BUILDING A CULTURE OF SOUL CARE THROUGH THE

PERSONAL MINISTRY OF GOD'S WORD AT CALVARY

BAPTIST CHURCH IN BREWERTON, NEW YORK

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by

Bruce Edward Havens

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APPROVAL SHEET

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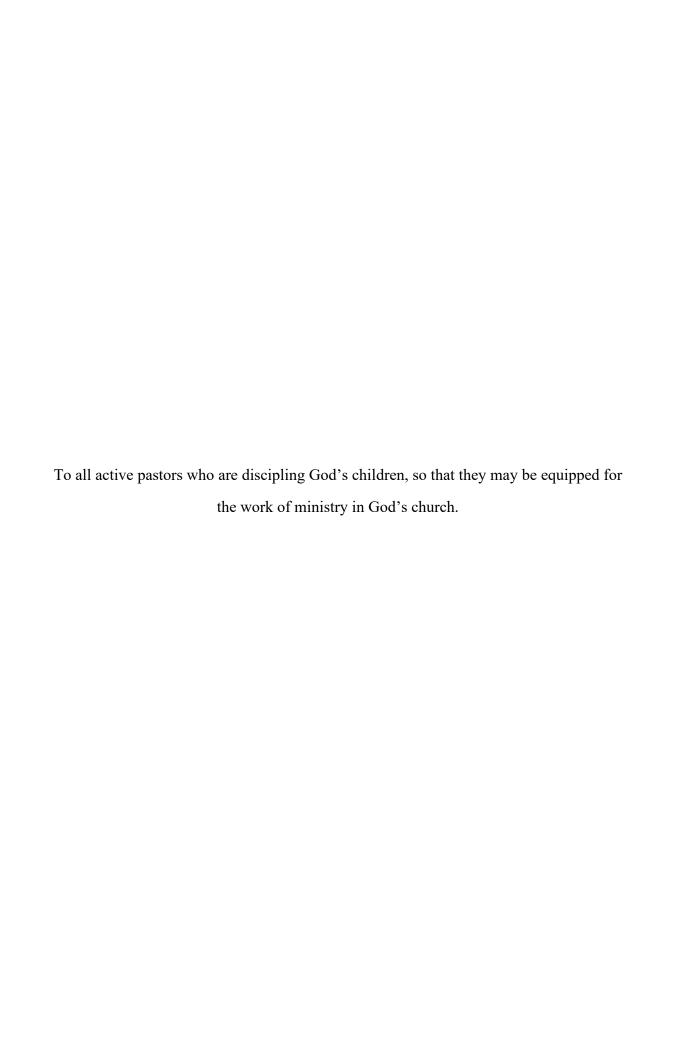

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To all active pastors who are discipling God's children, so that they may be equipped for the work of ministry in God's church.

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PREFACE

First and foremost, I thank God for my salvation and placing me into His body, the church. His love, grace, and kindness drop me to my knees when I consider the wonders of His glorious salvation. Thank you, Lord, for being a consistent source of hope, whether in the past as I considered the hope of my calling, the future when I will realize the wealth of my inheritance, or the present as I live in your incomparable power. There truly is no one like you, Father in heaven.

Through God's providence, He has given me an encouraging wife, Kim, and wonderful children, Isaac, Zachary, and Hannah, who supported me throughout the process. Thank you, Kim, for pushing me when I needed pushed, for telling me to rest when I needed rest, and for your smile and laugh that brighten every day. To our children, I am thankful that you love God with all of your heart, soul, and strength. Each of you are a gift from God. Each of you, in your unique diversity, have caused me to think more clearly about the nature and application of caring for souls.

I am thankful for all the pastors God has placed in my life over the years, but I am especially thankful for Don Workman, who invested in me every Friday morning for several years. I was a child of God with head knowledge and no practical understanding of how to apply God's Word. It was during this time that God changed my direction in life. Today, I want to help others know God more intimately because God used you in helping me know Him more intimately through His Spirit and Word.

I also would like to thank the members of Calvary Baptist Church. God used the body of Christ to direct the timing of this project. I am glad for it personally and corporately that God's timing is always perfect. One component of this timing was hiring Pastor Andy, who has sharpened my thinking about God and the church. Church family,

thank you for your willingness to follow God's vision for the church. Thank you for being active church members who understand and act on the responsibilities God has given you. It is a blessing to serve you and with you for God's glory and our sanctified good. I continue to praise God for our journey together.

Finally, I am thankful for Dr. Matthew Haste, my project supervisor, and Teresa Smith, who helped me grow as a writer. There is still much work to do, but your comments and questions improved the quality and clarity of my writing. The churches who participated in this project and the ones still to come thank you.

<div align="right">Bruce Havens</div>

Brewerton, New York

May 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

New initiatives in the church can cause both excitement and resistance. This is especially true when beginning a soul care ministry. People who are concerned about pain, suffering, and sin in this world desire to help those in need while others hear the term *soul care* and wonder about tolerance, equality, and freedom. The tension between these two groups, along with the knowledge of how to implement a soul care ministry, often hinders churches in fulfilling God's call to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20). This project was built on the foundational conviction that soul care and discipleship are linked in the personal ministry of the Word.

Context

Calvary Baptist Church (CBC) in Brewerton, New York, has persevered in the difficult spiritual climate of the northeastern United States since 1953. The Northeast, once known for its pursuit of the fundamentals of the faith,[1] has become difficult soil in which to labor. CBC was a seemingly healthy church until 2005, when the church split over the practical methods of carrying out the Great Commission. What started as a pursuit to help others hear the gospel turned inwardly to peoples' preferences. Since 2005, CBC has stabilized and healed through the public ministry of the Word. In 2010, CBC's leadership team re-focused the church's purpose. The people of the church no longer just want to persevere in existing, so they set the goal of becoming a caring, believing community, and

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[1] The Niagara Bible Conference, held in the late 1800s, was attended by scholars William Blackstone, Charles Erdman, Adoniram Judson Gordon, C. I. Scofield, James Hudson Taylor, and several others who produced a fourteen-point statement of faith known as the Niagara Creed. David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual, 1986).

a new vision was cast. The people of CBC strive to give every man, woman, and child in their geographical responsibility multiple opportunities to see and hear the gospel so that they might be reconciled to God. To care for God's people through the private ministry of the Word, CBC began its Restoration Counseling Ministry in 2018.

CBC's most prominent strength is its value of God's Word. God's Word is sufficient in helping people know God, know His truths, and in directing one's life personally, in family relationships, and corporately in the church. CBC's worship services demonstrate this belief as God's Word is central in the songs, prayers, and sermons. The value of God's Word is also seen in CBC's sermon-based small groups that meet on a weekly basis. The groups not only meet to understand God's Word intellectually, but to brainstorm how each individual can apply God's Word in various areas of life.

Another strength at CBC is its members' desire to care for the physical needs of people within the church community and for those in the geographical community. The deacons' fund is the primary source to care for the people who attend CBC when physical needs arise. Even though the deacons aggressively meet people's needs, this account never empties. Likewise, anytime an opportunity is presented to help someone in the geographical community, people supply the physical need.

The most significant area of growth over the past five years for CBC is its care for its missionary partners. CBC not only desires to send financial resources, but to know, pray, and serve alongside each missionary. In the last three years, CBC has sent two different short-term teams to help with physical and spiritual needs of its missionary partners and the people they serve. CBC believes that practicing the personal ministry of God's Word should be implemented locally and globally.

While CBC has grown in its care for people, a common occurrence is its lack of clarity and action in the private ministry of God's Word. Church members have no problem helping with one another's physical needs, but only lightly address one another's spiritual needs. Too frequently, church members adopt the belief of the current culture that a

person should not judge another. In reality, believers are to help brothers or sisters who have fallen into sin. This is the loving thing to do.

CBC members are aware of their responsibility to care, but an area for improvement is overcoming the fear of not knowing what to say to the person in need. The biblical knowledge members have is general and not specific, and this correlates with their belief in the sufficiency of God's Word. They believe it is sufficient generally because that is what they are supposed to believe, but practically, for everyday life, they are unsure if God's Word will be effective in ministering the word privately. Therefore, rather than obeying their God-given responsibility, they send the person in need to one of the pastors or counseling team members who have more training.

CBC can improve both in the areas of equipping the saints for the work of ministry and in the saints doing the work of ministry. A couple of current problems with training are attendance and implementation. A low percentage of people value training opportunities enough to make room for it in their busy schedules. People understand they should be there and feel guilty about not attending, but the priority is low, especially if it is not convenient. Time becomes an even bigger factor in implementing what was learned. In the past, people would attend a weekly program, but since the personal ministry of God's Word is organic, people seldom find the time to implement the call to make disciples. They are too busy with their own lives, let alone to be involved in someone else's life.

Even more concerning than failing to counsel one another in the church is the failure to counsel one's family. Several reasons for this exist at CBC. First, Christian marriages are not as biblical as they ought to be. Couples are deceived regarding the roles of husbands and wives. Second, couples are deceived in understanding what they need to provide for their children. Instead of teaching them about God, there is more concern in helping with athletic endeavors, hobbies, and entertainment. Children spend hours in front of electronic devices instead of learning how to love God and love others. Since many of

these extracurricular activities are now scheduled on Sundays, parents attempt to fit God in around their busy schedules rather than teaching their children that God is the first priority.

The problem of providing sufficient soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word is not unique to CBC. CBC partners with several churches of like faith in the Syracuse area who are under two hundred people in attendance. The ability to mobilize people to meet the call to make disciples is critical for smaller churches if they are going to be faithful compared to larger churches who may hire staff to focus on it. Often, smaller churches and their pastors outsource or neglect counseling needs rather than caring for the people God has entrusted to them.

Rationale

The weight of God's call to make disciples needs to change at CBC. It is no longer sufficient to understand disciple making generally, hoping it will be accomplished through osmosis. If the church is going to overcome the problem of haphazard discipleship, it must realize the difference between knowing God's Word and doing God's Word (Jas 1:22) individually and corporately. All of the church must follow God's plan for discipleship so that people will consistently mature in Christ (Eph 4:15).

Since God's Word is a critical component in sanctifying people in truth, everyone in the church must understand the necessity of God's Word to be communicated both publicly and privately. It is good that the church has invested a lot of effort into the public ministry of the Word over the last ten years, but this is not enough. The personal ministry of God's Word needs to expand. Sermon-based small groups are a good start, but there is more to be accomplished in these meetings. First, it is the responsibility of the whole body to provide informal soul care through preventative and directive care (discipleship). For too long, churches have mistakenly believed this is the pastors' job. Jesus, however, gave spiritual leaders to the church so that the saints may be equipped for the work of ministry (Eph 4:11-12). Second, it is the responsibility of a smaller group of trained individuals to provide formal biblical soul care through intervention and

restorative care. Not everyone is called to be a formal biblical counselor, but again, the pastor should equip church members to assist in this personal ministry of the Word.

While legalism and head knowledge are the historical context of making disciples at CBC, biblical soul care will be the new strategy for making disciples through "one another" ministry. The desire at CBC is not to create another program, but to build a culture of people investing in the lives of others. Discipleship at CBC has occurred in classroom or lecture oriented to groups rather than individually, where love in the fullness of grace and truth can be demonstrated with accountability to another.

Effective discipleship in the church first starts with soul care functioning in the family properly. Husbands are to lead and care for their wives using God's Word (Eph 5:26). Strong families start with strong marriages. Since the fall, God has warned mankind about the potential relational issues between a husband and a wife. The husband will struggle with shirking his responsibility and the wife will desire to control the husband. Therefore, marriages were a point of emphasis in the ministry project.

The second aspect of effective discipleship in the family is to help parents care for their children's souls. In discussing the problems of church members' children leaving the faith, the problem was rarely a lack of biblical knowledge. In fact, the departed generation knows the Bible very well. True soul care includes the whole person. Moses, in Deuteronomy, instructs parents to teach their children to love God with all their being (6:4-9). Discipleship is not just lectures and information to the mind, but it includes a demonstration of how to apply these truths in life. Parents are to encourage children to trust God during all seasons of their lives. Therefore, an effective discipleship program teaches parents to focus on the gospel (conversion and sanctification) in their child's life, so they might love and glorify God.

Since family relationships are not the only type of broken family, a third emphasis in this project was soul care in the church family. Over twenty different "one-

another" commands in the New Testament are to be practiced in the church family.[2] Widows and orphans are just a couple of instances where the church is instructed to think outside the personal family and be responsible for the larger church family. The goal at CBC is for every person to invest in another non-family member's life (mentor) while having another non-family person investing in his/her life (mentee). If CBC were to accomplish this, it would be a church known by its love (John 13:35).

Since many small churches struggle with mobilizing members to care for the souls of people like CBC, CBC invited smaller churches in the Syracuse area to participate in the project training. CBC does not want to be known as the place for biblical counseling in the Syracuse area, but its desire is to strengthen established churches, so they can care for their own members rather than outsourcing. Also, since the amount of people in need of counseling is never-ending, CBC commits to the continued advancement of church counselor training.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to build a culture of soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word at Calvary Baptist Church in Brewerton, New York, and to train participants of neighboring local churches to do likewise.

Goals

The following three goals were established to determine the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was designed to measure members' involvement in informal soul care. Goals 2 and 3 intended to equip class participants with how informal soul care can be accomplished through the personal ministry of God's Word.

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[2] There are fifty-nine "one another" commands in the New Testament. Scholars vary on how many "one another "commands exist, but all agree there are a minimum of twenty different categories. Quantity differences occur in how people organize similar concepts or words into one category. See Stuart Scott and S. Andrew Jin, *31 Ways to Be a "One Another" Christian: Loving Others with the Love of Jesus* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2019).

1. The first goal was to understand the knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care among the members of Calvary Baptist Church.

2. The second goal was to develop a six-session core curriculum on informal soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word.

3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care among the class participants.

Definitive research methodology measured when these three goals had been accomplished. The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal are detailed in the following section.

Research Methodology

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to understand the knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care among the members of Calvary Baptist Church, in Brewerton, New York. This goal was measured by administering a pre-course biblical informal soul care assessment of voluntary members in October of 2022, which gauged each members' knowledge, confidence, and practices in caring for one another at CBC.[3] This goal was considered successfully met when twenty-five church members completed the assessment, and the results were compiled electronically, yielding a fuller analysis of informal soul care aptitude at CBC Brewerton.

The second goal was to develop a six-session core curriculum on informal soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word. This goal was measured by the expert panel consisting of one CBC Brewerton pastor and two members in the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors who regularly conduct ACBC track one training. This panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the course material to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and applicable to ministry practice.[4] This goal was considered

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

[4] See appendix 2.

successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Should the initial feedback yield less than 90 percent, the curriculum would be revised in accordance with the panel's evaluation until such time that the criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care among the class participants. Each class participant received six weeks of informal soul care class training and six weeks of coaching when they applied the lessons with another person in the church. This goal was measured by two methods. First, section 2 of the pre- and post-survey gauged the change in soul care knowledge and confidence among the class participants.[5] This part of the goal was considered met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. Second, the practice of soul care was measured by section 3 of the pre- and post-survey, which analyzed the current trends of class participants.[6] The number of class participants was utilized as the base number to which the increase was compared.[7] This goal was considered successfully met when the class participants practicing biblical informal soul care increased by a minimum of 25 percent. A class participant was considered as a practicing class participant when the following qualifications were met: (1) the class participant implemented the curriculum definition of what an "one-another" meeting is, and (2) the class participant had a minimum of three "one-another" meetings during a six-week observation period.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The purpose of this project was to build a culture of soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word in the church. The phrases *biblical counseling* and s*oul*

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[5] See appendix 3.

[6] See appendix 3.

[7] Only participants who completed the pre-course survey and attended a minimum of five sessions were considered class participants.

care are sometimes synonymous in meaning, while other times one phrase may be designated as formal care and the other as informal care. Likewise, the phrase *personal ministry of God's Word* is used to describe both formal care and informal care. Lastly, the Bible uses the word *soul* to describe humanity. Sometimes the Bible uses the word *soul* wholistically while other instances refers to the various functions of the inner being.[8] The following definitions are key terms used in the ministry project:

> *Biblical counseling.* Paul Tautges defines *biblical counseling* more as informal care:

> Biblical counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby the more mature believer (counselor) comes alongside the less mature believer (counselee) for three main purposes: first, to help that person to consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning that person, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that person to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she too may become a spiritually reproductive disciple-maker.[9]

> *Soul care.* Eugene Peterson captures the idea of informal care by defining two particular aspects of knowing and doing in caring for one another:

> The word *cura* combines our words cure and care. Cure is nurturing a person towards health; care is being a compassionate companion towards a person in need. Cure requires that we know what we are doing. Care requires that we be involved in what we are doing. Applied knowledge is necessary, but it is not enough. *Cura* combines both these dimensions, the curing and the caring.[10]

> *Personal ministry of God's Word.* The *personal ministry of God's Word* applies to both formal and informal soul care. The difference between formal and informal soul care is the expectation of care. Formal soul care is predominantly one way. The counselor seeks to correct or restore the counselee with an issue in life. Informal soul care is a mutual discovery of what the Scriptures teach. The relationship is that of friends who share

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[8] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 194-95.

[9] Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2015), 20.

[10] Eugene H. Peterson, "Teach Us to Care, and Not to Care," in *Subversive Spirituality*, ed. Jim Lyster, John Sharon, and Peter Santucci (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 155.

responsibility for one another by directing or warning each other from potential harm or sin. The focus of this project is informal soul care in the body of Christ.

