. This biblical model for managing disagreements is widely published and supported in many Christian schools and homeschool cooperatives.³⁶ It is a strong start

³⁵ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 123.

³⁶ This makes it a clear example of how biblical counseling concepts can be applied by everyone. It is worth noting, however, that Matthew 18 polices in school and homeschool settings have their weaknesses. Matthew 18 is dealing with moral and ethical failures. It does not always apply to parent concerns about curriculum and instruction in schools. Often these things are based on opinions and preferences. Maxx Godsey writes, “Within a Christian school environment, many times there occur instances that are in reality concerns or complaints that ought not to be treated as conflicts.” Maxx Godsey, “When Matthew 18 Isn't Enough: Developing a Deeper Model for School Conflict Resolution,” ASCI

for thinking biblically about handling problems and it shows how biblical counseling principles can work without specialized training.

Biblical counseling can easily become a natural and informal part of the established homeschool cooperative routine. Communication among cooperative members is already supported because parent-teachers and classroom-teachers normally communicate every class day. This gives them a chance to talk about something going on with the students. Problems are not allowed to fester unaddressed for long. In addition to these informal chats, most cooperative classroom teachers communicate about any issues (academic, behavioral, relational, or spiritual) on at least a weekly basis. These conversations create a natural platform for biblical counseling.

Social gatherings (playground activity before and after classes, picnics, mixers, and other special events) can promote biblical counseling by providing opportunities to establish and strengthen relationships. When people have positive relationships, they are more likely to reach out to each another for help. These relationships can make biblical confrontation considerably easier and the social events themselves can be times and places for Christian encouragement and admonishing in a friendly environment. These positive social interactions facilitate informal counseling that honors Christ and leads to life change. Tripp encourages us to be “ready to ask what role our relationships can play in the work Christ wants us to do . . . God’s relationship to us is living and redemptive, and he wants our relationships to mirror those qualities.”³⁷

Formal Settings for Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative

In addition to informal counseling that can take place in the cooperative community, a Christian homeschool cooperative can develop formal biblical counseling

(blog), October 2, 2018, <https://blog.acsi.org/developing-deeper-school-conflict-resolution>.

³⁷ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 120.

plans for parents, students, and staff. Many cooperatives have already developed structures that address common problems. For example, Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative has trained liaisons to facilitate communication between teachers and parents of students with unique educational, behavioral, and emotional challenges.³⁸ In addition to academics, these liaisons address issues in the context of Christian discipleship with the understanding there are always heart issues involved in educational situations. Preparing liaisons to think biblically about the problems faced by students, teachers, and parents provides a platform for biblical counseling. In a similar way, homeschool cooperatives can train interested and qualified members to function as part of a biblical counseling team. This team of individuals can be available by appointment to support the needs of children and families in the cooperative.

Homeschool cooperatives can also create a referral list of local churches and other organizations that do biblical counseling. This list must be representative of churches and counselors with likeminded beliefs about counseling principles and methods. Powlison writes, “My decision to refer to pastors or pastoral counselors is not based on anyone’s title, but on three, more substantial matters: What do you believe? What do you show you believe? How do you treat other people?”³⁹

A partnership network of likeminded biblical counselors in churches will allow the cooperative to support churches’ ministries to parents and children. Jim Newheiser and Rod Mays write about an expansion of biblical counseling ministry through this sort of network,

³⁸ “To help facilitate open communication for identifying and implementing modifications, Oak Grove offers the support of a parent-led Curriculum, Behaviors, and Social Modification Review Team (CBSM). The CBSM Team, comprised of parents in the co-op with unique backgrounds and experiences, offers a variety of possibilities, including peer support, ideas, and an experienced parent mediator who can assist communication with teachers, staff and other parents.” Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, “Oak Grove Policies and Procedures for the 2020-2021 Academic Year: Elementary School Parent-Student Handbook,” accessed September 24, 2020, https://www.oakgrovecoop.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1772301&type=d&pREC_ID=1997573.

³⁹ Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love*, 142.

One way your vision for biblical counseling can be spread is by having leaders of your counseling center meet with leaders of area churches to explain your ministry and to answer any questions they may have. You want to assure them that your desire is that counselees go back to their home churches where they will be cared for and thrive.⁴⁰

Finally, a section in the cooperative library could house biblical counseling material for member families. These could include booklets from the Christian Counseling Education Foundation, the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, and other trusted sources.⁴¹ Pierre and Reju encourage biblical counselors to, “commend and give out good books on discipleship.”⁴² Promoting these will help promote the concept of looking to the Bible for answers to life’s common problems.

Since Christians are competent to counsel one another, an equipping program in the homeschool cooperative can contribute to effective biblical counseling in informal and formal settings. Homeschool cooperative ministry will benefit if counseling is intentionally promoted among members. This will lead to a stronger community of homeschool families.

Community for Biblical Counseling in a Homeschool Cooperative

Christians Are Transformed Individuals

When people trust in Jesus, God makes them new. They are transformed from the dead life of the flesh to the new life of the Spirit. This transformation is effective immediately, but it also represents a new beginning. There is a “now but not yet” reality to the Christian life. Christians experience growth as they are increasingly conformed to the image of their Savior Jesus. This growth is steady and normally observable. Powlison

⁴⁰ Jim Newheiser and Rod Mays, “Launching a Counseling Ministry in a ‘Midsize Church’: Biblical Counseling for the Church and Community,” in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God’s Care Through God’s People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 234.

⁴¹ See Appendix 1 for a list of library resources.

⁴² Jeremy Pierre and Reju Deepak, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 112.

writes, “Becoming more holy does not mean that you become ethereal, ghostly, and detached from the storms of life. It means you are becoming a wiser human being. You are learning how to deal well with your money, your sexuality, your job. You are becoming a better friend and family member.”⁴³

Biblical counseling is not a gimmick intended merely to make life more bearable in this world. It is about a right relationship with the God of heaven and right relationships with other people that lead to lasting joy, deep peace, and unflagging hope. This joy, peace, and hope is available even in the face of adversity. It is the result of genuine change. Lane and Tripp write, “Change is not rooted in a body of knowledge, a set of rules, theological outlines, or behavioral techniques. It is the result of your heart’s transformation by the risen Lord.”⁴⁴

Christians live in contrast to people in the world who do not know Jesus. Christians are people who go to God, his truth, and his means of grace for solutions to life’s problems. In doing this, they not only find help for their souls they are a witness to the world around them. Christian people who participate in a homeschool cooperative that practices biblical counseling can bring this transformed life and Christian witness with them.

Christian Homeschooling Is Transformed Education

Families who participate in Christian education, such as homeschooling, have already made an important decision that sets them apart from the culture around them. They have invested their time and money in an educational model that declares dependence on the Creator God and the Savior of mankind. In their own modern way, they have followed in the footsteps of God’s ancient people and chosen to “come out and

⁴³ David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 14.

⁴⁴ Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 220.

be separate” (2 Cor 6:17). They are committed to learning about and looking at the world with a Christian way of thinking. This makes them an educational community set apart.

A homeschool cooperative is not a church. However, as it is made of Christians who are members of churches. Because of this, cooperative members are the people of God living in a community that, as James Estep Jr. writes, “has important ramifications for the church as the Father’s children. It is to be a holy, countercultural reality that intentionally distinguishes itself from the world in which it lives, rejecting the prevailing non-Christian worldviews, values, pleasures, purposes, and goals.”⁴⁵ A Christian homeschool cooperative promotes a transformation of education that demonstrates the great reality of all God has done and continues to do in the world he made. Biblical counseling in the homeschool cooperative shows how living according to God’s truth can dramatically set Christian people apart from those who are in the world.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Can Lead to Transformed Communities

It does not, however, mean they are a community with no concern for or interaction with the world. In fact, being transformed by the truth of Christ better prepares the Christian cooperative to effectively minister to the non-Christian culture. As a community set apart, it is a community qualified to call others to the Savior. There is a priestly function in Christian education. Berkhof writes that Christian schools can “make an important contribution to the spiritual welfare of our community and nation by depositing a seed that may yield thirty, sixty, even a hundred-fold.”⁴⁶

The cooperative can have a multiplied impact on the community. As mentioned above, when cooperative families grow in Christ and seek answers to life’s

⁴⁵ James Riley Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 235.

⁴⁶ Berkhof and Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Education*, 40.

common problems from the pages of the Bible, they will be more effective members of churches. This strengthening of churches can impact the broader culture. Wilson writes, “Apart from reformation in the church, reformation in anything else, especially in schools, will come to *nada, zilch*.”⁴⁷ But a transformed homeschool cooperative can further the cause of transformed churches that are better equipped to transform the cities in which they exist.

Homeschool education and biblical counseling present alternatives to the secular humanist approach that leads to such unhappiness in the world. Trueman writes, “Many Christians talk of engaging culture. In fact, the culture is most dramatically engaged by the church presenting it with another culture, another form of community . . . manifested in the loving community that exists both in and beyond the worship service.”⁴⁸ Parents, who unite in a Christian homeschool cooperative are not merely impacting their own family life or the lives of other homeschool families. They are providing light amid darkness.

A Christian Homeschool Cooperative Can Enjoy Transformed Counseling

Christians who choose homeschool education for their children and who face life’s common problems with reliance upon biblical truth are set free from bondage to the opinions of secular humanist experts. They can enjoy hope the world does not understand and experience ultimate deliverance from problems. They can do more than just manage. They can genuinely overcome their struggles and their sins. Using God’s truth to address the issues of the heart can lead to lasting transformation. Jeremy Pierre writes, “Appeals to change action alone do not carry the weight of the heart in producing a healthy inner

⁴⁷ Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education*, 208.

⁴⁸ Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined History and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 176.

life.”⁴⁹ But a truly changed heart can lead to lasting change of attitude and actions.