Soul. Heath Lambert describes the tension between unity and distinction in defining humanity:

> The Bible makes a distinction between these two aspects [body and soul] of humanity, but it never makes an ultimate division. In biblical terms, there is no such thing as a person who is not both a body and a soul together in one human being. This biblical reality is called "dichotomy," which refers to the fact that human beings consist of two aspects.[11]

Since the body and soul are interconnected as one, a proper care for people incorporates both. The focus of this project is to discern the desires of the heart without neglecting the body.

One limitation applied to this project. The accuracy of the pre- and post-surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the participants to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of the process of training class participants. To mitigate this limitation, respondents were promised that their answers would remain nameless.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the training component was designed to strengthen skills in the personal ministry of God's Word at CBC informally, rather than to produce formal biblical counselors. While CBC's goal is to build a culture of soul care in its membership at-large, this project only focused on class participants who voluntarily signed up. Informal biblical soul care was the most appropriate setting in which to pursue further training, as opposed to the development of a formal counseling ministry. Second, the course curriculum was designed to address the basics of biblical counseling, and as such excluded certain issues that, though germane to biblical counseling at-large, were outside the scope of this project. For example, topics such as data gathering, assigning homework in counseling, and inducement in counseling (to name a few) were reframed and set in context for their appropriate understanding and utilization in community-based personal ministry of the Word.

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[11] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 192.

Conclusion

God calls the people of the church to make disciples. The church's effectiveness of making disciples through structured discipleship programs has decreased. Therefore, a majority of people only hear the public ministry of God's Word. As necessary as the public ministry of God's Word is, the private ministry of God's Word has been neglected in personally caring for people. This project trained and motivated the people of the church to actively care for the souls of people through God's sufficient Word.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS
FOR PERSONAL SOUL CARE

God calls every believer to care for the needs of others, and this care involves bringing the Word of God to bear on issues of the heart. While Scripture designates specific offices of leadership and ministry for the church, it also contains clear expectations that every Christian can minister interpersonally. An exegesis of Matthew 28:16–20 will show that God calls all Christians to make disciples through the ministry of teaching. An exegesis of Psalm 19:7-11 will show the power of Scripture to transform lives. And finally, Ephesians 4:20-24 will show that the pathway of transformation is through the inner being.

Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus calls all disciples to make more and better disciples throughout the ages. Disciples should obey this command because of Jesus's all-inclusive authority as king. God did not promise that He would only be present with the eleven disciples to the end of the age, but He would be with all disciples who obey the command to make more and better disciples. Therefore, the ability to care for the souls of people rests not just with church leaders, but every member in the church. Caring for the souls of people is a church-wide responsibility whereby God promises His presence to support those who carry out His directive.

The Gospel of Matthew begins the transition from the Old Testament economy to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God chose Israel to be His people who would be an example and be responsible for pointing other nations to God. Benjamin Hubbard identifies that throughout the Old Testament is a pattern in God's commissioning narratives

that aligns with Matthew's Great Commission structure.[1] The Great Commission in Matthew is not a new strategy for God, but a continued call for His people to proclaim the good news of a Redeemer, the Messiah, who would come from Israel to rule all people.

The first concern in identifying the recipients of Jesus's command to make more and better disciples is found in verse 19. In looking for the antecedent, verse 16 seemingly identifies the group as the eleven disciples. The twelve disciples have become the eleven disciples after the death of Judas Iscariot (Matt 27:3-5). Mathias had not yet been added to the group (Acts 1:26) to make it the twelve disciples again. The eleven disciples certainly received the command to make more and better disciples, but was a larger group present? An argument from Matthew, Luke, and 1 Corinthians can be made that more disciples were present than just the eleven. Scripture records four different instructions to disciples other than the eleven about a post-resurrection meeting in Galilee on a designated mountain (Matt 28:7, 10; Luke 24:9, 33). John Nolland argues that it is the women who commonly accompanied the disciples:

> The eleven disciples are clearly the subject of the first verb in v. 16 ("went"), and it is natural to think of them as the continuing subjects in v. 17. But the question needs to be raised whether, especially in the light of v. 7, we need to think of them as the exclusive subjects in v. 17. If I have rightly construed v. 7 above (see discussion there), the women are also to see Jesus in Galilee; and if they are not to be regarded as present in v. 17, then Matthew has left a loose end.[2]

There is no need, however, to limit the "other disciples" to just women. In Paul's chronological summary in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7, he describes five hundred "brothers and sisters" having seen the resurrected Jesus. Leon Morris concludes, "The appearance to *more than five hundred of the brothers* is mentioned here only (unless, as is probable, it is that referred to in Matt. 28:16ff.). It is obviously important, for on no other occasion

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[1] Benjamin Hubbard analyses twenty-seven Old Testament passages and concludes the pattern to be introduction, confrontation, reaction, confirmation, commission, and reassurance. He then identifies all these aspects in Matt 28:16-20. Benjamin Hubbard, "The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1973).

[2] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 1262.

could such a large number of people testify to the fact of the resurrection."[3] It is uncertain why Matthew left off specific details of the gathering in Galilee, but D. A. Carson considers,

> Especially if Matthew was an eyewitness, it is easy to believe that he describes a scene vivid in his own memory without taking all the precautions that would remove questions from the minds of readers who were not there. As a result, both here and in v. 10 Matthew in an incidental fashion alludes to the larger crowd without providing useful specifics.[4]

What seemed straightforward in searching for the antecedent to Jesus's command to make more and better disciples has led to the possibility of more disciples being present.

A second concern in determining the recipients of Jesus's command to make more and better disciples is understanding who worshipped and who doubted in Matthew 28:17. Grant Osborne summarizes three different views along with their proponents:

> There are three ways to take the "but some" (οἱ δέ) who doubt: "some" of the disciples doubt (Hill, Hubbard, Osborne, Gundry, Gnilka, Blomberg, Nolland, France); "all of them" doubt (Bonnard, Grundmann, Bruner, Hagnar, Pregeant); or "some others" (than the disciples) doubt (Allen, McNeile, Carson, Morris). Any of the three can fit "but some" (οἱ δέ), so the question is which fits the context best.[5]

Context is important along with the passages previously noted in Matthew, Luke, and 1 Corinthians, but one contextual issue remains: how should the words translated as worship and doubted be understood? Carson writes, "If *proskyneō* here means not merely 'kneel' or 'make obeisance to' but 'worship' (see on v. 9), then the 'eleven disciples' and the 'some' probably constitute two groups; for doubt about who Jesus is or about the reality of his resurrection does not seem appropriate for true worship."[6] Carson interprets the word "doubt" as having a strong contrast to the meaning of "worshipped." What if, however,

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[3] Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 199, emphasis original.

[4] D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 593.

[5] Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1155.

[6] Carson, *Matthew*, 593.

Matthew's use of διστάζω means to "hesitate" rather than "doubt?"[7] It would then mimic the reaction of many of the eleven disciples when they saw the physically resurrected Jesus for the first time (Luke 24:16, 37, 41). Leon Morris concludes, "It is difficult to think that the hesitation was coming from the eleven, considering all that had happened to them during the recent past."[8] Osborne agrees with Morris regarding the word translated as doubt, but has a different conclusion:

> διστάζω can mean to "hesitate" as well as "doubt" but does not really connote unbelief. When Peter failed to walk on the water and exhibited only a "little faith" in 14:31, Jesus asked him, "Why did you doubt?" It was not that he doubted Jesus' power but that he hesitated or was uncertain. In fact, this summarizes the "little faith" motif in Matthew.[9]

Osborne notes that it is impossible to know for sure, but his understanding of the context leads him to believe the eleven disciples are the only ones worshipping with some of those eleven hesitating.

Therefore, regarding the call, some interpret the recipients as the eleven disciples only while others believe a larger group was present. Both, however, agree that the application of the call goes beyond the eleven disciples to all disciples.[10] Daniel Akin specifically applies the call to three groups:

> The apostles were the original pioneers of the Great Commission. They were the first to make disciples of the nations, and they established the first churches across the known world. But, the Great Commission is Christ's commission to his church today as well. Christ's promise to be with his church, even to the end of the age, clearly and powerfully implies that this command is still in effect. This mission

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[7] Walter Bauer and William F. Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 252. Both are acceptable translations of the word διστάζω.

[8] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 745.

[9] Osborne, *Matthew*, 1155.

[10] The prevailing interpretation today is that the call exceeds the original eleven disciples to all disciples, but this has not always been the case. See David F. Wright, "The Great Commission and the Ministry of the Word: Reflections Historical and Contemporary on Relations and Priorities," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 25, no. 2 (September 2007): 153; Daniel Akin, "Question 7: How Has the Great Commission Been Interpreted in History?," in *40 Questions about the Great Commission*, by Daniel L. Akin, Benjamin L. Merkle, and George G. Robinson, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids Kregel, 2020), 63-69.

incorporates every disciple of Christ and requires each to contribute their gifts and resources. This is our assignment while we are on this earth. This will be the church's assignment until Christ returns.[11]

All disciples are called to make disciples. This truth is supported further by examining Jesus's authority.

The Gospel of Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and establishes His authority over all things (Matt 7:29; 9:6; 10:1; 11:27) and all people as the long-awaited King. The dispute over the resurrection of Jesus concludes Matthew's gospel. The religious authorities, chief priests, and elders attempt to hide the reality of Jesus's resurrection (Matt 28:11-15) while Jesus physically presents Himself to His disciples verifying His resurrection and authority. This Kingship is definitively declared through His life, death, and resurrection as told by Matthew. Osborne connects Jesus's call with His authority:

> The Risen Lord's universal authority makes possible the universal mission. This looks back to and universalizes the commissioning service of ch. 10. There Jesus told his followers what the mission constitutes and centered on the Jewish mission. Now he expands it and introduces a brand-new element in salvation history, the universal mission.[12]

Nolland believes all questions regarding Jesus's death, resurrection, and authority over all have been dismantled: "Mt. 28:18 is most likely to represent a reaffirmation of authority after the rejection of Jesus by the Jerusalem authorities which led to his death. Through resurrection God has vindicated Jesus who is now able to freshly affirm his authority."[13] Since Jesus's authority has been affirmed by the resurrection, Andreas Köstenberger highlights the nature of Jesus's authority by examining the word *all*:

> What kind of authority has the Father given to Jesus? All we are told is that Jesus' authority is comprehensive (*pasa*). In fact, "all" dominates the entire "Great Commission" passage: Jesus has "all authority" (v. 18); his followers are to go and

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[11] Daniel Akin, "Question 2: To Whom Was the Great Commission Given?," in Akin, Merkle, and Robinson, *40 Questions about the Great Commission*, 27.

[12] Osborne, *Matthew*, 1157.

[13] Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1265.

make disciples of "all nations" (v. 19); and Jesus will be with them "always" (lit. "all the days"; v. 20).[14]

The implications of recognizing that the Great Commission is intended for all disciples and not just the eleven are significant. Jesus's command to make more and better disciples was never intended for a select group of disciples. His authority of command included all His disciples and with it came a promise: Jesus would be spiritually present with His disciples who are obedient until the end of the age in their various weaknesses.

Since Jesus's command is directed to all disciples, the next step is to understand the general content of the command to make disciples. Simply stated, His command is to make more (evangelism) and better (discipleship) disciples. Becoming a disciple of Jesus is not the final act in a person's life, but it is a new beginning both personally and corporately. By the authority of Jesus, the command to make disciples is a lifetime directive to share the gospel with people who have not placed their trust in Him. This action is not passive, but active in going to people. Too often, people lean to one extreme or the other when considering the command to go. Craig Blomberg explains that the participle "to go" is both evangelizing where you are and a missionary endeavor.[15] It is a mistake to limit the command to one or the other. The result of this action is that all nations will be reached with God's redeeming offer. For those whom God redeems, there is to be an initial act of baptizing and then a continued effort of teaching the person how to live a life of obedience toward God. It is not in the scope of this project to examine the details of the command "make disciples" or the accompanying participle actions of going, baptizing, and teaching.[16] All disciples are to evangelize, and all disciples are to disciple.

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[14] Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies of Biblical Literature 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 103.

[15] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

[16] On the issue of interpreting the command to make disciples with its corresponding participles, see especially Hans Kvalbein, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples . . . The Concept of Discipleship in the New Testament," *Themelios* 13, no. 2 (January 1988): 48-53; Grant Osborne, *Matthew,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1157; Stanley Porter, *Linguistic*

The last participle, "teaching," however, is the emphasis of this project. Blomberg understands that "teaching them to observe all that I commanded" as the heart of disciple making,[17] but Paul Tautges contends, that personal soul care should be viewed as synonymous with discipleship: "Therefore, we must consciously use the terms *counseling* and *discipleship* interchangeably, or even together (*discipleship counseling*), in order to communicate that counseling is not merely specialized ministry of a few professionals, but rather an intensely focused, personal; aspect of the discipleship process for all believers."[18] Robert Jones agrees: "Teach 'them to observe everything' he had commanded. Doing so requires giving biblical counsel."[19] The call to teach, therefore, must require the counseling aspect. For discipleship to be effective in the church, both the public and private ministry (Acts 20:20) of God's Word is required. Teaching and observing require a personal interaction. This becomes clear when defining disciple.

To make a disciple, a definition of *disciple* is first required. What appears to be a simple endeavor often leads to confusion because *disciple* is used in various ways in the New Testament. Examples of simple definitions are Christian (Acts 11:26), learner (John 6:66), and follower (Luke 9:23). The definition of *disciple* certainly involves these various elements but, as Michael Wilkins explains, "discipleship appears simple to understand at first glance, yet the more we examine what Jesus was doing with his disciples, the more complex the issue becomes."[20] Wilkins proceeds to demonstrate several difficulties when

Analysis of the Greek New Testament: Studies in Tools, Methods, and Practice (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 237-53; David Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 689n3.

[17] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 432.

[18] Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2015), 23.

[19] Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 26.

[20] Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 24.

defining disciple in a singular aspect. The five singular definitions/models he discusses are disciple as a learner, disciple as a committed believer, disciple as a spiritual leader, disciple as a convert, and a disciple as a convert in the process of discipleship.[21] Haphazard discipleship occurs when churches do not take the time to understand the full meaning of the definition for *disciple*. Churches must know what God is calling them to make. Anything less is not adequately fulfilling the command to make disciples.

While a definition is more complex than a single term, it is possible to define. Walter Bauer and William Arndt define disciple as "*to be a pupil,* with implication of being an adherent of the teacher."[22] It is evident in this definition that there is a close relationship between teacher and disciple. How else can the teacher discern if someone is observing all of Christ's commands? To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, it is much more than a confession although it certainly includes one (Rom 10:9). A disciple of Jesus Christ begins with God's saving work (Eph 2:8-9) making him a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). The disciple's transformation continues as he denies himself, submits his life to Christ, and follows Christ daily (Matt 16:24-25). Settling for anything less is not obeying the command to make disciples. Wilkins writes, "A disciple of Jesus is one who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed Jesus as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the life of following Jesus."[23] To create a culture of discipleship in the church, the full meaning of disciple must be understood. The church must rightly identify God's standard and strive to live this out personally while also helping others in the church to obey God's commands.

Certainly, the Great Commission is a daunting task to make more and better disciples. Jesus, however, encourages the disciples by comforting them with two facts: all authority has been given to Him and He will be with His disciples until the end of the age.

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[21] Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 25-31.

[22] Bauer and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 609.

[23] Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 40.

Jesus's command was not for a select few, but for all His disciples. Therefore, all disciples should confidently obey Jesus's command to make more and better disciples.

Psalm 19:7-11

An exegesis of Psalm 19:7-11 will show that Christians can have confidence in using the Scriptures to help other Christians in life as they submit to God and His transforming power. The setting of Psalm 19 helps one recognize that all of creation declares the glory of God the Creator (vv. 1-6). This general revelation through creation, however, is not always understood correctly by man. In fact, Romans 1 explains that man exchanges the truth of God revealed through creation for a lie (v. 25). Since God desires to be truly known, He also reveals Himself to man through His Word (special revelation) so people might understand how to live a God-glorifying life (Ps 19:7-11). Therefore, God's Word is to be of first priority when caring for the souls of people.

Scholars debate the overall composition of Psalm 19.[24] Is it one united Psalm, or are there two units with the first unit being a hymn and the second belonging to wisdom poetry? Setting aside the overall form of the Psalm, it is clear that it is a cohesive thought, as Allen Ross explains,

> The two parts belong together because the sun imagery gives unity to the whole composition: if the sun is the most glorious gift of the creator for physical life, the word of Yahweh is the most glorious gift for the spiritual life; and if the sun dominates life and illuminates everything under it, the word dominates every aspect of the spiritual life—and the physical life as well—all the time. There is no physical life without the sun; there is no spiritual life without the word. There is a perfect complementarity between the two parts, showing that their connection was well designed.[25]

This Psalm is not two adjacent thoughts thrown together, but a carefully crafted argument demonstrating the sufficiency of Scripture.

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[24] For a summary of the debate, see John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 284-86.

[25] Allen Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1, *Psalms 1-41* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 1:469.