Jesus Christ sets people free by giving them a new heart when they trust in his work on the cross. The new heart brings about a new lifestyle for the Christian. This is the simple and yet powerful message of the gospel, and it means genuine change and growth can happen. In God’s world, it is not true that people must always suffer with depression, anxiety, broken relationships, and other similar limitations. Tripp and Lane write, “Change can and does happen when we live in relationship with our Redeemer and embrace all the benefits he brings.”⁵⁰

Although Christians are not to expect heaven on earth, God did not intend his people to live in bondage to their pasts, their bad habits, or the sins of others. Jesus came in power to deliver his people. Embracing biblical counseling in Christian community is a gateway to freedom. Biblical counseling shows us the way to lasting hope. Adams writes,

Hope in the Scriptures is a confident expectation; the word hope never carries even the connotation of uncertainty that adheres to our English term (as when we say cautiously say, “I hope so”). There is no “hope so” about the biblical concept. When Paul wrote Titus about the “blessed hope,” for instance, he was urging him to look forward to the “happy expectation” of the “appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”⁵¹

Hope in the Savior is never disappointing. God can and does use the Scripture to transform individuals, homeschool cooperatives, and communities. He has the power to do this in a lasting way.

Conclusion

Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. This chapter explored ways biblical counseling can be applied in the homeschool cooperative context. The chapter pointed to (1) the importance of going to

⁴⁹ Jeremy Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 6.

⁵⁰ Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 171.

⁵¹ Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, 39.

the Bible, the right source for counseling *content*, (2) *competence* for counseling in a homeschool cooperative with suggestions for programs of informal and formal counseling, and (3) the resulting transformed *community* within the homeschool cooperative. The following chapter will further outline the implications biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative has for the church.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

The previous chapters show how Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. Scripture is clear that Christians are helped by God and equipped by him to help each other with life's common problems. Homeschool cooperatives that are founded on biblical principles can serve entire families and support the ministry of the local church. This happens when members of a Christian homeschool cooperative, relying on the Bible as the source of truth, develop formal and informal programs for biblical counseling. These programs can transform the homeschool cooperative community and impact the surrounding community.

This chapter will outline how biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative has implications for the church. First, the chapter will discuss the opportunities presented to the church and homeschool cooperative ministry. Next, suggestions for taking advantage of these opportunities will be made and examples of biblical counseling scenarios provided. Finally, the thesis will be concluded.

The Opportunity for the Church

Along with Christian schools, homeschool cooperatives can provide churches with an opportunity to address at least three important areas of ministry concern: education, family ministry, and biblical counseling.¹ Local churches may not immediately think of these as primary areas for ministry, but they must consider them in today's cultural milieu. When churches partner with homeschool cooperatives, they can

¹ The purpose here is to address biblical counseling, but within the broader context of educating children and supporting entire families.

experience an expansion of ministry in these areas far beyond what they could accomplish on their own.

The church in America today must address the crisis that is enveloping education. Local church leaders can no longer assume their neighborhood public school is acceptable for Christian children to attend. James W. Sire writes, “Being born in the Western world now guarantees nothing. Worldviews have proliferated. Walk down a street of any major city in Europe or North America and the next person you meet could adhere to any one of a dozen distinctly different patterns of understanding what life is all about.”²

This is not really a new phenomenon. The New Testament church is charged with the responsibility of teaching the next generation. Paul encourages Timothy to “remain at Ephesus so that he may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim 1:3) and he warns of a time when “people will not endure sound teaching” (2 Tim 4:3). This means that local churches must embrace the responsibility for shepherding parents and children through the process of childhood education—and beyond. Wise church leaders, therefore, will not only accept the idea of parachurch organizations like Christian homeschool cooperatives, but they will actively seek them out as ministry partners.³

These partnerships require diligence on the part of pastors, elders, or deacons. Church leaders must be discerning about principles of education and should equip their own understanding of Christian education. For example, reading George R. Knight’s

² James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 6th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 26.

³ Sometimes a church will start its own homeschool cooperative. This is one way to address the responsibility for educating the children of members. Most churches, however, will not have the infrastructure for cooperative education that an independent, highly structured homeschool cooperative program can provide. Additional writing on how to start and operate effective, smaller, church-based cooperatives could prove helpful.

*Philosophy and Education*⁴ along with Doug Wilson’s *The Case of Classical Christian Education*⁵ can provide a range of helpful categories for local church leaders to consider. The Christian education of children should become a routine agenda item for church board meetings. As church leaders understand the biblical principles of Christian education, they can seek out likeminded educational institutions to recommend, support, and partner with—including homeschool cooperatives. Church leaders who understand Christian education can look for ways to encourage and enable parents to embrace this kind of education.⁶

When pastors pay attention to the way parents educate children, they are fulfilling their responsibility to shepherd the flock through family ministry. The New Testament provides for family ministry, with its instructions for husbands, wives, and children (Eph 5:22-6:4), and the apostle Paul set an example, not only in writing about this but through his teaching “in public and from house to house” (Acts 20:20b). Church leaders must be involved in homes, serving families by pointing to the teaching and tools needed for educating the next generation of believers. This is serious business that will require resources outside the local church body. This makes partnering with organizations like Christian homeschool cooperatives an attractive means of ministering to families.