Human knowledge of God is revealed knowledge since He alone is the source (Prov 2:6). Psalm 19 explains both aspects of God's revelation: general through creation (vv. 1-6) and special through His Word (vv. 7-11). General revelation (vv. 1-6) helps people understand there is a God. People know there is a problem because of their conscience (Rom 2:14-15); both people themselves and the world they live in are broken, but they do not understand the details of how creation is to be restored. Special revelation (vv. 7-11) explains the creator and sustainer of life. There is a redemptive solution to the problem of brokenness and sin. If people did not have special revelation, then they would not fully understand general revelation. Likewise, if people did not have general revelation, then they would misunderstand the majesty of the Creator. Jim Hamilton illustrates, "The greatest works of art point beyond themselves to something higher and deeper and more worthy than themselves. This means that those works of art that celebrate infinite greatness have most potential to inspire."[26] Creation is God's art that demands peoples' attention to know Him more, and the Creator is found in God's Word.

David moves from the art of creation to the art of God's Word by employing a poetic structure in describing God's Word. Gerald Wilson observes four identical patterns in verses 7 and 8: "That pattern can be described as: Torah synonym + Yahweh + adjective + factitive participle + noun affected."[27] Hamilton, however, identifies the structure differently by including verse 9 in the formula:

> Every statement in 19:7-9 (MT 19:8-10) follows the same formula in Hebrew: the first three words state what God's word is, and the following two words state what it does. Psalm 19:9a (MT 19:10a) breaks the pattern of thought by referring to the fear of Yahweh instead of the word of Yahweh, but the formula of a three word statement followed by a two word statement is maintained. Then in 19:9b (MT 19:10b) the pattern of thought is resumed with the final instance of the formula.[28]

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[26] Jim Hamilton, *Psalms*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 1:254.

[27] Gerald Wilson, *Psalms*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1:368.

[28] Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:257.

Both agree that David has carefully formed the verses to make a repetitive point: the beauty of God's Word matches and exceeds that of creation because of its spiritual value.

David describes first what God's Word is by using Torah synonyms (law, testimony, precepts, and commands), Yahweh's covenant name (of the Lord) and adjectives (perfect, sure, right, and pure). Each Torah synonym has a nuanced difference in describing God's Word.[29] The word *Torah* or *law* in the first stanza, specifically, may cause some confusion as Ross explains its diverse usage in the Bible: "This word translated 'law' can refer to an induvial teaching, the law given at Sinai, all the books of the law in general, or all of Scripture."[30] Since Torah has a wide range of meaning, the context of synonyms along with the repeated phrase "of the Lord" after each noun is helpful to discern David's usage. First, the meaning of the nouns can be understood as Yahweh's teachings, instructions, or expectations, as Goldingay writes, "The verses laud Yhwh's instruction about behavior."[31] Second, the shift from God in verse 1 to the covenant name Yahweh in verses 7 through 9 is significant, as Ross explains, "Specific revelation can tell us about the personal, covenant God Yahweh who revealed his will and his plans to his people."[32] Both the Old and New Testaments teach mankind about God's redemptive covenant through Jesus Christ. In Romans 15, the apostle Paul quotes Psalm 69 in verse 3 and then explains the importance of the previously written scriptures in verse 4. God's instructions produce hope for those who continue to live their lives by them. Paul explains this further in his letter to Timothy regarding the special revelation of His Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15-16). Wayne Grudem writes,

> Since it is writings that are said to be "breathed out," this breathing must be understood as a metaphor for speaking the words of Scripture. This verse states in brief form what was evident in many passages in the Old Testament: the Old

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[29] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 291.

[30] Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:478.

[31] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 291.

[32] Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:478.

Testament writings are regarded as God's Word in written form. For every word of the Old Testament, God is the one who spoke (and still speaks) it, although God used human agents to write these words down.[33]

All of God's special revelation, both Old and New Testaments, are capable of producing wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:15). The adjectives (perfect, sure, right, and pure) explain further regarding what God's Word is; it is sufficient for instructing people what to believe about God and how to live for God. Hamilton expounds,

> The term commonly rendered "perfect" connotes integrity and wholeness. It means that there are no internal contradictions, no conflicting perspectives, and no incoherent logical leaps. Unlike ancient myths with their insoluble dilemmas, and unlike modern scientific myths with their claims that stagger imagination and belief, the Torah of Yahweh is complete, whole, flawless and blameless.[34]

This completes the first part of David's poetic structure; attention now turns to the second part of his poetic structure.

David describes what God's Word does by using factitive participles (restoring, making, rejoicing, and enlightening) and corresponding nouns affected by the verbs (soul, simple, heart, and eyes). The implications in caring for people is significant because the power of God's Word has the ability to produce change in people's lives. Disciples can have confidence because God's Word is the best resource for helping people.

Disciples can have confidence in using God's Word for the problems of life because it restores the soul of those who faithfully adhere to it. Christians are bound to make mistakes. No one lives a perfect life, but God's Word is perfect in directing one's ways. Although scholars agree on the range of the word (שׁוּב) to mean "restore, turn back or return,"[35] not everyone agrees regarding its interpretation. The same word is used in Psalm 23 where Derek Kidner comments on the meaning of (שׁוּב) in Psalm 19 as spiritual renewal:

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[33] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 74-75.

[34] Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:258.

[35] Francis Brown, R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 996.

Psalm 19:7, by its subject (the law) and by the parallel verb ("making wise"), points to a spiritual renewal of this kind, rather than mere refreshment. On the other hand, *my soul* usually means "my life" or "myself"; and "restore" often has a physical or psychological sense, as in Isaiah 58:12, or using another part of the verb, Proverbs 25:13, Lamentations 1:11, 16, 19.[36]

Spiritual renewal focuses on the overall aspect happening to the person who observes the Law of the Lord. While Wilson agrees that (שׁוּב) could mean restore, he argues for (שׁוּב) having a secondary meaning "to repent":

> Many commentators take this Hiphil participle of שׁוּב to mean "restore, revive," ignoring one of the more common uses of the verb to describe human repentance and obedience to God and his Torah. This predilection of the commentators is perhaps the result of an assumption that God—honoring free will in humans—does not manipulate or cause humans to "repent." While "restore, revive" is a possible translation here, it seems to me that the poet may well have intended a double meaning, suggesting to the astute reader that the Torah not only revives but also calls the faithful to repent and return. This certainly is compatible with the attitudes revealed in 19:11, where Torah "warns," and in the final section of the psalm, where the narrator feels the need to seek divine forgiveness from both willful and unintentional sin (19:12–13).[37]

Both interpretations speak to the transformative power of God's Word. If taking (שׁוּב) in the intransitive sense, then reviving the soul is viewed as a wholistic process, not mentioning the details. When a person is restored from sin and living as originally designed, his soul is refreshed. Whereas Wilson's argument identifies the responsibility of a person to turn back or repent in God's process of restoring the soul, one will not be restored unless genuine repentance occurs. What exactly does David mean by using the word translated as soul? In examining all the uses of this Hebrew phrase, Jonathan Safran observes the basic meaning as "to revive, restore to full strength and vitality by means of food and drink."[38] David's use of this phrase in Psalm 19 is different from the general sense of these other texts (Ps 23:3; Lam 1:11, 19) because they refer to actual food or drink reviving a physical body. Psalm 19:7 is God's Word influencing one's life with new

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[36] Derek Kidner, *Psalms: 1-72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 127-28.

[37] Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:366.

[38] Jonathan Safran, "He Restoreth My Soul," in *Mari in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Mari and Mari Studies*, ed. Gordon D. Young (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 266.

vitality figuratively likened to these other Old Testament usages (Prov 25:13; Lam 1:16; Ruth 4:15).[39] Regarding David's use of soul in Psalm 19, Goldingay concludes, "A life of obedience does issue in a life of blessing, and by leading one into the experience of its doing so."[40] When a person obeys God's Word, it is an inner being activity carried out in the outer being. Transformation is comprehensive in reviving one's life.

Disciples can have confidence in using God's Word for the problems of life because it makes wise the simple for those who faithfully learn it. Glorifying God requires wisdom. Wisdom does not just come naturally, but it is a learned process. No matter what level of wisdom a person may live by, God's Word can be understood so that they may learn to make better choices. The word translated as simple can have a broad definition, but Paul Tautges and Steve Viars bring clarity to its meaning along with an implication: "The Hebrew word translated 'simple' means open-minded so as to believe anything and everything without consideration of truth; they are naïve. The Word has the ability to move us from foolishness to wisdom since Scripture reveals to us the glory of Jesus Christ, who is our wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30)."[41] From the most simple of people to the most educated, God's Word will continue to help and transform peoples' lives if they follow it. Here David extols the complete reliability of God's Word. There is nothing lacking in all its teachings. The only thing that keeps a simple person simple is the amount of exposure to the Lord's testimony.

Disciples can have confidence in using God's Word for the problems of life because it brings joy to the heart of those who faithfully cling to it. For something to bring joy to the heart, it must first be understood and then judged. As David considers the precepts of the Lord, he says they are sure. Bruce Waltke confirms that the word (יָשָׁר) is

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[39] Safran, "He Restoreth My Soul," 269.

[40] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 292.

[41] Paul Tautges and Steve Viars, "Sufficient for Life and Godliness," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 50.

discernable and measurable: "*Yāšār* has the geometric notion of being straight, either horizontally or vertically, or, when a surface is involved, flat. This geometric use assumes a fixed order to which something can be compared. God's teachings/commands conform to a fixed order by which they can be judged."[42] For the one who clings to the Lord's precepts, they can be measured and have been found to be accurate. David reports that the Lord's precepts do not deviate from the expectant outcome. Therefore, joy is given to one's heart when the expectant outcome of his choice is realized (Pss 1:1-3; 16:11; 18:30; 51:12; 119:111). The very opposite is true for those who follow man's precepts (Pss 1:4-6; 37). There is no guarantee of joy, but only hope that their choice will reach the desired outcome.

Disciples can have confidence in using God's Word for the problems of life because it enlightens the eyes of those who faithfully observe it. The eyes are a delicate organ, but notice David's description of the Lord's commandments. They are pure or clear.[43] That is, it is without contamination. Eyes function at peak capacity when there are no hindrances. The Lord's commandments not only keep the eyes from harm, but actually aide in their performance. The idea of the word (אוֹר) describes the process of allowing light in so that what was hidden can be seen. Darkness conceals while light reveals. David's use of the eyes is an illustration of how the Lord's commandments benefit the person who observes them. Victor Matthews, Mark Chavalas, and John Walton write, "Light to the eyes refers to life and therefore, in one sense, is given to all (Prov 29:13). The law, however, is able to bring extended life to those who follow its commands."[44] Confidence can again be placed in the use of Scriptures for the person who cannot see literally and figuratively.

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[42] Bruce Waltke, James Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 366.

[43] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 141.

[44] Victor Matthews, Mark Chavalas, and John Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), Ps 19:8, Logos.

Verse 9 breaks David's poetic structure, but it does not stop his discussion on God's Word. The repetition of David's grammar changes in verse 9, as Wilson acknowledges, "In the fifth phrase, however, the participial pattern is altered by the use of a Qal form that does not carry the same factitive function."[45] Hamilton agrees, but again, his observation is slightly different from Wilson's: "Descriptions of God's Word—is broken, but it is broken in a way that does not alter the train of thought but complements it, even as the pattern of expression—three-word statements followed by two-word statements—is maintained."[46] Since Scripture is God's special revelation and will endure forever, man should respond appropriately to it. Wilson adds, "To 'fear Yahweh' is to assume an appropriate attitude of humility, loyalty, and absolute dependence on Yahweh."[47] David resumes his poetic structure for the second phrase of verse 9. His interjection of response finishes with what God's Word is (judgments and trustworthy) and what God's Word does (absolutely just). Ross explains,

> In this context it probably refers to the rulings in the law that decide cases (Exodus 21-23 for example). Because "truth" is related to the words "faithful" and "reliable" (Psalm 15:2), truth is that which corresponds to reality and therefore is reliable. In deciding a legal case, the purpose is to get to the truth. All God's decisions will do just that, and so the conclusion is that "they are righteous altogether."[48]

The judgment of God is like none other. Man's judgments are uncertain while God's are true justice.

In the final two verses (vv. 10-11) of this section (vv. 7-11) of the Psalm, David appeals to the reader so that he might desire Scriptures above all else. There is nothing more valuable to the life of a human. Since a person's actions proceed from the desires of the heart, David proclaims God's Word as being greater than what the world holds in high esteem (gold and honey). God has justifiably warned people (both the unbeliever and

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[45] Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:368.

[46] Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:260.

[47] Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:368.

[48] Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:481.

believer) how to live a God-pleasing life. In adhering to the Scriptures, one will be kept from folly. Because of the vastness of sin, David concludes the Psalm (vv. 12-14) with a prayer for God's mercy in his life. Even if sin was committed ignorantly, David prayed and believed that God in His mercy would keep these types of sin from controlling his life through the power of God's Word, since God is his redeemer.

Ephesians 4:20-24

An exegesis of Ephesians 4:20-24 will show that believers are built up through biblical soul care that addresses a person's inner being by putting off the old self, renewing the spirit of the mind, and putting on the new self.

Before examining verses 20 through 24, it is important to understand God's goal for the church specified in Ephesians 4:11-19. Christ gave gifted leaders (v. 11) to equip the church (v. 12). The church in return is to serve the body so that it may be built up in the unity of faith (v. 13). The goal is that every Christian will mature (v. 13) into the fullness of Christ as Christians speak the truth in love (v. 15) and pursue corporate edification (v. 16). To do this, Paul explains to the church at Ephesus that the former way of life has no place in its new lifestyle (vv. 17-19). To prevent any confusion, Paul unpacks the Gentile lifestyle. First, he is not talking about their physical nationality, as Frank Thielman notes, "Although there is a physical sense in which they are still Gentiles—they are not circumcised (2:11; 3:1)—they have nevertheless been created anew by their union with the crucified, risen, exalted Christ (2:5–6, 10, 15), and so there is another sense in which they are no longer Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1; 12:2)."[49] Second, Paul is not talking about their physical walk, as Clinton Arnold describes, "The word 'walk' ($\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\pi\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\omega$) is a common metaphor in Jewish circles for one's conduct in everyday life, especially in

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[49] Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 296.

terms of obedience or disobedience to covenant standards."[50] Paul's third general statement of the Gentile lifestyle resides in the sphere of the mind, as delineated by Arnold: "Here the word 'mind' refers to more than just the ability to reason. It refers to the capacity to think, plan, and make moral judgments and lifestyle choices (see also Rom 1:28; 12:2)."[51] Paul has stated the basic problem with the Gentile lifestyle, but now he details the complete futility of the Gentile thinking: darkened in their understanding (v. 18), alienated from God (v. 18), ignorance in them (v. 18), hardness of their hearts (v. 18), callous (v. 19) and continual lust (v. 19). Klyne Snodgrass summarizes, "Paul's primary concern is not with a list of specific sins, but with a distortion and disorientation of the mind."[52] Paul is not simply seeking a modification of their behavior, but their whole being. This whole being transformation begins in the inner being as Arnold demonstrates the connection between mind and heart: "In this passage, Paul uses 'understanding/thinking' (διανοία) instead of 'heart' (καρδία), but the two terms were often used interchangeably (see Isa 57:11; Jer 31:33 [38:33 LXX]) insofar as they both refer to the part of the person responsible for making lifestyle choices."[53] Since verses 17 through 19 are a sustained argument for the inner being, Paul uses both mind and heart in verse 18 and both mind and heart can be confused with the physical being; inner being will be used to avoid confusion for the part of a person that makes lifestyle choices (Luke 6:43-45).

The power of the gospel enables a new lifestyle. Paul reminds the reader of this contrast from the Gentile lifestyle and implores believers to use what they have learned so they might live in Christ who is the truth. To prevent conflation, Paul emphatically contrasts the two lifestyles, as Harold Hoehner observes,

[50] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 180.

[51] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 402.

[52] Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 229.

[53] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 403.

The emphatic contrast with the previous verses is noted by: (1) the adversative δὲ; (2) the change from τὰ ἔθνη to ὑμεῖς, which is emphatically placed; and (3) the adverbial conjunction οὕτως, which applies what had been stated before (cf. 5:24, 28, 33), namely, that the conduct of the Gentiles is not what believers learned regarding Christ.[54]

A second way Paul distinguishes the two lifestyles is through his grammatical use of "learn." Sam Baugh observes, "The phrase 'you did not learn the Messiah' is unusual in that the verb 'learn' (μανθάνω) does not take a personal object elsewhere, as most commentators discuss."[55] Baugh, however, rightfully connects this structure to that of the structure in Galatians 4:9 recorded in the Septuagint where "know" carries an inceptive idea more like "come to know."[56] Arnold agrees, "One normally learns a content (e.g., the law, statues, and ordinances, etc.) or a certain pattern of behavior (e.g., to obey God or to do good), but not a person. This unique expression most likely heightens the element of personal relationship with Christ that is central to the Christian faith and emphasized in Ephesians."[57] There is not a question of whether they "heard Him" and "have been taught Him," as Baugh further writes concerning Paul's second grammatical indicator "if indeed" in verse 21: "Paul is not expressing doubts, about whether his Ephesian audience has heard Christ—he affirms their faith and love (1:13, 15) and that they were taught Christ (20). The phrase εἴ γε does not mean 'if indeed' (as NASB and NKJV), but 'you must surely have heard.'"[58] Paul is making a positive statement about the relationship these Ephesian brothers and sisters have with Christ and now calls the Ephesians to live in Christ. Just as the truth is in Jesus, so too in Christ they have communion with Him because they have received the glorious gospel proclaimed to them.

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[54] Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 593.

[55] Sam Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 365.

[56] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 365.

[57] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 406.

[58] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 366.

In verses 22-24, Paul reminds the Ephesian believers of the work Christ has done, so that they will walk in holiness. Questions arise, though, over Paul's use of the infinitives "to lay aside," "to renew," and "to put on." Syntactically they can be interpreted as indicatives or imperatives. Darrell Bock explains the difference:

> The core question is whether these are to be seen as imperatival in force or indicatives. If imperatives, they would read: put off the old man, be renewed in your mind and put on the new man. If indicatives, the teaching would be: you have put off the old man, you are being renewed, you have put on the new man. With imperatives, it would be an exhortation. With indicatives, it states a fact.[59]

Some interpreters believe Paul is issuing the infinitives as commands. Even though infinitives function in the New Testament occasionally as imperatives, Andrew Lincoln dismisses it as a possibility here: "What makes such a grammatical feature less likely here, however, is that v 22 contains not a simple infinitive but an infinitive plus an accusative—ὑμᾶς, "you" (cf. also BDF §389)."[60] Baugh adds another reason why they should be interpreted as indicatives rather than commands: "The infinitive ἀποθέσθαι ("shed") and the two other infinitives in vv. 23-24 are all grammatically dependent on ἐδιδάχθητε ('you were taught') in v. 21, as object clauses in indirect discourse."[61] Even though Lincoln would agree with Baugh on the syntactical outcome, he would still argue against Baugh's final interpretation: "This would make very little difference to the sense, but it is less natural syntactically than relating them to the major verb 'were taught.' Because of their context in what is a piece of paraenesis, these infinitives do take on some imperatival force (cf. also Schnackenburg, 203)."[62] Lincoln, therefore, believes that an epexegetical explanation of the content of the teaching is the most accurate interpretation. As alluded to already by Lincoln, context is another factor required for interpreting this

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[59] Darrell Bock, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 136-37.

[60] Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 283.

[61] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 368.

[62] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 284.

passage well. Although Lincoln believes the context favors the interpretation toward an imperatival aspect, Baugh disagrees wholeheartedly in his footnote and additional exegetical comments:

> It should be noted that this is not an accurate or compelling exegetical argument. Verses17c-21 are statements of fact and *cannot* be interpreted with imperatival force simply because there are impvs. in the vicinity. Optionally taking the infs. as connected with truth in Jesus (Gnilka, 229) is not a likely possibility (cf. Lincoln, 283-84).[63]

Baugh's argument is persuasive. He too believes the context is helpful in understanding the correct interpretation, but only in a different way from Lincoln. In verse 25, Paul uses the indicative statements of facts as his base of reasoning for how holy living is to be conducted in one's life. Even though there is disagreement between commentators, it does not negate the work of God and the call to the believer to act as Arnold recaps,

> All three of the following infinitive clauses depend on the verb "you were taught" (ἐδιδάχθητε) and are best described as epexegetical (explanatory) infinitives; that is, they spell out the content of that teaching. In saying that "you were taught . . . to take off the old self," there is an implied imperatival force. It is going too far, however, to interpret them as essentially imperatival infinitives (see NLT and KJV) because this misses the dependent relationship on "you were taught." Neither is it accurate to interpret the aorist infinitives as only referring to a past act (i.e., conversion) and see no exhortation in this passage.[64]

One other point should be considered when considering the interpretation—is this consistent with how Paul's companion teaching to the church at Colossae reads? In Paul's discussion (Col 3:9-10), he begins with an imperative "do not lie," and then completes the statement with participles "put off, clothed and renewed" instead of infinitives like the Ephesian passage. Likewise, there is some debate on how the participles function, as mentioned by Arnold: "In that passage, the aorist participles appear to be serving as the basis for the ethical exhortation in the context (although some interpreters do take them as imperatival participles). In other words, their new identity in Christ becomes

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[63] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 369.

[64] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 408.

a vital perspective and enabling factor in living the Christian life."[65] There is no need, however, to interpret these passages differently. Paul is consistent in identifying the work of God in a believer and the call for a believer to respond to that work by living in holiness until glorification, as Arnold concludes,

> The solution lies in seeing these two texts as accurately displaying the tension between the indicative and imperative in Paul's writings, or, as some have referred to it, the eschatological tension of the "already" and "not yet." This is a fundamental structure in Paul's thought. He balances the "indicative" of the work of Christ on our behalf and the resultant change in our identity with the "imperative" that calls for us to actualize in our day-to-day lives what is already true of us in Christ.[66]

It is critical then, if a believer is going to walk in holiness, to know salvation— regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification. Paul's sharp contrast of the two lifestyles is not theoretical, but a new reality and ability to live differently. John MacArthur writes, "Paul is emphasizing that in Christ a transformation has occurred. Christians have gone from being the old self to being the new self. And they are to live in light of this reality."[67] Knowing what God has done and knowing what is left to do, the child of God now has confidence to live in the hope he has in Christ.

The old man has been replaced with the new man, but this does not mean a believer is absent from interacting with the old man's residue (Rom 7:14-25). Paul implicitly states this by informing the Ephesians about the old man's "corruption" or "perishing" (φθειρόμενον) continuing in verse 22. Grant Osborne explains this on-going battle:

> We have been redeemed and made part of the body of Christ, but the process is not yet complete. The old has been nullified and rendered powerless—has been "crucified with Christ" (Rom 6:6)—but while it is no longer an internal force controlling us it is still an external force tempting and deceiving us. It operates through the flesh, the

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[65] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 408.

[66] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 408-9.

[67] John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 466.

sin nature that is still a part of us. It has been defeated but not destroyed, cast out of our new being but still operative as a threatening outside force.[68]

Since sanctification is the process whereby a believer is being transformed from one degree of glory to another by God (2 Cor 3:18), and glorification of a believer's body (1 Cor 15:53) occurs at Christ's return (Titus 2:13), then a believer must continue to put aside fleshly desires. In verse 25 and following, Paul illustrates then four practical areas of deceitful desire to lay aside: falsehood (v. 25), stealing (v. 28), tearing people down (v. 29) and unrighteous anger (v. 31).

As helpful as it is for the old man to be diminishing, Paul explains in verse 23 that the new man is in the process of renewal (ἀνανεοῦσθαι) since it is in the present tense. As well, ἀνανεοῦσθαι is a passive verb, so the believer is not the one doing the renewal, but God is, as Baugh details:

> Renewal of the "spirit of your minds" gets to the core of the transformational effect of regeneration and justification in the life of the genuine believer. Sanctification begins immediately in the inner καινὸς ἄνθρωπος ("new man" or "human person") after the "old man" (vs. 22) is renewed in regeneration (John 3:3-6; cf. Eph. 1:13-14), and it then undergoes a process of constant renewal: "But even if our outer man is rotting away (διαφθείρεται), our inner man is undergoing renewal (ἀνακαινοῦται) day after day" (2 Cor. 4:16).[69]

It is this status that God has placed the believer in, so there will be an increasing holiness in his life. This does not negate responsibility for the believer to change in conduct. Positionally, Christ has done a work in the believer, but practically, the believer is to live in conformity with this new identity. Arnold explains,

> The new self is who believers now are in terms of their solidarity with Christ. Nevertheless, Paul calls them to put on this new identity. This amounts to a daily and growing recognition of the truth of who they are now in Christ Jesus. It also involves an actualization of this identity in their daily experience through a transformed way of thinking (4:23) and bringing their lives into conformity with the defining characteristics of this new identity—righteousness and holiness.[70]

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[68] Grant Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 143.

[69] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 372.

[70] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 412-13.

Walking in holiness requires humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with others, and effort (vv. 2-3) by believers as they live in the community. What Paul introduced at the beginning of chapter 4, he now resumes in calling believers to action by aligning their wills to God's will, which is evident in one's lifestyle.

The goal of the believer is to be like Christ since he is in union with Christ. This union in Christ is understood as a new creation. The new man is not a revision or second edition of the first because he is a complete contrast with that of the old man. In particular, the old man's thinking and mindset could not understand the life of God. Again, the verb κτισθέντα is in the passive form. This creation is not a work commanded to the believer, but it is a work of God, as earlier noted in Ephesians 2:10. God's image then is the basis of the new man's lifestyle. Immediately, Paul identifies two qualities the new man is to put on: righteousness and holiness. However, the only way the new man will be able to put on these qualities is if he starts with truth since it is the source of righteousness and holiness. Paul does not stop in verse 24, but he adds four more illustrations in verses 25 and following of what the new man is to put on: speaking truth (v. 25), sharing/generosity (v. 28), edifying speech (v. 29) and kindness (v. 32). Life for the believer is to be different now. Even though commentators debate the grammatical particulars (indicative or imperative), both agree on the interpretation. God has empowered (indicative) and commanded (imperative) the believer in Christ so he can live out the image-bearing qualities of God in his life. The question is not an either or, but both realities are present. Believers are to be thankful for the work God has done in them. At the same time, believers have a present responsibility to display God's character in their life.

Conclusion

A careful exegesis of passages from Matthew, Psalms, and Ephesians demonstrates that God calls all disciples to care for others by teaching God's truths, which are able to help people in need as they conform their lives to God and His ways. Certainly, the Great Commission is a daunting task, however, Jesus's authority and presence are with

disciples until the end of the age. As well, God's enduring Word will continue to be sufficient in comforting people. Since God has done a work in the believer, disciples should encourage other disciples to live in light of this new position so they might progress in spiritual growth. As each person obeys God's call to disciple, a culture of maturing and edification will occur in the body of Christ. Therefore, all disciples should confidently obey Jesus's command to make more and better disciples.

CHAPTER 3

FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES FOR A CULTURE OF CARE

Chapter 2 provided the biblical basis for every local church to function as a culture of care. A culture of care is not a new concept in church history, but it can be difficult to achieve as there are many obstacles. First, it is not another program to be added to the list of ministries at a church. Second, care is not merely intellectual assent to information being provided in a class; a culture of care begins when people do the work of ministry. Third, care is not outsourcing the responsibility, whether to inadequate secular professionals or even another church's biblical counseling ministry. A culture of care is the responsibility of each local church. Spiritual leaders are to equip the saints so they can care for one another through the personal ministry of God's Word. How then should this work be approached?

A culture of care permeates every person in the church as they practically live according to the truth. Just as one must understand the heart to care for another person correctly, the church will not attain unity of the faith unless everyone practices the truth in love. There is freedom in how the church pragmatically aims for a culture of care, but there are key principles to discern. The biblical counseling movement, now in its third generation, continues to advance and build upon the work of Jay Adams.[1] Throughout church history, however, building a culture of care has been a consistent objective. Most notably, the Puritans did well in devoting themselves to building a culture of care, though

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[1] Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 161.

they may have used different terms.[2] They understood God's call in the New Testament to care for another in the local church, so they strategically acted upon it. Terminology has changed over the years, but the following five key principles endure: a culture of care (1) involves every member in the church community; (2) responds to the contextual status of the person; (3) uses God's authoritative and sufficient Word; (4) battles idols in the heart; and (5) teaches one how to live according to the truth.

A Culture of Care Involves Every Member

Building a culture of care requires a sustained vision, ownership, and teamwork by the whole church body. Both leadership and membership must equally commit to God's call in caring for one another since opposition is always present. Many churches do not even realize how the culture of the world has so invaded their thinking that it quenches their response to help people in need. The church has become deceived about its responsibility. T. Dale Johnson describes, "The modern secular paradigm has become so dominant that it has often clouded the minds of believers to the vitality of the Scripture and the design of God's church for the ministry of soul care."[3] Problems in the church regarding personal care are many, but the prevailing thought is that the church is the last resort. Whether a deficiency in the church providing help or a belief by people that the church cannot help, souls are not being cared for in the church through the personal ministry of God's Word. Since these problems are so common in churches, Bob Kellemen dedicates five chapters in his book *Equipping Counselors for your Church: The 4E Ministry Training Strategy* so that the church might hear, know, and mobilize its people to answering God's call. The church will remain passive if it continues to think that the

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[2] It is not the objective of this chapter to give a historical account for creating a culture of care. See Bob Kellemen, "When Did 'Biblical Counseling' Begin?," RPM Ministries, September 6, 2022, https://rpmministries.org/2022/09/when-did-biblical-counseling-begin/?mc_cid=49b0bb2f34&mc_eid=ff0e8e45af. For a specific example of the Puritans, please see Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2000), 13.

[3] T. Dale Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2021), 8.

secular paradigm is sufficient in caring for people. Johnson summarizes the secular

response for helping people in need:

> Most counseling psychologies can be refined down to two distinct issues. First, they are attempting to describe true human change outside of God's process of sanctification. Second, each counseling psychology proposes some sort of means for insight into the inner workings of the human soul that is a replacement for the work of the Holy Spirit described in Scripture.[4]

In light of this poor secular response to helping people, Mark Jones challenges

the church to trust God's sufficient Word: "The church seems to be the last group to

acknowledge the flaws of a secular system for fear of being labeled as non-progressive or

anti-intellectual, even when leaders in the secular system are lamenting the lack of

scientific rigor within their disciplines."[5] Even though churches are beginning to

understand this crisis of neglect, they struggle to build a culture of care. As is common in

counseling a person, the problem is not the problem. Alerting the church is not the problem.

The problem is building unity in the church to consistently follow God's plan of care

through the personal ministry of God's Word. Brad Bigney and Steve Viars observe,

"Sadly, most seminaries focus almost exclusively on homiletics and exegesis, essential

teaching functions, but they neglect the tasks of shepherding and equipping others in

counseling or soul care."[6] In building a culture of care in three different local churches,

Kellemen believes, "Biblical counseling is not a ministry of a few, but a mindset of the

entire congregation that the Bible is sufficient for every life issue."[7] Without this

component in the vision and belief that acts upon it, the church will struggle in building a

culture of care through the personal ministry of God's Word.

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[4] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 30.

[5] Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), 51.

[6] Brad Bigney and Steve Viars, "A Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People*, ed. Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 24.

[7] Robert Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church: The 4E Ministry Training Strategy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 32.

A culture of care is built when people understand and follow God's vision for the church. Cultural influence and poor vision have been consistent obstacles to building a culture of care in the church. David Powlison, a second-generation worker in the biblical counseling movement, writes in the foreword of Heath Lambert's *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* that there are six stages to the process of building a culture of care:

> *First Stage.* We each need to hear—some of us for the first time—that the church has a unique and significant counseling calling. *Second Stage.* We need to agree that the vision is a desirable one. *Third Stage.* We need to personally embrace and embody the vision. *Fourth Stage.* We need training, teaching, mentoring, practice, and supervision. *Fifth Stage.* We need to become good at counseling. *Sixth Stage.* We need to develop leaders.[8]

Powlison's comments are directed to both church leaders and members. Both groups are required in the process. A problem arises when one or the other elevates or ignores its responsibility. Teamwork and unity are essential. Ed Welch, a co-worker with Powlison, comments from the perspective of a member who thinks it is just the spiritual leaders' responsibility: "Shepherds and teachers do the work of ministry. They also train us to do the work of ministry. Apparently, the Lord is pleased to use ordinary people, through seemingly ordinary acts of love, to be the prime contributors to the maturing of people."[9] One should notice that Welch continues the call of teamwork where everyone does their job. Understanding and valuing all care workers' responsibilities in the church is key then to building unity and effectiveness.

The church needs leaders equipping the members, but a culture of care builds momentum through the grass roots movement of members obeying God's call to care for one another. Welch describes the process of care through eight lessons: humility, intentional, heart, influences, personal ministry, suffering, sin and gospel living.[10] Humility is the first chapter—humility is required in caring for others, but humility is

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[8] David Powlison, foreword to Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, 14-17.

[9] Ed Welch, *Caring for One Another: 8 Ways to Cultivate Meaningful Relationships* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 9-10.

[10] Welch, *Caring for One Another*, 11-71.

also required for both church leaders and members. Church leaders need members and members need church leaders. This is the best scenario for a consistent culture of care: teamwork where all involved know God's vision, their responsibility, and does their job. Church leaders and members doing the work of ministry together.

Building a culture of care requires more than announcing God's vision. Ownership and teamwork become reality when leaders and members immerse themselves in biblical counseling training. A culture of training, therefore, is crucial for building and sustaining a culture of care. Training starts with a pastor(s) who obediently answers God's call to equip the saints. When pastors spend a major portion of their week focusing on the public ministry of the Word, they minimize the personal ministry of God's Word. In essence, a pastor does not view counseling as his job. Kellemen explains the rationale even further: "Sometimes when I train pastors, especially in seminary settings, I get a push back about 'counseling.' It typically sounds something like this: 'I do my counseling from the pulpit. People don't need anything but the preached Word.'"[11] This mindset lacks vision, as already discussed. On the other end of the training problem spectrum, pastors do not train the saints to care for one another. Whatever the reasoning (time, ability, etc.), this falls into the lack of vision category as well. And unfortunately, for pastors who attempt care independent of the body, soul care leads to ministry burn-out or a less vibrant public ministry of the Word. Either way, a culture of care is not present as he cannot keep up with all the counseling needs in the church. Therefore, building and sustaining a culture of care requires continual training in biblical counseling for both the leaders and members.