In the work of education and child training, pastors and parents can quickly discover they need help wrestling through common problems. Although churches can and should develop biblical counseling ministries, these ministries are rarely equipped to

⁴ George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006).

⁵ Wilson’s cutting style is not something to be emulated, but he does provide warnings that stir up serious thought about the education of children in America today. Douglas Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

⁶ Church members who send their children to public schools can also be taught the importance of faithfully supplementing what their children are learning with Christian doctrine and discipleship. Families participating in public school systems can maintain their Christian faith, but they will have more work to do than those who participate in Christian schools and homeschool cooperatives.

minister to children and to address educational concerns such as learning delays or classroom behavior problems.⁷ Christian homeschool cooperatives are designed to be supportive educational communities for parents and children. This makes them a rich environment for biblical counseling of parents, teachers, and students. With this somewhat specialized focus they present the church with an opportunity for expanded biblical counseling ministry.

The Opportunity for Homeschool Cooperatives

Christian homeschool cooperatives must be unapologetically biblical in their approach. This means homeschool cooperatives are supportive of the local church, which is appointed by God as “a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15b). Cooperatives are not churches and are not intended to replace the vital functions of church ministry. God has given the primary responsibility of teaching to parents and the church. This means homeschool cooperatives are intended to support those responsibilities rather than supplant them. Supporting the ministry of the local church, however, is not a limitation to the mission of Christian homeschool cooperatives, but rather an opportunity.

Just as local churches can experience expanded ministry through involvement with homeschool cooperatives, cooperatives are wise to solicit the involvement and partnership of local churches. Churches have tremendous influence on families who participate in homeschool cooperatives and they represent extensive resources for serving those families and supporting their efforts in homeschool education. For example, Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative serves one-hundred and fifty families who attend sixty different local churches.⁸ That is at least sixty pastors (probably more) who have an

⁷ Although Amy Baker helpfully encourages the counseling of children when she writes, “The means of hope and salvation for a child are the same as for an adult—Jesus Christ. In light of this core reality, our fundamental message in counseling doesn’t change when we address children.” Amy Baker, *Caring for the Souls of Children: A Biblical Counselors Manual* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020), 13.

⁸ Oak Grove Homeschool Cooperative, “The Oak Grove Values,” accessed August 31, 2022,

interest in what takes place within the cooperative. This demonstrates how Christian homeschool cooperatives create a natural network of churches within a community. Homeschool cooperative administrators should maximize the benefit of this natural network by creating a list of member families' churches and reaching out to the churches on that list. There are at least three good reasons to do this.

First, it is appropriate for the homeschool cooperative to indicate its desire to support and encourage the ministry of the local church. This sometimes comes as a surprise to pastors who view parachurch organizations as competitors that draw resources away from the church or attempt to teach different doctrine.⁹ When cooperative administrators communicate their desire to enhance the ministry effectiveness of the local church, this immediately builds bridges that can positively impact both ministries.

Second, Christian homeschool cooperatives will want to create pathways for sharing resources. For example, churches often have empty facility space during the week that can be used as cooperative classroom space. Larger cooperatives can pay rent or other fees for this space which can help with church budgets. Pastors can recommend cooperatives to members who are homeschooling, and cooperative administrators and staff can recommend churches to homeschool families looking for a place to worship. Likeminded churches are a good source for hiring potential cooperative teachers and staff. Because Christian homeschool cooperatives are non-profits, some churches can even support them financially.

Third, while Christian homeschool cooperatives do have a specialized focus that can make them a rich resource for biblical counseling of church members, local

<https://www.oakgrovecoop.net>.

⁹ Lambert and Powlison write, "The church is central. The centrality of the church does not mean there is no room for the multitude of activities that we refer to today as para-church work . . . the centrality of the local church congregation is actually an argument for principled para-church ministry—so long as such ministries direct their energies toward the churches thriving." Heath Lambert and David Powlison, "Biblical Counseling, the Church, and the Para-Church," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 354-355.

churches often have well developed biblical counseling ministries that are equipped to serve people in the cooperative. When churches and homeschool cooperatives partner together they can benefit from sharing these ministry strengths. Homeschool cooperatives are wise to develop these partnerships because the local church provides them with many opportunities for expanded educational ministry.

Taking Advantage of These Opportunities

Christian homeschool cooperatives and local churches serving the same communities must take advantage of the mutual opportunities the two organizations present for supporting one another. Although there are many such opportunities, the focus here is on biblical counseling.¹⁰ This section will outline a process for developing a Biblical Counseling Partnership (BCP) between churches and a homeschool cooperative.

As mentioned above, homeschool cooperative administrators should develop a list of churches represented by cooperative families and reach out to those churches. An initial form letter of introduction should be kept on file to send. This friendly letter is addressed to the church pastor (or other appropriate person), introduces the homeschool cooperative to the church, and indicates that a family in the church is participating in the cooperative. The letter assures the pastor that the cooperative's goal is to serve homeschool parents and children in the work of Christian education, to build their faith in Christ, and to support their involvement in the church they attend. A cooperative statement of faith and brief philosophy of education should be attached to the letter along with an invitation for any questions. The letter should indicate that cooperative staff will be praying for the church ministry. This first contact letter could be the beginning of a fruitful relationship between the church and homeschool cooperative.

Thirty to sixty days after sending the letter of introduction, the homeschool

¹⁰ Nevertheless, the developing of a biblical counseling partnership can be a catalyst to sharing many other resources.

cooperative should send a second letter to the churches on their list. This letter will explain the cooperative's commitment to biblical counseling as a means of helping member families with life's common problems. The letter will reaffirm the cooperative's desire to support the ministry of the local church and indicate that the cooperative's consent for counseling agreement allows for its trained counselors to communicate with pastors if needed.¹¹ The primary aim is to communicate the cooperative's desire to serve Christian parents and children in a way that supports the purposes of the local church ministry. Another aim of this second letter to churches is to survey local church pastors regarding their interest in participating in the BCP with the homeschool cooperative. The letter will briefly outline the benefits of this partnership and include contact information for pastors to respond if they want to learn more.

Follow up at this point should be two-fold. First, the homeschool cooperative administrator can host a lunch to meet with local pastors who expressed interest. The goal of this lunch is to build relationships, further explain the cooperative's method of biblical counseling, and outline what a BCP between local churches and the homeschool cooperative would look like. Second, the cooperative administrator can send out a follow up letter to any pastors who expressed interest, whether they attended the informational lunch or not. This letter will include a Biblical Counseling Partnership Agreement (BCPA) that briefly explains the principles and practices of biblical counseling, defines the authority and roles of the cooperative and the church as they work together in biblical counseling, and includes space for first contact information at the church and the cooperative.¹²

Clarity regarding authority of the church and the homeschool cooperative is critical. An independent Christian homeschool cooperative, in agreement with the

¹¹ See Appendix 2 for a sample Homeschool Cooperative Consent to Counsel form.

¹² See Appendix 3 for a sample BCPA.

Scripture, will respect the authority of the church in the lives of church members. The homeschool cooperative is not a church, does not practice church discipline, nor seek to replace the discipleship ministry of the church.¹³ It must also be clearly stated that the cooperative is its own independent Christian ministry and is not under the authority of any church. The cooperative has its own articles of incorporation, by-laws, statement of faith, corporate membership, elected board of directors, and policy manuals. The BCP, therefore, is a voluntary partnership with the goal of working together to glorify God and help parents and children with life's common problems. The church and cooperative may simply decline to work together on any individual case for any reason. This will be clearly stated in the agreement form.

Examples of a Biblical Counseling Partnership

There are many examples of how a Biblical Counseling Partnership can be helpful. Homeschool cooperatives and local churches can work together in ministry to children with serious behavioral issues, children with learning disabilities, parents going through divorce, grieving parents and children, children recovering from abuse or other trauma, and many other situations. Here are three examples based on real situations that have taken place in a homeschool cooperative.¹⁴

Serious Behavioral Issues

Tyler, a third-grade student attending his homeschool cooperative class, suddenly refused to follow his teacher's instructions or even look at her. This was a surprise because he had never displayed serious behavioral issues before. He would shift

¹³ Although, as mentioned above, a Christian homeschool cooperative can support the family ministry of the local church by assisting parents in the Christian education of their children.

¹⁴ I had the privilege of serving as a homeschool cooperative principal from 2016-2021. These stories are *based* upon actual experiences during that time but as the retelling here is largely fictional. The names and some of the details have been changed to protect confidentiality and to effectively illustrate how a Biblical Counseling Partnership could have helped in these situations. No assumptions about real individuals should be made from these stories.

his head from side to side as she tried to make eye contact with him. After many attempts the teacher called for the cooperative principal. The principal and teacher led Tyler into the hallway where he suddenly lashed out violently. He bit the principal several times and kicked the teacher. Tyler was placed in a gentle restraint hold for thirty minutes until his parents could come and get him.

Although Tyler was not allowed to return to school, he remained enrolled while his parents sought help for him from a child psychiatrist. When the psychiatrist prescribed medication, Tyler's parents were reluctant to assign any responsibility to Tyler for the events that led to his suspension from class. Even though he was no longer exhibiting any violent behavior, the cooperative principal would not let Tyler return without any acknowledgement of responsibility for his behavior.

Tyler's parents eventually agreed to meet with a biblical counselor as part of a plan for his potential return to class. Since their church participated in the cooperative's Biblical Counseling Partnership, Tyler's parents opted to meet with their pastor for counseling. After a few weeks of meeting with the pastor, they better understood how to lead Tyler to accept responsibility for his actions even though there were obvious special circumstances present.¹⁵ Tyler did genuinely repent of his actions and ask his teacher and principal for forgiveness. After a semester off he was allowed to return to class and has done very well in the homeschool cooperative for several years.