Many specific topics could be covered in biblical counseling training, but the most important concept is to believe that God and His Word are sufficient in caring for people. Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju explain, "Professional training or academic programs can be very helpful for honing skills, but even if you have not had these, you can counsel if you wholeheartedly embrace God's Word as that which shows people their

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[11] Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church*, 38.

greatest needs and their greatest hope."[12] For pastors, equipping members is more about

an attitude of reliance upon God than a technical skill, although caring for people does

require competence. This was a primary belief for Jay Adams:

> If counseling is in essence one aspect of the work of sanctification (as I have argued
> elsewhere), then the Holy Spirit, whose principal work in the regenerated man is to
> sanctify him (cf. also Ezekiel 36:25-27), must be considered the most important
> Person in the counseling context. Indeed, He must be viewed as the Counselor.
> Ignoring the Holy Spirit or avoiding the use of Scriptures in counseling is tantamount
> to an act of autonomous rebellion. Christians may not counsel apart from the Holy
> Spirit and His Word without grievously sinning against Him and the counselee.[13]

Counseling is hard work, but one's ability to counsel is determined more by

what he or she is offering in Christ rather than his or her specific training on a certain issue.

Paul Tripp adds to the discussion on what is most important for the counselee to hear:

> The good news confronts us with the reality that heart-changing help will never be
> found in the mound [of human ideas]. It will only be found in the Man, Christ Jesus.
> We must not offer people a system of redemption, a set of insights and principles.
> We offer people a Redeemer. In his power, we find the hope and help we need to
> defeat the most powerful enemies. Hope rests in the grace of the Redeemer, the only
> real means of lasting change.[14]

Training people to have confidence in God resumes the previous character trait of humility

and understanding one's responsibility of pointing a person to God who is the God of all

comfort. It is not about the counselor's ability, but God's ability. Therefore, confidence in

God and His Word are tantamount in equipping members and building a culture of care.

Two factors work against the church's ability to build a culture of care:

consumerism and fear. Again, it is easy to explain God's vision for the church and quite

another to implement God's vision. A consumer mindset kills the church's ability to

respond and is the opposite of Christ's call. Bill Hull explains, "People cannot be formed

in Christ in a climate that is dominated by a consumer mentality. Jesus calls us to come

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[12] Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 18-19.

[13] Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 6-7.

[14] Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 8.

and die, whereas consumer Christianity calls us to come and improve our lives and enhance our personalities."[15] Ephesians 4 type churches equip the saints for the work of ministry, but all too often churches struggle with convincing members that their God-given responsibility is to serve rather than be served. Bigney and Viars write, "We don't need fans, and the church is not a Christian cruise ship, focused on how comfortable we can make our people."[16] If members are going to buy into the vision of a culture of care, then an attitude of community must be a priority. Pierre and Reju believe that meaningful church membership where members sign away their individualism is an important aspect of building community.[17] The very foundational elements of discipleship and the church are to follow Jesus who cared for the interests of others. Church members following God's design of community involvement are capable of strengthening the body of Christ. Unfortunately, the culture has influenced church members that one another ministry is not their business. A culture of isolation rather than community is all too common. Ed Welch believes this lack of serving one another is due to fear:

> And yet fear enters in. We are afraid to jump into the complexities of someone's life. Who are we to help someone else? . . . We feel broken ourselves and fear we will only make things worse for others. We feel unqualified. In our care we consult experts, professionals, and specialists, but when you look at your own history of having been helped, it's likely that you'll notice very few experts among those who have helped you.[18]

Bigney and Viars have also observed this problem of fear, but point out how fear can be overcome: "Often this dynamic occurs because men and women in the church feel guilty about their own lack of spiritual growth. Why serve in the church if you aren't healthy? Who wants to spread their spiritual measles to others? Conversely, when someone is

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[15] Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith*, rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 12.

[16] Bigney and Viars, "A Church of Biblical Counseling," 24.

[17] Pierre and Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling*, 108.

[18] Ed Welch, *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 12-13.

experiencing genuine life change, that person wants to serve."[19] Caring people are called

to help, but it is God who causes the growth (1 Cor 3:7). There is no need to fear because

caring for others is not about the one providing care, but obedience to being God's co-

worker. Therefore, caring servants place their confidence in God when caring for others.

Finally, obedience to the one-another commands of the New Testament is the

avenue for building a culture of care that involves every member. Johnson expresses the

significance: "The call of the 'one another' commands in the New Testament provide clear

evidence that the church, under the headship of Christ, is to make everyone complete in

Christ."[20] Individualism and independence were never God's design for care and spiritual

growth. The ultimate "one-another" command is to love one another as Jesus has loved

them (John 13:34). The world will know you are Jesus's disciples by your love for one

another (John 13:35). Yes, love is the overarching principle Jesus taught, but how is it to

be practically demonstrated? Don McMinn believes the phrase "one another" is the answer:

> Woven throughout the fabric of the New Testament are a series of clear and practical
> tools for loving others. We'll call them the "One Anothers." . . . Thirty-six times in
> the New Testament we see a recurring word pattern—an action verb followed by the
> words one another. In English grammar this phrase is called a reciprocal pronoun—I
> am to act a certain way toward you and you should act the same way toward me.[21]

Believers engaging in community provides an opportunity to care and receive

care from one another. The benefit is clarity and maturity, so that a person might not be

deceived. Tripp describes the important practice of community in the church:

> Encouragement and accountability are important parts of the truth application
> process. Scripture makes it clear that we were never created to live in isolation. God
> designed us to live in community, first with him and then with one another.
> According to the Bible, personal change is a community project. In fact, it is in the
> process of change that we really begin to see our need for one another.[22]

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[19] Bigney and Viars, "A Church of Biblical Counseling," 32.

[20] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 29.

[21] Don McMinn, *Love One Another: 20 Practical Lessons* (Dallas: iPlace, 2012), chap. 1, "A Powerful Pattern," para. 1, Kindle.

[22] Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*, 259.

A church community that helps one another mature through the personal ministry of God's Word is an important distinction. Church communities are to be centered on God's redeeming work. Caring for one another by using God's Word sounds basic, but Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop identify two common types of church communities among gospel-preaching, evangelical churches:

> Let's call one "gospel-plus" community. In gospel-plus community, nearly every relationship is founded on the gospel plus something else (similar life experience, identity, causes, needs and positions). . . . Contrast this with "gospel-revealing" community. In gospel revealing community, many relationships would never exist but for the truth and power of the gospel–either because of the depth of the care for each other or because two people in relationship have little in common but Christ.[23]

There is nothing wrong with common interests, but similar life experiences, identity, causes, needs, and positions should never be the focus of the church community. The one-another commands are to be practiced with no partiality amongst the saints. When the one-another commands are regularly obeyed by many people in the church community, it a good indicator that a culture of care is being built in the church.

A Culture of Care Responds to the Contextual Status

Building a culture of care considers the person being cared for. Each situation has a specific context. Within that context, the numerous factors and differing heart desires lead people to the choices they make. Robert Jones explains, "In any helping field, accurate treatment requires accurate diagnosis, and accurate diagnosis requires knowing what to look for and why."[24] One size does not fit all even if there are good intentions in attempting to love one another. Caring for people certainly would be easier if there was a single template on sin, but there is not. This was one of the criticisms of the biblical counseling movement early in its history. Even though Adams held to a larger view regarding what is wrong with the counselee, his foundational belief was that sin is the

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[23] Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 21-22.

[24] Robert D. Jones, Kristin Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 71.

main issue.[25] Lambert explains why Adams dedicated so much of his writing to this topic:

> It is important to note that Adams had a good reason to focus on sin the way he did. He was writing in a counseling context that had wholly been given over to secularism. The specific counseling models that Adams critiqued all located the cause of personal problems outside the person's responsibility. Adams was deeply concerned to restore an approach of personal responsibility to counseling that the secular psychologies had removed.[26]

Sin cannot be ignored, but helpful counsel considers all that God has to say about the problems people face. Unfortunately for the church, many church leaders and members have sought human wisdom in broadening its understanding of sin and humanity. Johnson writes, "The church has adopted many secular definitions like the DSM diagnostic categories, 'recovery,' 'self-esteem,' etc., which keep Christians from thinking biblically about human problems."[27]

Sin is a category, but it is not the only category. There is no need to depart from God's Word in seeking to understand the problems of men. Michael Emlet recalls what David Powlison once said, "True wisdom is not marked by a simple accumulation of knowledge, but by a growing ability to hold together complementary biblical truths without allowing any one of them to be eclipsed."[28] The biblical counseling movement has provided an invaluable work to the church as it seeks to understand the whole counsel of God's Word and then use biblical concepts to describe man's problems. By rejecting the categories of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*) and culture, Lambert comments on the biblical counseling movement's progress: "While the second generation has not abandoned the need to confront sin, it has sought to advance the movement by seeing the counselee in a more nuanced way as both a sinner and a

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[25] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, 50-57.

[26] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, 55-56.

[27] Johnson, *The Church as a Culture of Care*, 52.

[28] Michael Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners: Loving Others as God Loves Us* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2021), 182.

sufferer."[29] The Bible is not a technical manual, but it is sufficient in helping people think through care for various types of problems. In pursuing this goal of discovering more robust biblical categories, Emlet suggests, "Scripture reveals that God ministers to his people as: *Saints* who need confirmation of their identity as children of God, *Sufferers* who need comfort in the midst of their afflictions, and *Sinners* who need challenge to their sin in light of God's redemptive mercies. All three of these are simultaneously true of every Christian you meet."[30]

Next, the categories of *saints*, *sufferers*, and *sinners* will be used to consider how to care for Christians while the category *unregenerate* will examine care for unbelievers since the Great Commission calls for both: evangelism and discipleship. Helping people starts with assessing people through the lens of God's Word using His categories.

Saints

A person does not become a saint by his or her work (Eph 2:8-9), but the person is sanctified in Christ (1 Cor 1:2). Most often, the Bible uses the plural form of "saint" to identify a called group of people known as the church (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2). Saints are to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet 1:16). Therefore, saints are set apart in Christ, but also called to be saints (1 Cor 1:2). Emlet explains why saints need care: "In the midst of suffering and the temptations to sin, we [saints] are prone to identity amnesia."[31] Being a saint does not mean instant success in practical holiness. Emlet notes, "Ongoing struggle with suffering or with sin must be understood in this basic context of our new identity as children of the living God. We are saints who suffer. We are saints who sin."[32] A saint is

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[29] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, 50.

[30] Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners*, 8.

[31] Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners*, 22.

[32] Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners*, 26.

no longer enslaved to sin but transformation still requires encouragement through God's Word by others. Paul Tautges emphasizes that care "requires a more personal ministry— a coming alongside those who believe, to help them live out the reality of their new position in Christ by learning to walk in obedient faith."[33] This is the call of Jesus in making disciples: teaching them to obey all of Christ commands (Matt 28:19-20). Emlet thinks that believers have a difficult time grasping this new position: "First, you can be sure they struggle with identity at some level—which means they are implicitly or explicitly asking, 'Who am I?' . . . Because this identity question is tied to mission or calling, it also means they are asking, 'What is my purpose?'"[34] Understanding this new status and purpose becomes more difficult when saints become deceived about the presence of suffering and sin in their lives. In discussing 1 Corinthians 1:2, John MacArthur observes, "Notice that he's not talking about a special class of advanced sainthood. He's underscoring the truth that all genuine believers are saints—holy people. A person who is utterly unsanctified is no Christian at all, no matter what verbal confession of faith he or she might make." [35] Caring for saints is a continual reminder of God's work in the person's life so that the person will follow Christ instead of self.

Sufferers

In the biblical counseling movement, writing on how to care for suffering saints has grown exponentially in the transition from second generation to the third generation. Tripp, a second generation writer, laments over the lack of skill and biblical thinking about suffering by church people: "Too often we reduce our ministry to biblical platitudes and promises of prayer, establishing a wide buffer zone around people who are

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[33] Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2015), 177.

[34] Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners*, 6.

[35] John MacArthur, *Sanctification: God's Passion for His People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 45.

in deep pain. Sure, we will send a card, pay a visit, say a prayer, and read a passage, but we are ill at ease and can't wait to be on our way."[36] People who attempted to care for Mark Vroegop during his time of suffering made him well aware of their lack of understanding on how to help others. He writes,

> I discovered many attempts to explain the purpose of pain or to walk readers through the stages of grief. While these are helpful at some level, they frequently missed or ignored the concept of lament. Finding an explanation or a quick solution for grief, while an admirable goal, can circumvent the opportunity afforded in lament—to give a person permission to wrestle with sorrow instead of rushing to end it. Walking through sorrow without understanding and embracing the God-given song of lament can stunt the grieving process. I came to see lament as a helpful gift from the Lord.[37]

Combined with his own lack of understanding, Vroegop searched the Scriptures and discovered, "Most biblical laments follow a pattern as God takes grieving people on a journey. This poetic odyssey usually includes four key elements: (1) an address to God, (2) a complaint, (3) a request, and (4) an expression of trust and or praise."[38] While there are multiple ways saints suffer, there are general principles to practicing care. Teaching people how to biblically lament is one of them. While there is still much to learn, the third generation is addressing the problem. Under the general topic of suffering in *The Annual Guide to Biblical Counseling Resources* 2020 edition, Kellemen recommends and summarizes eight booklets and eight books on suffering.[39] Fifteen books are listed on suffering in the appendix of *The Gospel for Disordered Lives* with the following exhortation: "We recommend you as a counselor read several of the following resources on the subject to become more skilled in thinking biblically about the many different

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[36] Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*, 143.

[37] Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 19.

[38] Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, 29.

[39] Bob Kellemen, *The Annual Guide to Biblical Counseling Resources 2020 Edition* (Auburn, WA: RPM, 2020), 90-93.

forms trials and hardship take."[40] Jones, Kellen, and Green summarize their thoughts on how to care for suffering saints through truths and characteristics: "Each resource recognizes God's sovereignty, wisdom, and love amid suffering, displays compassion, and supplies the sufferer with hope and purpose."[41] There is purpose in suffering, as Tripp explains, "Suffering has the power to expose what you have been trusting all along."[42] Therefore, the goal is not to explain away or to remove suffering, but to help one trust God more in the midst of suffering.

Sinners

All people (saints and unregenerate) sin, but this category deals with the on-going battle of sin for saints. Although God's work changes the status of a person to justified and God is progressively sanctifying him or her to be more like Christ, all saints continue to interact with evil. As previously discussed, suffering is one way believers relate with evil. Emlet writes on the second way: "They also experience evil from within (sin), which means they are asking, How do I deal with the evil inside of me? . . . Why do I struggle to live out of my identity? How do I change?'"[43] Powlison agrees that a robust understanding of evil is not limited to suffering: "The Bible uses the word evil to describe both sin and suffering, just as we do in English."[44] Problems are not limited to evil that happens to people, but they also arise from personal actions that displease God. Care for one another recognizes the major problem of personal sin. Dave Harvey expounds, "Sin is crafty. It is inherently deceitful. The ultimate spiritual con game, sin stays in the shadows as it tries to control and take us captive. But unlike a con man who merely wants to

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[40] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 521-22.

[41] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 521.

[42] Paul David Tripp, *Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 21.

[43] Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners*, 7.

[44] David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 66.

separate us from our money, sin wants to separate us from God himself."[45] For care to be helpful, therefore, Adams directs counselors to Proverbs 28:13:

> The failure evident in most counseling results largely from failure to heed the words of this Proverb. God will not bless counseling that overlooks, excuses, condones, or "conceals" sin, which should be openly confessed to God and to others who have been wronged. Neither the counselor who propounds some other solution to sin nor the counselee who follows that "solution" will prosper, or "succeed."[46]

Confrontation is difficult, yet God calls His people to love one another. It is unloving to allow a person to continue on in known sin. Believers have blind spots; people are deceived at times. Harvey advises, "It is very important in our Christian lives to be suspicious of any claims to righteousness we bring to our relationship with God. It is in Christ alone, and in his merit alone, that we trust. True humility is living confident in Christ's righteousness, and suspicious of our own."[47] Caring people accurately discern the problem of sin in other believer's lives and then gently come alongside them to see God and His truths rightly.

Unregenerate (Evangelism)

All people sin and all people suffer; therefore, care must also consider people who are still at enmity with God (unregenerate). In discussing whether counseling applies to the unregenerate, Kevin Carson argues that it is the same process: "I was told that you cannot counsel an unbeliever. But over the years I have found that this is not true. I have discovered, in fact, that the process of counseling unbelievers is no different from counseling believers. The process is the same."[48] Emlet agrees and recognizes one such structure: "There is a common thread in ministry methodology to believers and

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[45] Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2007), 37.

[46] Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 53-154.

[47] Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*, 43.