Because of the Biblical Counseling Partnership between Tyler's church and the homeschool cooperative a strong team was able to serve Tyler and his family. Tyler was appropriately served by the cooperative teacher and principal, he saw a child psychiatrist, and his family was served by their local church pastor. The BCP put the pastor in a

¹⁵ Tyler, like all people, was an embodied soul. He may have had some physiological issues that factored into his behavior, but it was still sinful behavior against his teacher and principal. Even after his condition was improved, repenting and asking forgiveness for this behavior was crucial for his return to the classroom.

position to disciple the entire family and serve the cooperative by creating a situation where Tyler could return to school under appropriate circumstances.

Grieving Family Issues

The Hass family had three children enrolled in the homeschool cooperative's elementary and middle school programs. One afternoon, their mother suddenly died because of an unknown medical condition. Although the mom was the primary teacher, other homeschool parents (who also attended church with the Hass family) agreed to help with the children's education so they could remain in the cooperative for the rest of the academic year. The dad, Fred Hass, was grieving deeply and eventually stopped going to work. This not only led to unnecessary financial pressures on the family, but it also created an awkward environment for the parents who had agreed to help with the Hass children's homeschooling. They were working with his kids each day, but he was at home rather than working.

The pastor of the Hass's church learned about this. The church was small, and he was the only pastor on staff. However, he had agreed to participate in the BCP with the homeschool cooperative. The pastor contacted the principal and asked if someone from the cooperative's biblical counseling team could reach out to Fred. Fred agreed to counseling and after a few weeks he was making progress in dealing with his grief biblically. Fred soon returned to work, he reconciled with the people helping the children, and he deeply appreciated his pastor and the cooperative's help.

A Struggling Grandparent

Seth was a new kindergarten student enrolled at the homeschool cooperative. Although his parents signed him up for class, his primary teacher was his elderly grandfather. This was legal and acceptable according to the homeschool cooperative's policy. However, it soon became apparent that things were not going well. Seth would sleep at his desk for a couple hours of each class day. He came without lunch or snack

most days and was doing poorly academically. When the teacher addressed these things with Seth's grandfather, the grandfather became agitated, even angry. In a subsequent meeting with the principal, however, he did agree to meet with a cooperative biblical counselor.

In the first meeting the counselor learned that although the parents had signed all the paperwork when Seth was enrolled, they lived in another city and refused to be involved in Seth's care. The parents had basically handed Seth over to his grandfather who had little energy or ability to serve as a homeschool parent. This issue was referred to the homeschool cooperative principal who determined that Seth could not participate in the cooperative. However, he also noticed the church the grandfather attended was part of the BCP. When the principal met with Seth's grandfather to explain that Seth could not remain enrolled, he also convinced the grandfather to seek help from his pastor. Although Seth never returned to the cooperative, biblical counseling at the church did prove helpful for the family.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the implications biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative has for the church. The chapter shows (1) the opportunities homeschool cooperatives provide for local churches, (2) the opportunities local churches provide for homeschool cooperatives, (3) suggestions for taking advantage of these opportunities, and (4) examples of biblical counseling in partnership between a church and a homeschool cooperative.

Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. In partnership with local churches, cooperatives can help homeschool parents, students, and educators with life's common problems. With the help of God's Word and Spirit, Christian people are able to "bear one another's burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL COUNSELING BOOKS FOR THE HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE LIBRARY

Biblical Counseling Basics

Adams, Jay E. *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970.

_____. *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*. Zondervan, 2010.

Emler, Michael R. *Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses & Medications*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017.

Lambert, Heath. *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Lane, Timothy S., and Paul David Tripp. *How People Change*. 2nd ed. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008.

MacArthur, John. *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*. 6th ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

Pierre, Jeremy. *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016.

Powlison, David. *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003.

_____. *Speaking Truth in Love*. Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005.

Tripp, Paul David. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002.

Biblical Counseling and Children

Baker, Amy. *Caring for the Souls of Children: A Biblical Counselors Manual*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020.

Hendrickson, Laura. *Finding Your Child's Way on the Autism Spectrum*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.

Rice, Linda J. *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on Reactive Attachment Disorder*. O'Fallon, IL: SeedSown Press, 2012.

Tripp, Tedd. *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995.

Tripp, Tedd, and Margy Tripp. *Instructing a Child's Heart*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008.

Biblical Counseling Booklets

The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors publishes the Biblical Solutions Booklet Set. These cover a range of biblical counseling topics and can be purchased individually or in sets of ten.¹

New Growth Press publishes a similar set of minibooks that cover a range of biblical counseling topics.²

¹ Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, "Biblical Solutions Booklets," accessed September 6, 2022, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/product-category/individual-booklets/>.

² New Growth Press, "Best Christian Minibooks," accessed September 6, 2022, <https://newgrowthpress.com/minibooks/>.