[48] Kevin Carson and Randy Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, 315.

unbelievers alike: indicatives to believe/trust precede imperatives to follow."[49] Since the method of calling people to believe and repent is the same, the first priority is to talk about God's plan of redemption. Sin is sin; its source does not change, as Jesus explains, that sin proceeds from the heart (Matt 15:18-20). Of first priority in providing biblical care is addressing the heart. Otherwise, as Randy Patten states, "Counselors are rehabilitating or exchanging lusts, lies, or idols. The counselor who decides to focus on other secondary or tertiary issues becomes an accomplice in aiding the counselee to manipulate his idolatry so that life outside of Christ is easier"[50] If unregenerate people are going to have victory over sin, the gospel must be preeminent. Carson writes, "Therefore, biblical counseling must aim for true transformation through heart change—and that begins with the gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation. . . . Salvation goes to the root of the problem—the heart."[51] Caring for the unregenerate does not mean the presenting problem is ignored, but as Patten suggests, it comes after presenting the gospel:

> I think about evangelism in two parts. First, is the concept of sowing a seed. . . .To sow or plant the seed means that you present the gospel. . . . [Second], watering the seed is encouraging people to seriously consider the claims of Christ. Christians can water the gospel through kindness to people, acts of love, and the way we speak or act that causes people to think highly about Jesus.[52]

Presenting problems of the unregenerate are not ignored, but the unregenerate are cared for as their presenting problem is viewed with their ultimate problem: salvation. Caring for others understands the context of the person. This last situation may be the most difficult, as Carson explains,

> Sometimes one of the biggest challenges in this regard is the counselee who has been raised in the church and is already a professing Christian. You may come to recognize that the person seeking counseling is an unsaved person. It's important to understand that many counselees will come to you with a great deal of Bible knowledge, sometimes even an academic degree. . . . They have a functional theology

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[49] Emlet, *Saints, Sufferers and Sinners*, 125.

[50] Carson and Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," 328.

[51] Carson and Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," 316-17.

[52] Carson and Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," 324.

of living, based on their church of origin. As you talk with this person, you may begin to question if they are truly regenerate.[53]

In caring for one another, counselors are not called to judge another's salvation, but they are to help people with truth about God and their counselee so he or she may not be deceived.

Discerning the context of the person is important in caring for one another. There may not be a one-size fits all type of template, but there are categories: *saints*, *sufferers*, *sinners*, and *unregenerate.* The next step is to discern how to use God's Word when caring for people in these various categories.

A Culture of Care Uses God's Authoritative and Sufficient Word

The common church member would most likely advocate for the importance of God's Word in caring for one another, but two closely related areas of concern become immediately clear if one attempts to practice care: the authority of God's Word and the sufficiency of God's Word. Church members can give the expected Sunday school response about the Bible, but the problem is often one of conflation when it comes to practice. Care becomes a mixture of biblical moralities and the "old man" secular thinking that incorporates philosophies of the world instead of confidently believing in God's Word and its ability to help the person. When God's Word is minimized, church members stop caring for one another because the results are underwhelming. For the church to become a culture of care, God's Word is the sole authority. Confidence arises as people are transformed by God through His Word. The authority of Scripture is realized when counselors appeal to hurting people and call them to submit and live in accordance with God's instructions. Since God is the author of Scripture (inspiration) and He carefully authenticated what was written (inerrancy), the Scriptures alone should govern the thoughts, desires, and actions of a person for daily life. Therefore, this key principle will

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[53] Carson and Patten, "Biblical Counseling and Evangelism," 321-22.

examine sufficiency, how conflation occurs, and then consider how one should use God's Word in caring for another.

Sufficiency

Since all people sin and live in a sin-stained world, it is imperative to know how to truly help people. God's Word is sufficient to help people. What seems to be a simple statement is actually misunderstood by many church members in practice. Therefore, it is helpful to start with a definition to gain clarity in thinking, Wayne Grudem 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 perfectly."[54] Since God created the world and has given mankind His Word, who else could be more qualified regarding the problem of sin and its effect on people in the world? John Frame explains that God is not a distant bystander, but active and superior in knowing and solving the problem of sin:

> Since God created and governs all things, he is the original interpreter of creation, the one who understands the world and all its depths—not only in the material nature, but also its ultimate meaning and purpose. God, therefore, has the ultimate viewpoint on the world—the broadest, deepest understanding of it. His Word about himself or about the world, therefore, is more credible than any other word or any other means of knowing. It obligates belief, trust, and obedience.[55]

All problems in life should be viewed through the lens of one's relationship with God. Am I glorifying God or someone or something else? The gospel is of utmost importance for the salvation of man. In what source other than God's Word could a person hear the definitive truth about regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification? Steve Viars and Rob Green comment on the apostle Paul's approach in mentoring Timothy:

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[54] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

[55] John Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of* Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 81.

Biblical counselors would be wise to think carefully about the logical progression of this chapter [2 Timothy 3]. Paul could have pointed Timothy to any number of possible sources of truth as he taught him about what effective pastoral ministry looked like in challenging times. But Paul's essential point was, "Never forget the centrality of the biblical gospel." It doesn't matter if we have helped a person feel better emotionally or improved some aspect of their situation if they are no closer to Christ when the process is concluded.[56]

The apostle John recorded Jesus's prayer to the Father in which he asked the Father to sanctify them in truth. God's Word is truth (John 17:17). The apostle Peter also shared his confidence that God, in His divine power, has given people everything they need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). Since God is the creator and sustainer of life, and people are made in His image, He can communicate through His truth to help people understand life by His Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12).

Conflation

The Scriptures contain God's glorious gospel whereby people who believe in it are redeemed, restored, and in the process of being transformed to be like Christ. The definition of sufficiency does not mean that the Scriptures are a technical manual addressing every situation in life. Pierre explains that this is a common misunderstanding regarding the Bible's scope of influence:

> 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. . . . You rely extensively on sources of knowledge outside what is revealed in Scripture. This reliance is a good thing because God designed you that way. But extrabiblical knowledge is not sufficient for you to know who you are and why you do what you do. God designed you to need Him to tell you about His world so that you can understand your own observations of it.[57]

The warning is to not confuse the two. The slippery slope of misunderstanding that provides improper care occurs when observations and interpretations of mankind's

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[56] Steve Viars and Rob Green, "The Sufficiency of Scripture," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2013), 93.

[57] 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, 2014), 94.

problems supersede God's point of emphasis. Mankind is called by God to subdue or rule over the earth (Gen 1:28). Since mankind is created in God's image, it is good that mankind has created rules and regulations that are helpful in following God's call. But these laws must remain under God's law rather than replacing it by becoming a law unto itself. Douglas Bookman explains how this happens in churches:

> The tragedy in the contemporary marketplace is that many models of Christian counseling are based on theories more accurately subsumed under the error of Jonah 2:8 ("lying vanities") than under the truth of Jonah 2:9 (salvation is of the Lord"). Wittingly or not, some counselors have proven themselves to be blind leaders of the blind; they have acquiesced to ear tickling notions that are sub-biblical and God-dishonoring, notions that only make people more comfortable in their wickedness.[58]

Not only is this true for the private ministry of God's Word, but the public ministry of God's Word, according to John MacArthur:

> By failing to offer biblical answers to people's problems, many preachers have actually given people the idea that Scripture offers no answers to the issues that trouble them. Then by offering psychology as a substitute, they have fed the widespread misconception that psychology's answers are more reliable, more helpful, and more sophisticated than "mere" biblical counsel. The answer to such thinking is a renewed emphasis on the sufficiency of Scripture.[59]

Instead of using God's Word, many use outside sources of knowledge to understand people and why they do what they do. Scripture is either ignored or generalized rather than submitted to when seeking to understand God's revealed design of people. A question that arises is, "How do human observations and discovery through science factor into caring for people?" Are they to be standardized, integrated with God's Word, or rejected? Jeffrey Forrey finds Paul Hiebert's discussion on the topic insightful:

> So long as we use science in our everyday lives—in the form of electricity, automobiles, computers, etc.—scientific assumptions will influence our theology. The same is true as we draw upon the social sciences. . . . It will not do to simply pick a few pieces of scientific thought and incorporate them into our Christian

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[58] Douglas Bookman, "The Godward Focus of Biblical Counseling," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, by John MacArthur and The Master's College Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 59.

[59] John MacArthur, "Preaching and Biblical Counseling," in MacArthur and The Master's College Faculty, *Counseling*, 203.

thought. If we wish to draw upon our scientific insights, we must face head on the question of how science itself relates to biblical truth.[60]

Science can be helpful as long as it is viewed from a God-ordained perspective. Sufficiency of Scripture means that science is dependent upon Scripture and not the other way around. Scripture, however, does not need science for it to be helpful even though science will never contradict it. It is man's observations or interpretations of creation that may need adjustment, but never Scripture. Pierre summarizes the proper framework: "Scripture is all we need to understand God's ultimate design of and purpose for human beings. All other information we gain about human life, be it developmental, cognitive, neurological, or otherwise, is necessarily interpreted in light of God's primary concerns. In one sense, emphasis is everything."[61] The problem is not solved by mixing God's Word with man's observations even though people think this is the best of both worlds. A common mantra that elevates man's understanding of this world to that of God's is, "all truth is God's truth." Yes, truth is truth but this grossly misunderstands man's ability, as Viars and Green respond, "There is no question about ownership—yes, God owns the truth. The issue is our ability to derive truth apart from God's sufficient Word. The more a theorist understands the significance of the noetic effect of sin, the closer he or she will stay to the text of Scripture."[62] Caring people remember this is God's world; therefore, they confidently use God's Word He has provided in providing care to others.

Method

Since the Scriptures are authoritative for one's life while all other resources are subservient, how does a person use God's sufficient Word in practically caring for others? Sub-standard care occurs when people simplistically believe it involves merely looking

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[60] Jeffrey Forrey, "Where Do We Find Truth?," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 67.

[61] Pierre, "Scripture Is Sufficient," 98.

[62] Viars and Green, "The Sufficiency of Scripture," 100.

up Bible verses on the person's presenting problem. Care involves much more than talking briefly about a verse and asking one to memorize it. This is not helpful. Key principles four and five will address the question "what." Biblical themes, such as the heart (inner being) and glorifying God are important concepts to help a person grow in sanctification, but for now, the purpose is "how." How is a counselor to approach God's Word in providing care? What general principles should be deployed consistently in using God's Word? The first general principle addresses a counselor's approach to the Scriptures. Principles of Bible study such as observation, interpretation, and application are helpful, but they are only one aspect of a larger approach to God's sufficient Word. Viars and Green explain the whole process:

> The process begins on the foundation of the Word of God. The counseling theorist uses appropriate principles of hermeneutics (Bible study) and exegesis to generate a biblical theology—propositional statements about God and His Word. That information is then organized into systematic theology, an organized approach to all that God has revealed to us in His Word. We then turn to historical theology to glean what we can from the godly men and women who have gone before us. From this study emerges an approach to change and growth that impacts the practical areas of everyday life.[63]

Just as context is important to the Bible study process regarding understanding a passage, so too are these principles mentioned above in approaching Scripture in its entirety on a subject. In saying God's Word is sufficient for a presenting problem such as anxiety, more than one Bible verse must be examined, more than one book of the Bible must be explored, more than one person's synthesis of the Scriptures should be read, and so on. God's sufficient Word requires counselors to be diligent in searching the Scriptures so that genuine help is provided.

The second general principle is to lead a counselee to discovering what God's Word has to say. The goal is a journey together that teaches a person how to fish rather than giving him a fish. Powlison observes this approach in Proverbs: "Wisdom is a verbal virtue. Proverbs comes to us in the form of a personal conversation, not as a sermon or a

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[63] Viars and Green, "The Sufficiency of Scripture," 103-4.

book. The wise father and mother come as counselors: 'My son.' . . . Wisdom is a conversational skill."[64] Lectures have their place, but people walking alongside of others helping them discover God's truths have a greater impact. The concept, "people do not care how much you know until they understand how much you care" is a humble, helpful approach in providing care. This leads to the third general skill in using God's Word.

Since people being counseled are familiar with man's interpretations, observations, and labels regarding the problems of life, Wayne Mack speaks toward the necessity of using biblical terms:

> If we are doing biblical counseling, we need to help our counselees think and talk biblically about their problems. To do this we need to use biblical terms, rather than psychological terms, to describe people's problems. Psychological terms tend to direct the counselee's thinking away from Christ and His Word, whereas the use of biblical words such as sin, fear, anger, worry, lying, lust, bitterness, coveting, envy, and jealousy direct thinking towards the Scriptures.[65]

Using God's terms brings biblical hope because God provides solutions and victory over sin while man's terms cast doubt of permanency.

The last general principle is to help people understand and apply biblical meditation in their life. Biblical meditation is not emptying one's mind, but filling one's mind with God's Word. As well, Tautges explains the difference between memorization and meditation: "Meditation takes the memorizing of biblical texts to a deeper level of transforming one's inner being, which will then lead to change of character."[66] The problem stated previously regarding memorization was the belief it was the only aspect of care. And that care, unfortunately, limited memorization to an academic exercise of the physical brain. Memorizing God's Word, however, is a powerful component of the care package when combined with meditation. It helps a person to consider what wisdom

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[64] David Powlison, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2005), 105.

[65] Wayne Mack, "Instilling Hope in the Counselee," in MacArthur and The Master's College Faculty, *Counseling*, 128.

[66] Tautges, *Counseling One Another*, 125.

(rightly applying truth) would be in a situation. Too often, people think they have applied a biblical principle correctly only to find out they have not. As God keeps a person in a trial and he or she examines/considers Scripture through meditation, the person's heart/mind are renewed/transformed to align with God's sufficient Word. How God's Word is used, therefore, is a critical component in providing care to people. Biblical mediation is not something to avoid or fear, but when practiced correctly, it draws one near to God as he imitates His character in real life trials. The result is joy because a person understands what God expects. Living a life of half-hearted reflection was never what God intended. God desires His people to give careful thought to their lives so they might demonstrate His character.

A Culture of Care Battles Idols in the Heart

Building a culture of care requires the use of God's sufficient Word, but questions immediately arise, "Where do I start; what Scriptures should I use?" A myriad of problems ail believers in the church, and since the Bible is not a technical manual, many people are confused about using God's Word. Caring people know they are to use good Bible study principles, but too often there is a disconnect between the belief in God's sufficient Word and the practice of using God's sufficient Word. In an attempt to help, caring people will either zoom in too far by focusing only on a person's "presenting" problem and what the Bible has to say about it, or they will zoom too far out by lumping everything into a general category of sin. The lack of helpful care is the result. A culture of care, however, is a continual battle against the idols of the heart. Tripp identifies this principle as God's first line of correction in Ezekiel 14:

> Because these men have idols in their hearts, God says he is going to answer them "in keeping with their great idolatry." What does this mean? God is saying, "Because you have idols in your hearts, the only thing I want to talk about is your idolatry." . . . If we fail to examine the heart and the areas where it needs to change, our ministry efforts will only result in people who are more committed and successful idolaters.[67]

[67] Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*, 68-69.

A culture of care understands where the real battle takes place. By addressing idols in the heart, there is hope that worship will be redirected back to God through believing the gospel each day, which glorifies God with one's life.

The Real Problem (the Heart)

A consistent theme in the Bible is for the people of God to abandon existing idols (Ezek 20:8) and to guard against future idols (1 John 5:21). Addressing specific problems from the Scriptures can produce some help,[68] but lasting transformational change understands idols and the dynamics of the heart. Adams alerts people to a common misunderstanding in caring for others: "Preoccupied with problems on the horizontal plane, they ignore or forget that problems must first be settled on the vertical."[69] The horizontal plane is the presenting problem a person has, but the vertical plane is one's relationship with God. A problem occurs when people attempt to solve the problems of life without including God in the process, but as David declared in Psalm 139:7, "Where can I flee to escape your presence?" Helping people, therefore, engages God in the process to discover idols in a person's heart. Kyle Idleman highlights this concept: "But here's what I've discovered: they're talking about a symptom rather than the true illness—the true issue—which is always idolatry."[70] Helpful care examines all problems through the lens of God's care that removes idols from the heart. There are many themes in the Bible, but Powlison believes, "Idolatry is by far the most frequently discussed problem in the Bible. . . . The relevance of massive chunks of Scripture hangs on our understanding of

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[68] It is not in the scope of this project to examine all of the various specific problems, please see Jones, Kellen, and Green, "Part Four: Common Individual Problems and Procedures" in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 258-455; or Kellemen, *The Annual Guide to Biblical Counseling Resources*.

[69] Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 3-4.

[70] Kyle Idleman, *Gods at War: Defeating the Idols that Battle for Your Heart* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), chap. 1, "Idolatry Is the Issue," para. 4, Kindle.

idolatry."[71] Even though Scripture speaks so frequently on the topic of idolatry, many people have an improper understanding of idolatry. Wooden images or something like it come to mind, but people question the relevance of that understanding with their problems in life. Brad Bigney gives a basic definition of idolatry: "An idol is anything or anyone that captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God."[72] This is an accurate and helpful definition, yet many who hear this definition still have difficulty implementing it in their lives. Genuine care walks alongside a person so he might see the significance of idolatry in daily living. Powlison, appropriately, demonstrates the sociological ramifications of idolatry.

> Idols define good and evil in ways contrary to God's definitions. They establish a locus of control that is earth-bound: either in objects (e.g., lust for money), other people ("I need to please my critical father"), or myself (e.g., self-trusting pursuit of my personal agenda). Such false gods create false laws, false definitions of success and failure, of value and stigma. Idols promise blessing and warn of curses for those who succeed or fail against the law.[73]

Another way to help a person identify idols in his life is the Puritan belief of "inordinate desires." Good desires remain good desires as long as they submit to the authority of Christ, but good desires become bad desires (inordinate desires) when the desire replaces God as the authority in one's life. Jones agrees and believes this is the best use of the Scriptures: "The most relevant passages of Scripture to share may not be those that rebut particular manifestations of sin, but those that remind us to love God with all our hearts. Our inordinate desires are modern synonyms for idolatry. Our aim in counseling is to encourage right worship more than just to eliminate bad behavior."[74] Since all sin offends a holy God, a culture of care helps people understand the devastating

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[71] David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (1995): 35.

[72] Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2012), 24.