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE CONSENT TO COUNSEL

The following document is a sample Consent to Counsel form that can be used in a Christian homeschool cooperative.¹ This form should be given to counselees before they begin counseling with trained members of the cooperative's biblical counseling team.

Christian Homeschool Cooperative Biblical Counseling Team Consent to Counsel Form

Our Goal

Our goal as biblical counselors is to assist members of the homeschool cooperative (parents, students, teachers, and staff) in responding to and working through challenges in a manner which pleases and honors the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that meeting life's challenges biblically allows one to bring God glory by being conformed to the image of Christ and finding full satisfaction in Him.

Biblical Basis

We believe that God's inspired Word, the Bible, provides guidance and instruction for both faith and life in all its facets. Therefore, our counseling is based on

¹ This form is modified from the Consent to Counsel Form used by the Biblical Counseling Ministry of Cornerstone Church of Knoxville, TN. Cornerstone Church of Knoxville, "Biblical Counseling Ministry: Consent to Counsel Form" (Knoxville, TN: Cornerstone Church of Knoxville, 2021). This is not original content, and it is difficult to trace the origins of this content since similar wording is shared as a free resource and downloadable on many different websites. See for example, Samuel Stephens, "Counseling Center Resources," Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (blog), October 9, 2020, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/counseling-center-resources/>. Also, see a similar form used by Grace Community Church in Maryville, TN. Grace Community Church, "Consent to Counsel," accessed September 6, 2022, <https://gracemaryville.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GCC-CONSENT-TO-COUNSEL.pdf>.

scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. The homeschool cooperative's biblical counselors are not licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals. However, the counselors are trained, or being trained, in knowing how to apply God's Word to life's challenges.

Professional Advice

In the process of biblical counseling there are times when there is a need for significant advice with regards to legal, medical, financial, or other technical areas. In those cases, you will be encouraged to seek independent professional counsel. Biblical counselors will be happy to cooperate with such advisors and help you to consider their counsel in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and we will carefully guard the information you entrust to us. However, there are some situations when it may be necessary for us to share certain information with others:

1. When a counselor meets with his or her biblical counseling trainer, team leader, or appropriate team members (Prov 15:22).
2. When a counselee is a member of a church, and it is necessary or helpful to talk with his or her pastor, elders, or church biblical counselor. (Signing this form affirms the counselee's permission for the homeschool cooperative's biblical counselors or administrator to communicate with the church pastor, elders, or biblical counselor.)
3. When there is a clear indication that someone may be harmed unless others intervene. If a counselor is concerned for a counselee's safety, he or she is authorized and responsible to contact the appropriate support services.²
4. When a person persistently refuses to renounce a particular sin and it becomes

² National Suicide Hotline: (800) 273-8255, TN Statewide Crisis: (855) 274-7471, TN Children's services: (877) 237-0004, Knox County DCS - Child Protective Services: (865) 329-8879 Knox County Sheriff's Office: (865) 215-2243.

necessary to seek assistance of others in the cooperative or in the church where they are members (see 2 above) to encourage repentance and reconciliation (Matt 18:15-17)

Counselee Expectations

Most of the homeschool cooperative's biblical counselors are volunteers who are willingly and happily donating their time to this ministry. By committing to participate in biblical counseling you are making a commitment to keep appointments with counselors and do your best to complete homework and other assignments made by counselors. The goal is to work together to grow in Christ. Please be mindful of your counselor's time and effort.

Resolution of Conflicts

On rare occasions, a conflict may develop between a biblical counselor and counselee. First Corinthians 6:1-8 forbids Christians from bringing lawsuits against one another in secular courts of law. To ensure that such conflicts are resolved in a biblically faithful manner, we require all our counsees to agree that any dispute with a counselor or with the homeschool cooperative will be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration conducted in accordance with *Rules of Procedure* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation (a copy is available on request).³

Contact for More Information

Having clarified the principles and policies of the homeschool cooperative's biblical counseling team we welcome the opportunity to minister to you in the name of Christ and to be used by him as he helps you to grow.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please speak with your biblical counselor or contact the cooperative administrator.

³ Institute for Christian Conciliation, "ICC Rules of Procedure for Christian Reconciliation," accessed September 6, 2022, <https://www.aorhope.org/icc-rules>.

Counselor Signature(s)

If these guidelines are acceptable to you, please sign below.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX 3
SAMPLE BIBLICAL COUNSELING PARTNERSHIP
AGREEMENT

The following is a sample Biblical Counseling Partnership Agreement form for use by a Christian Homeschool Cooperative and a local partner church.

Biblical Counseling Partnership Agreement

The goal of the Biblical Counseling Partnership between Christian Homeschool Cooperative and First Local Church is to voluntarily work together to glorify God and help parents and children with life’s common problems through biblical counseling.

Definitions

Biblical Counseling. Biblical counseling is “a subset of Christian discipleship and deals with the more problematic and difficult aspects of life to handle . . .”¹ Counseling can take place in a formal setting or less formally as described by the Biblical Counseling Coalition:

Biblical counseling occurs whenever and wherever God’s people engage in conversations that are anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ and the gospel, grounded in sound theology, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and prayer, directed toward sanctification, rooted in the life of the church, founded in love, attentive in heart issues, comprehensive in understanding, thorough in care, practical and relevant, and oriented toward outreach.²

¹ Deepak Reju and Mark Dever, “The Health of the Church in Biblical Counseling,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God’s Changeless Truth*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2021), 251.

² The Biblical Counseling Coalition, “The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition,” accessed September 6, 2022, <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Confessional-Statement-of-the-BCC.pdf>.

Sufficiency of Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture means the Bible provides the answers we need for Christian living. Wayne Grudem's writes,

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him privately.³

Affirmation

This Biblical Counseling Partnership Agreement assumes that Christian Homeschool Cooperative and First Local Church are in general agreement with the principles and practice of biblical counseling as outlined in the Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition.⁴

Biblical Counseling Partners

First Local Church is a local church body unaffiliated with Christian Homeschool Cooperative. First Local Church is led by a board of elders and served by a pastoral staff. The church has its own Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Statement of Faith, membership, elected board of directors, and ministry policies.

As an independent ministry, Christian Homeschool Cooperative recognizes and respects the biblical authority of the church in the lives of its members. The cooperative is not a church, does not practice church discipline, nor seek to replace the discipleship ministry of the church. Christian Homeschool Cooperative is its own independent Christian ministry and is not under the authority of any church. The cooperative has its own Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Statement of Faith, corporate membership, elected board of directors, and policy manuals.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 127.

⁴ The Biblical Counseling Coalition, "The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition."

This Biblical Counseling Partnership, therefore, is a voluntary partnership with the goal of the church and homeschool cooperative working together to glorify God and help parents and children with life's common problems. The church and cooperative may simply decline to work together on any individual case for any reason.

Partner Contact

Per the Christian Homeschool Cooperative's Consent to Counsel, counselees who meet with the cooperative's biblical counseling team members grant their permission for the cooperative's biblical counselor to contact First Local Church's pastor, elders, or biblical counselors when it is deemed helpful for the counselee.

First Local Church has provided the following name, phone number, and email as the primary contact regarding the biblical counseling of members:

Name and title:

Phone Number:

Email:

The leadership of First Local Church is encouraged to reach out the Christian Homeschool Cooperative with requests for any biblical counseling assistance, especially if it involves a family or employee of the cooperative. Christian Homeschool Cooperative has provided the following name, phone number, and email as the primary contact regarding biblical counseling in the cooperative:

Name and title:

Phone Number:

Email:

Signatures

The undersigned representatives of Christian Homeschool Cooperative and First Local Church affirm their commitment to this Biblical Counseling Partnership.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PRINTED NAME _____ TITLE _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PRINTED NAME _____ TITLE _____

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ABSTRACT

BIBLICAL COUNSELING IN HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVES: BRINGING SCRIPTURAL HELP TO HOMESCHOOL EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

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Christian homeschool cooperatives provide a rich environment for biblical counseling. These cooperatives are rooted in biblical truth and therefore have a ready foundation for addressing problems faced by teachers, parents, and students. Homeschool cooperatives provide a context for Christian families to counsel one another. They also have the needed content, that is the Bible, including the gospel message. Born-again Christians in a homeschool cooperative are competent to counsel one another, and they enjoy the benefit of Christian community.

Chapter 1 presents literature that (1) introduces biblical counseling, (2) Christian education, and (3) homeschool education. The literature shows there is a close relationship between the foundational principles of biblical counseling and homeschool education. However, there is little or no intentional writing on how to do biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative.

Chapter 2 uses four Scripture passages to demonstrate that Christians are helped by God and equipped by him to help each other with life's common problems. Exegesis of the passages demonstrates that (1) the Lordship of Christ should impact the way Christians live, (2) Scripture provides the necessary and authoritative instruction for dealing with life's problems, (3) the Holy Spirit empowers believers to help each other, and (4) the heart is central in life transformation.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that a homeschool cooperative is an effective context for biblical counseling. The chapter points to (1) the reality that all education is religious in nature, (2) that Christian homeschool cooperatives are founded on biblical principles, (3) that these cooperatives can provide support for local church ministry, and (4) minister to the whole family.

Chapter 4 explores ways biblical counseling can be applied in the homeschool cooperative context. The chapter points to (1) the importance of going to the Bible, the right source for counseling *content*, (2) *competence* for counseling in a homeschool cooperative with suggestions for programs of informal and formal counseling, and (3) the resulting transformed *community* within the homeschool cooperative.

Chapter 5 demonstrates the implications biblical counseling in a homeschool cooperative has for the church. The chapter shows (1) the opportunities homeschool cooperatives provide for local churches, (2) the opportunities local churches provide for homeschool cooperatives, (3) suggestions for taking advantage of these opportunities, and (4) examples of biblical counseling in partnership between a church and a homeschool cooperative.

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