[73] Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," 42.

[74] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 77.

depths at which idolatry affects a person. Tripp concludes, "An idol of the heart is anything that rules me other than God. As worshiping beings, human beings always worship someone or something. This is not a situation where some people worship and some don't. If God isn't ruling my heart, someone or something else will. It is the way we were made."[75] The real problem each person battles every day is one of worship.

Worship God through the Gospel Each Day

People are created to glorify God through proper worship every day of their lives. As previously discussed, the question is not if people will worship, but who or what they will worship. Will they worship the one true God or replace Him with some type of idol? Exchanging the worship of God with someone or something else is dangerous enough, but G. K. Beale points out another significant problem: "A number of the biblical passages that we will study express the idea that instead of worshiping and resembling the true God, idolaters resemble the idols they worship. These worshipers became as spiritually void and lifeless as the idols they committed themselves to."[76] A culture of care sees the deeper problem. Yes, there is the immediate issue of vanity and lifelessness, but beneath that is a worship problem. Since the Bible is filled with warnings and teachings on idolatry, one can also expect an abundance of teachings on the proper worship of God. The foundational teaching, however, is taught in the Ten Commandments. Timothy Lane observes,

> The first three commands focus on what or whom you worship. They command us to make the one true God our God, and condemn making a god of anything else. The order of the commands is important, because the commands begin by focusing on our heart tendency toward idolatry. That is why, in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the

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[75] Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*, 66.

[76] G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 16.

centrality of worship is emphasized. These two verses capture the essence of the first three commands.[77]

The heart is the location of the spiritual battlefield. The inner being is so important that God commands Israel to keep this teaching (Deut 6:4-5) in their minds. But not only that, parents are to teach this principle to their children regularly. Proper teaching is not just data to memorize, but truths are directed toward the inner being so that there might be belief, repentance, and obedience to God. Bigney demonstrates that Jesus taught this same key concept to the disciples in the New Testament: "God tells us in Matt. 22:37-38 that the number-one commandment is Ex. 20:3 'You shall have no other gods before me.' This is foundational. . . . To move toward idols is to move away from the gospel and the Savior that the gospel proclaims, so the problem is not peripheral—it is central."[78] Too often, believers think of the gospel as a one-time event rather than a lifetime, ongoing necessity in life. For spiritual transformation to occur where practical victory overcomes sin in a person's life, the gospel must be actively working in the inner being. The gospel is God's solution to the problem of sin. In commenting on the priority of the gospel in one's life, the apostle Paul said it is of first importance (1 Cor 15:1-3). C. J. Mahaney explains, "I mean passionate about thinking about it, dwelling on it, rejoicing in it, allowing it to color the way I look at the world. Only one thing can be of first importance to each of us."[79] Now that the location of the spiritual battle has been identified, the last key principle will explore how one walks in truth.

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[77] Timothy Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2008), 177.

[78] Bigney, *Gospel Treason*, 17.

[79] C. J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 15.

A Culture of Care Teaches One How
to Live according to the Truth

Struggle with sin can be confronted and defeated in a person's life as he or she pursues holiness. To defeat an enemy, a person needs to know sin well. What is its strength? Where does it want to attack me? Christians underestimate the power of sin and the fact that sin is right in the Christian's midst (Rom 7:21). At the same time, sin does not have power and authority over a Christian. It is just as dangerous to overestimate the ability of sin. Many people think there is nothing that they can do about sin in their life. Either way, a person needs to think about and deal with sin more seriously.

The previous key principle identified the heart as the location for this spiritual battle. This last key principle for building a culture of care will consider how a Christian is to utilize his heart. Bigney explains the current social problem: "The world keeps pointing us back to the heart, and so does the Bible. But here's the difference: the Bible points us back to the heart with a very different mission from what the world has in mind. The Bible tells us to direct our heart towards God's ways. Go to your heart to inspect it and direct it, but don't dare follow it."[80] Is the heart trustworthy? Jeremiah 17:5-10 teaches that an unregenerate heart is not trustworthy, but what about Christians? Is a Christian's heart trustworthy all the time? The problem Christians have in overcoming sin in their lives is one of misunderstanding their hearts (Eph 4:20-24; Heb 4:11-12). John Street cautions, "The heart's natural inclination to judge itself favorably is a serious problem, not only for the openly self-indulgent sinner but even for the most sincere and dedicated Christian."[81] In citing Proverbs 16:2 and 21:2, Street demonstrates, "Clearly, self-assessment tends to be intensely self-favoring, which is a manifestation of pride. The proud heart has no difficulty with portraying itself in favorable ways. In fact, this is part

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[80] Bigney, *Gospel Treason*, 133.

[81] John Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2019), 5.

of its self-imposed blindness."[82] Therefore, care that helps people live according to the truth teaches people about the dynamic heart God has placed in them. If a person is going to live in truth, then daily inspection and directing of the heart toward God and His commandments are imperative.

Dynamics of the Heart

When the Bible uses the term heart, most believers understand that it is not talking about the physical organ. If a person is going to inspect and direct his heart, however, there must be a better grasp than, it is just the inner being of a person. How does it work? How does it function? These questions are critical for overcoming sin and walking in the truth. A. Craig Troxel defines the heart as "the governing center of a person. When used simply, it reflects the unity of our inner being, and when used comprehensively, it describes the complexity of our inner being—as composed of mind (what we know), desires (what we love), and will (what we choose)."[83] This definition is helpful because it confronts people with the dual truth concepts of the heart recorded in the Bible. There is unity with diversity of functions working together. One must not minimize any function in the heart, while at the same time over emphasize another because they are dependent. Both responses can lead to an inaccurate understanding of a person's response when considering the context of a trial, sin, or problem. Jeremy Pierre advises,

> Caring for people requires understanding the delicate interplay between the internal responses of people's hearts and the external factors of their situation. In other words, people are designed with a dynamic response system that interacts with the various components of their situation. If counselors do not carefully consider the interchange between the two, they will not be able to adequately address what needs to change.[84]

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[82] Street, *Passions of the Heart*, 4-5.

[83] A. Craig Troxel, *With All Your Heart, Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will toward Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 21.

[84] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to the Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 9.

In examining the Scriptures to better understand the heart's responses to various situations in life, Powlison found Jeremiah 17 helpful for explaining the heart. Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp, students of Powlison, further contributed to this teaching tool by incorporating Luke 6:43-45. They use the terms *heat*, *thorns*, *cross*, and *fruit* for identifying how the Christian life works:

> HEAT (What is your situation?) You and I react to things that happen around us. THORNS (How do you react? What do you want and believe?) You and I are never passive. CROSS (Who is God and what does he say and do in Christ?) It should be a tremendous encouragement to us that the God of the Bible presents himself as "an ever present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). FRUIT (How is God calling me to seek him in repentance and faith?) Because of what Christ has done for us, we can respond to the same old pressures in a brand-new way.[85]

The question to be considered is, "How is the person interacting with the gospel in his/her everyday life?" The gospel is not just for conversion but every day progressive sanctification. Inside change affects outside actions and in turn the person glorifies God with his/her life. Although this is a general principle and this tool is helpful, one must be careful in thinking about the process of biblical change. Jones warns, "Biblical change isn't formulaic; it's the work of his Spirit who produces change in his own timing and ways. Even the most skilled and seasoned biblical counselor knows change depends on the Lord, not the counselor."[86] One last principle should be considered when thinking about the dynamic heart, "What is the controlling belief or controlling desire?" Believers are very good at giving the Sunday school answer to a problem in their lives. Often the problem is not one of knowledge, but application of a truth. At times, believers are deceived about what beliefs and desires are actually controlling their actions, but a helpful person draws it out (Prov 20:5). Pierre gives an example of this principle: "Exploring the husband's beliefs is not sufficient. A counselor must also help him understand his emotions and desires. Anger was the presenting emotion, but anger is never alone. The general sense of dissatisfaction and unhappiness that blanketed his life is just as important, if not more

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[85] Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 126-27.

[86] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 120.

so. Emotions are the expressions of desires."[87] Helpful care works hard by discerning the dynamics of the heart. The process does not stop there, however. Directing the heart is just as important as inspecting the heart.

Keeping the Dynamic Heart

God has given the believer a wonderful dynamic heart. God's children are not only to know the mechanics of how the heart works, but also practice proper care in keeping the heart. A culture of care encourages others to direct their hearts toward God instead of following it. Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer explain sanctification as a two-part process: "Sanctification has two parts: mortification and vivification. Mortification might be thought of as 'putting to death' things that rob our affections for Christ. Vivification might be thought of as 'filling ourselves' with the things that stir our affections for Christ."[88] The Bible speaks frequently about this process of sanctification using terms such as "putting off and putting on" (Rom 6; Eph 4; Col 3). The secular world has partially incorporated a two-step process for change in cognitive behavioral theory but misses the important aspect of renewing the mind (inner being). A culture of care in the church, therefore, must be careful so that it does not make the same mistake. Adams argues for the Bible teaching a four-step process based on 2 Timothy 3:14-17: "Within the process of edification [sanctification] itself are four steps: One, teaching; Two, conviction; Three, correction; and Four, disciplined training in righteousness."[89] Adams does not normally suggest such a structured approach as he more commonly observes diversity, but in this case he explains why diversity in approach can be problematic:

> Moreover, when you try to imagine the four elements in some other order, you run into all sorts of trouble. That is just as unthinkable as reversing evangelism and edification. For instance, attempting the disciplined training of a counselee before

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[87] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 26.

[88] Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer, "The Pursuit of Holiness," in MacDonald, Kellemen, and Viars, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, 185-86.

[89] Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 13.

teaching him what he must do, or before he is convicted that he should do it, or before he has corrected other erroneous and sinful ways, simply won't work.[90]

Robert Jones believes it is difficult to teach the sanctification process of change using just one passage; therefore, he argues for an exhaustive summary of the Bible[91] that identifies three key movements (believing, repenting, and obeying):

> Believing means clinging to God and embracing his presence, his provisions, and his promises of forgiveness, wisdom, and power in our individual situations. . . . Repenting means turning from and forsaking both our behavioral sins (box 2) and heart sins (box 3). . . . Obeying means loving God and others by putting off sin and putting on righteousness because of his grace.[92]

Even though Adams's model has four steps and Jones's model has three steps, there is a consistent pattern for the sanctification process. Jones's first step of believing is a broader term than Adams's more specific terms of teaching that a person then becomes convicted about. Teaching and conviction are certainly involved in the act of believing. Regardless, this process is necessary for helping people direct their hearts. In teaching sanctification, Puritan divine John Flavel concentrated on Proverbs 4:23. He addresses the urgency one must have: "By keeping the heart, understand the diligent and constant use of all holy means to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain its sweet and free communion with God."[93] The Latin root for communion means fellowship, mutual participation, or sharing. It is important to not get bogged down in the details of the process of change whereby the person forgets his personal intimate transformation in becoming more like Christ. For the believer, Flavel identifies the responsibilities: "Keep the heart, because the duty is ours, though the power is of God; what power we have depends upon the exciting and assisting strength of Christ."[94] Building a culture of care

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[90] Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 13-14.

[91] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 132.

[92] Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 126-29.

[93] John Flavel, *Keeping the Heart: How to Maintain Your Love for God* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 14.

[94] Flavel, *Keeping the Heart*, 15.

understands that dependence upon God is critical for any dynamic heart changes whereby believers live according to the truth as they seek to obey all of Christ's commands.

Conclusion

Building a culture of care through the personal ministry of God's Word is a difficult task, but an achievable one. Just as God works powerfully in a believer's life, so too He works powerfully in the church (Matt 16:18). It will not happen overnight, but as believers take responsibility and act on the Great Commission, Jesus is present with them until the end of the age (Matt 28:20). If the church is going to help people, who receive God's glorious gospel, then it is critical for the church to implement the five key principles discussed in this chapter: a culture of care involves every member in the church community; a culture of care responds to the contextual status of the person; a culture of care uses God's authoritative and sufficient Word; a culture of care battles idols in the heart; and a culture of care teaches one how to live according to the truth.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND DESCRIPTION

This chapter describes the project from preparation to implementation, including an overview of the course content. The original idea was to implement the class for people at CBC Brewerton first. Then, CBC Brewerton would offer the class to partnering churches in the Syracuse area. As pastors of partnering churches learned of the class through networking events, they asked to join now rather than later because of the need to equip and help people in their churches. Therefore, the class was held at two different locations in upstate New York. The classes comprised of pastors, church leaders, members, and attendees. The assessment used to direct the class curriculum was taken by CBC Brewerton members only while the pre- and post-surveys were completed by class participants of all churches. This project intended to equip and mobilize every believer in the church, so that he/she can provide personal biblical care, thus creating a culture of care whereby Jesus's disciples are known by their love for one another.

Project Preparation

Preparation for the class training began in 2018, with the realization that the Syracuse, New York area had zero ACBC certified counselors. The two closest ACBC certified counselors and training sites were two hours to the east and west of Syracuse. With a desire to create a culture of care at CBC Brewerton, and to strengthen other established churches in the Syracuse area, the pastors and leaders of CBC Brewerton began traveling to receive biblical counseling training. Hopefully, this class/project was the beginning of many more biblical counseling trainings to come in the Syracuse area. Because the scope of the class expanded, brochures were created and e-mailed in August

of 2022 to partnering churches inviting people to attend one of the two locations in October 2022.

CBC Brewerton was the only church who took the soul care assessment to aid the direction of the curriculum in September of 2022.[1] Time was limited, so it was assumed that neighboring churches were experiencing the same difficulties in caring for people as CBC Brewerton. Forty people at CBC Brewerton volunteered to take the assessment. There were three significant findings: (1) 98 percent of the people assessed recently gave counsel to someone regarding a difficult life problem; (2) only 15 percent of the people assessed were confident or fairly confident in giving biblical counsel; and (3) almost 70 percent of the people assessed addressed the person's presenting problem only in giving care. These results affirmed the need to equip people in the church, so they might confidently use God's Word in personally caring for a person's heart who sought informal counsel. Lastly, to aide communication to class participants, an e-mail distribution list, a Google drive housing class documents, and digital soul care surveys were created for the pre-class base and post-project comparison.

CBC Brewerton holds weekly prayer meetings and desires to be a church devoted to prayer. At the beginning of September 2022, a calendar of events/deadlines was communicated to the church regarding the Caring for One Another class/project. Each week prior to and during the classes, the church prayed for God to be glorified in this endeavor and that He would strengthen established churches in the Syracuse area along with CBC Brewerton.

Project Implementation

At Calvary Baptist Church in Brewerton, the course ran for six consecutive weeks October 13 to November 17, 2022, on Thursday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. At Calvary Baptist Church in Massena, the course ran every other week from October

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[1] See appendix 1.

15 to November 12, 2022, on Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Massena is a couple hours' drive from Brewerton, therefore the weekly format could not be provided. Each meeting in Massena was a double session. The CBC Brewerton class had twenty-four participants, and the CBC Massena class had twenty-nine participants for a total of fifty-three participants. Six different churches participated.

At both sites, meetings were held in the sanctuary. Chairs were not rearranged for the class, but for the most part, people sat toward the front and interacted well. The CBC Brewerton class was more eclectic with most participants being church pastors and leaders. The questions and comments of class participants were more academic in nature. The CBC Massena class participants knew each other well. The people were comfortable sharing in front of one another and were more talkative. The questions were "how to" and practical in nature. Since the Massena site was double sessions, a fifteen-minute break with refreshments was provided.

Class content was provided in several ways to assist learning. A Google drive was made available so participants could download class handouts for digital note taking. The Google drive also contained the projects for growth assigned each week that would be discussed in the content overview section.[2] Physical handouts and assignments were also available. All classes were video recorded. If a person missed a class, he/she was able to request the video link. To be an official part of the project, a participant was required to attend five of the six classes. Since the classes were video recorded, the expectation was to view/attend all six classes. A low percentage of people were able to attend all six classes in person. Unfortunately, a third round of COVID/flu went through the Syracuse area during class implementation. The video option enabled those who missed a class to interact with the content and qualify as a class participant.

Pre-class and post-project surveys were given. The pre-class survey was easier to administrate as it was a physical copy taken at the beginning of class 1. The responses

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[2] See appendix 4.

were then digitally recorded through a Google form. The post-project survey was more difficult to complete for the following reasons: (1) a portion of the third goal was to increase the practice of informal care, so the practice period extended four weeks beyond the last class session; (2) all participants do not attend my local church so I could only remind participants by e-mail to complete the post-project survey; and (3) the surveys were anonymous so I only knew how many were missing. The pre-class and post-project surveys were identical. The objective was to compare any changes a person may have had as a result of being a class participant. Each person entered a four-digit code unique to them so pre-class survey and post-project surveys could be compared while keeping responses anonymous. To be considered a class participant, a person must have attended five class sessions, completed the pre-class survey, and completed the post-project survey completely.

Finally, the last part of implementation was designed for personal application of the course content. Since the goal was to increase the practice of informal care, projects for growth (homework) were assigned on a weekly basis during the class. One portion of these projects for growth emphasized the aspect of practice/application of informal care. In essence, the one portion of the project for growth was a step-by-step process of how to conduct the three meetings. The application timeframe for the class was November 3, 2022, through December 15, 2022. The encouraged expectation was to provide biblical care to one person during three separate meetings. It was important for the application timeframe to lag slightly from the class timeframe so people could digest the knowledge component. The application timeframe could not lag too much, however, as people would lose the weekly accountability and encouragement of the class setting. Therefore, everyone was strongly encouraged to have the first meeting before class sessions concluded.

Content Overview

Chapters 2 and 3 of this project were significant to the development of the class curriculum. In August 2022, I wrote down twelve principles from what I had learned in

researching the biblical and theological foundations of biblical counseling. As I considered what to teach, I prayed, talked with a few leaders at CBC Brewerton, and discussed with the expert panel, who would review the class curriculum, about the possible content for the class. Combined, the men on the expert panel had over thirty years of experience in biblical counseling training. At the same time, CBC Brewerton church members volunteered and took the soul care assessment in September 2022. With these various inputs, I revised the twelve principles down to six key principles. I then created learning outcomes, a detailed teaching outline, class handouts, projects for growth, and full manuscripts for each of the six sessions.

The structure of each class was a fifteen-minute review of the previous week's projects for growth, introduction to the topic, lesson that taught two significant passages on the topic, a discussion of practical outcomes, and conclusion with directions regarding the projects for growth. The projects for growth were designed to enhance the learning outcome for each week that had the following structure: study an assigned passage and answer the corresponding questions to develop Bible study skills, memorize Scriptures, read resources on biblical counseling or sanctification, pray, and conclude with steps to prepare the student to biblically care for another person. The projects for growth were to be worked on in between the class sessions. As noted, each class began with a review of the projects and class interaction. In essence, this teaching format and the projects for growth intended to help participants see how this public ministry model could be used personally in caring for another person privately.

Session 1: "The Call to Care"

In the first class, an introduction to class with student expectations was stated. In session 1, participants completed the pre-class survey. The learning outcome for the session was that participants would be able to identify the responsibility God gives church members to care for one another. The session began with an introduction about God calling His people to serve Him. Sadly, the church has minimized the belief that soul care

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is its responsibility. The two main passages examined were Matthew 28:16-20 and Ephesians 4:11:16. The first passage emphasized the command to make disciples while the second discussed God's plan for mobilizing the church for action. The projects for growth centered around the idea of God calling his disciples to do the work of ministry.

Session 2: "Glorify God"

Session 2 began by reviewing and discussing week 1's projects for growth. Many class participants commented on the helpfulness of Dave Harvey's chapter 2 in *Am I Called?*[3] The learning outcome for this session was that participants would be able to discern the foundational purpose of believers to glorify God in their lives. The introduction to this session moved from calling to purpose. There are many callings in life, but the child of God has one primary purpose: glorify God. The two main passages examined were Isaiah 6:1-10 and Romans 15:14. The first passage was used as a case study to demonstrate the components necessary to give God glory while the second passage explored practical outcomes in displaying God's character in providing care. To glorify God, one must not only acknowledge God's sovereignty, but also actively display His character. The projects for growth centered around knowing God's character. A person's worship and purpose in life are directly affected by how intimately he/she knows God. Glorifying God is a needed requirement for both the counselor and counselee.

**Session 3: "The Contextual
Status of a Person"**

From the previous week's projects for growth, a good discussion focused on the necessity of knowing God and having it be a part of the regular sequence in one's devotions. The learning outcome for this session was that participants would be able to recognize the contextual status of a person, so that it will direct a plan for care. This week's session opened with a discussion on identity. People suffer in different ways and

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[3] Dave Harvey, *Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 33-47.

for different reasons; the afflictions of God's children are not uniform. Yes, all people are to glorify God, but there is not a one-size-fits-all type of counsel. Therefore, biblical care thinks through the person's context. The two main Bible texts were Ephesians 4:17-21 and Job 4, 8 and 11. The first passage contrasts the regenerate with the unregenerate while the second passage demonstrated unhelpful care. Since many believers lack wisdom in responding to suffering, the process of a biblical lament was introduced. The projects for growth centered around biblical case studies that had varying status contexts so class participants could practice the skill of discerning between them.

Session 4: "God's Authoritative and Sufficient Word"

The previous week's projects for growth were reviewed. Each biblical case study was examined in detail and the class did well in noting the different statuses of a person. The learning outcome for this session was that participants would be able to distinguish between proper and improper uses of God's Word in providing care. This week's class introduction focused on two components of determining something of value: "Why do I need it?" and "How does it work?" The two Bible texts explored were Psalms 19:1-11 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17. The first passage answered the question, "Why do I need it?," and the second passage answered the question, "How do I use it?" The practical component of this week's class reviewed good Bible study habits and warned the participants about misusing their Bibles in providing care. The projects for growth centered around building good Bible study habits.

Session 5: "Idols in the Heart"

In reviewing the projects for growth, an emphasis was placed on reading the Bible text repeatedly in a systematic process over the course of a week. This is not a difficult task, but people learned the benefit of repeatedly reading a specific passage in God's Word. The previous week's practical outcome warned participants about misusing the Bible in caring for people. Using the Bible to address the presenting problem is

inadequate. It is like mowing weeds instead of pulling them out by the roots. This concept worked well in transitioning the class to this week's introduction on idols of the heart. The learning outcome for this session was that participants would understand that the key battle for continual spiritual transformation is fought in the person's heart. The two main Bible passages used this week were 1 John 5:18-21 and Ezekiel 14:1-8. The first passage identified that the spiritual battle takes place in a person's heart while the second passage explained how God captures the believer's heart. Since most believers are intellectually aware of the warning against idolatry, the practical outcome portion of the class explained the difference between good desires and inordinate/ruling desires. Once the inordinate desire is understood, a person is more likely to help another have lasting change in his/her life. The projects for growth centered on James 4:1-10 so the concepts could be reviewed in one location and the participants would be prepared to teach this passage themselves.

Session 6: "Living according to the Truth"

The bulk of the review was spent on James 4 since it is a comprehensive passage that explains the location of the battle, the heart. The learning outcome for this session was that participants would be able to identify the functions of the heart and describe the process of biblical change. The introduction for this class emphasized the ongoing battle of sin in a believer's life. A problem exists when believers misunderstand the reality of progressive sanctification. Instead of using one main Bible passage for the first teaching component, I used several passages to teach the beauty of the New Covenant that replaces a heart of stone with a heart of flesh in the child of God. In the second teaching segment, the main passage was Ephesians 4:22-24. The child of God is not only to inspect his/her heart, but he/she is to direct it by living in Christ. The projects for growth centered on a repeated theme in the Bible: spiritual transformation.

Curriculum Review

There was both a partial and complete review of the curriculum because the project implementation moved from the winter/spring of 2023 to the fall of 2022. The partial curriculum review occurred before the project in September/October of 2022 while the complete curriculum review happened after the class sessions in November/December of 2022. The contents of the partial review revolved around personal discussions on chapters 2 and 3 of the project, the six class outcomes, and outlines I provided to them. As well, the men had full teaching manuscripts for the first two class sessions as a preview of the sessions to come. Each man gave input and asked thoughtful questions that produced a better outcome. With this information, the expert panel approved the partial curriculum to date and suggested the project be implemented with a complete curriculum review occurring after the project. The contents for the complete curriculum review after the class sessions included class outcomes, outlines, teaching manuscripts, handouts, projects for growth, and PowerPoints for each class. The expert panel used a rubric that asked for comments in the following areas: biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality.[4] All three men on the expert panel believed the curriculum exceeded the sufficient level stated in the goals section.

Conclusion

The decision to move the project implementation to the fall of 2022 caused a few irregularities, such as the partial content review before the class session, but overall, it did not have a significant effect on the project. Both the expert panel and class participants commented on the helpfulness of the class. As well, teaching the project in two locations during the same six-week timeframe allowed for another benefit: I could slightly revise and adjust the content after it was taught in the first location so the second location had an even more polished presentation.

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[4] See appendix 2.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter is an evaluation of the ministry project. The project's purpose and goals will be examined first, followed by an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Next, consideration will be given as to how the project could be improved for future training. Since the problem is not unique to CBC Brewerton and the five other churches that participated in the initial class, this chapter will explore and consider the project's impact on building a culture of care through the personal ministry of God's Word in the class participants. CBC's long-term desire is to strengthen established churches in the Syracuse area by helping pastors equip their members to care for one another.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to build a culture of soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word at Calvary Baptist Church in Brewerton, New York, and to train participants of neighboring local churches to do likewise. Most church members believe God's Word is authoritative for their lives. They delight in hearing and being challenged by the public ministry of God's Word. This, however, does not always translate to implementing God's Word in their lives personally or in helping others. Yes, people care for one another as evidenced by physical acts of mercy. It is common for members to be present and to provide for the physical needs of people in the church community. The purpose of this project was to equip the members so that they could provide spiritual care by confidently using God's Word.

One-on-one personal ministry is foundational in the church (Acts 20:20) and as observed in the call for all disciples to make more and better disciples (Matt 28:18-20).

Unfortunately, the church has outsourced its responsibility to care for one another's souls. This class reminded the church, God's people, to use God's Word (Ps 19:7-9) to care for others during the everyday circumstances of life because this is God's plan. This project was a means to help the church not only be hearers of God's Word, but doers (Jas 1:21-25) so that a culture of biblical care would increase. Therefore, a curriculum was developed to help class participants value, understand, and use God's Word in personal ministry with a specific emphasis on the process of spiritual transformation. Knowledge and intellectual assent are only two of the components to spiritual transformation. The action of obedience through faith in seeking God's grace and strength is also necessary for a believer to walk in the Spirit. All these aspects point to the ultimate aim of the project: for God's glory, CBC desires to change the practice of class participants so that there will be an increased culture of care in the local church.

The purpose of the class was confirmed by CBC Brewerton members who voluntarily took a soul care assessment.[1] The assessment identified time, fear, and biblical illiteracy as major contributors to the delinquency of spiritual care in the church. Later, a pre-class survey identified that 42 percent of the class participants had not provided spiritual care to a person in the last three months, even though 98 percent of people in the assessment identified that someone had come to them for counsel. Therefore, this project successfully demonstrated its relevance and necessity in two ways: (1) people need to understand God's call and responsibility to care for one another; and (2) people need to be equipped so they might value and have confidence in using God's Word to help others pursue godliness.

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[1] See appendix 1.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The goals of the project were as follows: (1) understand the knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care among the members at Calvary Baptist Church; (2) develop a six-session core curriculum on informal soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word; and (3) modify the knowledge, confidence, and practices of soul care among the class participants.

**Goal 1: Understand the Knowledge,
Confidence and Practices of
Informal Soul Care at CBC**

The first goal was to understand the knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care among the members at Calvary Baptist Church. Even though other churches participated in the class, the focus of this assessment was CBC Brewerton. A successful measurement of this goal was for twenty-five people at CBC Brewerton to take the assessment. The goal was accomplished by using a soul care assessment prior to the class.[2] Forty volunteers at CBC Brewerton answered twelve questions regarding their knowledge, confidence, and practices of informal soul care. The assessment revealed a mean score of 3.925 and 4.025 on the Likert scale for questions 2 and 4 respectively. These two questions examined a person's confidence in providing spiritual care and using the Bible in providing that care. These scores indicate that they thought they had an average level of understanding. Regarding CBC's current counseling practices with its people, the most common counsel given was to pray (84 percent), read the Bible (79 percent), and address the specific problem (69 percent) that the person came to them about. In dealing with sin, the most common responses of care were to repent, pray, and remove the temptation from their life. The responses to the soul care assessment were helpful and provided direction for the curriculum content.

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[2] See appendix 1.

**Goal Two: Develop a Six-Session
Core Curriculum**

        The second goal of this project was to develop a six-session core curriculum of informal soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word. As a seminary-trained pastor, I knew how to exegete God's Word, but I did not have confidence in using God's Word in caring for people. When I began certification with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, the process was challenging but appropriate. I was not afraid of the call to counsel and the work required to become competent in counseling. I did not find this to be the case, however, with the average person in the church. In my efforts to encourage and equip church members to do likewise, there seemed to be a missing first step in the process. This project was an attempt to help church members learn how to swim in the shallow end before preparing them to swim in deeper waters in caring for one another. The idea was to have a core curriculum that would be a feeder program to more in-depth biblical counseling training later. As I interacted with pastors and church members of other local churches in the Syracuse area regarding biblical counseling, I observed this same scenario—trained pastors who themselves were not confident in counseling and church members who understood the need to counsel but lacked equipping. Starting with ACBC training was too big of a jump. This backdrop along with the soul care assessment was the basis for building the core curriculum of informal care.

        A panel of three experts reviewed the curriculum using a rubric to evaluate the biblical accuracy, scope, teaching pedagogy and practicality of the curriculum.[3] This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Should the initial feedback have yielded less than 90 percent, the curriculum would have been revised in accordance with the panel's evaluation until such time that the criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Unfortunately, the expert panel was only able to do a partial review for the first two

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[3] See appendix 2.

classes prior to the start of class. The expert panel, however, was satisfied with the material submitted to date and approved proceeding with the class. The agreement included a full content review upon the class's completion. This modification to the review will be discussed more under project weaknesses, but ultimately it did not hinder the content of the curriculum. Upon conclusion of the class, the expert panel conducted a full curriculum review including additional PowerPoints and handouts. The expert panel gave 100 percent across all criteria. In using the rubric, one panel member commented on the scale. He believed a five-scale parameter would be more helpful than a four-scale measurement. He believed all the categories warranted more than a sufficient ranking, but that did not necessarily mean there was no room for improvement. Between the two options, though, he chose the exemplary ranking over the sufficient ranking. This issue will also be discussed under the weakness section.

The most helpful part of the expert panel review came from the comment section, along with personal interaction while writing the curriculum. Since one member of the panel serves at CBC Brewerton, there was almost weekly interaction that improved the curriculum content. The other two men on the panel are ACBC certified training instructors who have been teaching the "deeper end" content for over fifteen years. These men confirmed a need for this type of class in the first place. The expert panel's general consensus regarding the curriculum was (1) the material was well-organized, concise, and clear; (2) the six key principles truly identified the core components for beginners; and (3) the growth projects were a great benefit to the participants by helping them practically apply the material and prepare them to begin caring for one another.

In conclusion, the expert panel provided the guidance, detail, and encouragement so that a faithful introductory curriculum was produced that equips church members to care for one another. Pastors from the neighboring churches who attended the class also confirmed the usefulness of this curriculum. Ongoing discussions are occurring about possible trainings at their churches.

**Goal 3: Modify the Knowledge, Confidence
and Practices of Informal Soul Care
in the Class Participants**

This goal was accomplished by implementing the training curriculum and

administering the pre-class and post-project comparison surveys to measure the potential

improvement the curriculum had on class participants. Two different methods were used

to measure this goal on the pre-class and post-project comparison surveys. Section 2 of

the surveys gauged the change in soul care knowledge and confidence among the class

participants while section 3 analyzed the current trends of class participants in their

practice of soul care. A class participant was defined as a person who attended a

minimum of five sessions and completed both the pre-class and post-project surveys.

The first portion of the goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples

demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre-class and post-

project survey training scores: $t_{(21)} = -4.005, p < .0003$. To run statistical analysis, I

inverted the responses of questions 10, 13, and 16 that assumed a negative answer.

Table 1. *T*-test results

	Pre-Test total	Post-test total
Mean	124.5909091	130.3181818
Variance	42.34848485	37.84632035
Observations	22	
Person Correlation	0.439938097	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	21	
t Stat	-4.005891887	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000320317	
t Critical one-tail	1.720742903	
P(T<+t) two-tail	0.000640633	
t Critical two-tail	2.079613845	

The second portion of the goal was not met when a comparison of pre-class and

post-project surveys revealed a decrease of 8 percent. The comparison stated that 82

percent of the class participants were providing informal care before the class started and

only 74 percent of the class participants were providing informal care six weeks after the conclusion of the project. Possible explanations for the decrease could be that people finished the process of care, the counselee chose to end the sessions, the sessions were paused due to the holidays, or participants learned in class the definition of biblical care and realized what he/she counted as biblical care on the pre-class survey was actually something else. Therefore, they did not include it on the post-class survey.

The assumption leading into the class was that many church members were not currently practicing informal care in the church. A pre-class survey of twenty-three class participants revealed that 82 percent were practicing informal care in the church. A couple of reasons for why the pre-class survey percentage of class participants was this high are (1) CBC has already emphasized and equipped people to care for one another over the last three years; and (2) the people participating from neighboring churches were pastors and leaders.[4] The reasoning behind the goal was to measure practice. The hope was for the project to positively impact class participants so that more people would serve Christ by providing informal care. Of the fifty-three people who participated in the class, most, if not close to all, attended and met the five-session requirement to be qualified as a class participant. The video recording greatly assisted with this requirement. Unfortunately, thirty post-project surveys were not completed. If they were, it is probable that the 82 percent statistic would have been lower. If the pre-class survey of participants is any indicator, it identified 60 percent of the fifty-three people surveyed were practicing informal care in the church at the beginning of class. If that were then compared to the post-project survey of 77 percent of the twenty-six people who were proving informal care, then the increase would have been 17 percent.[5]

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[4] Surveys were anonymous and did not identify what church the participant was attending.

[5] Three participants completed the post-project survey that were not included as class participants because the four-digit comparison code was blank and a comparison could not be made.

In conclusion, many people stated how the class helped them become a better counselor. As well, the specific questions on counseling before and after the six class sessions also indicated that participants were engaged in providing care to one another. Ultimately, the results are in God's control.

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of this project was the introductory approach to equipping people in the church to care for one another. There are plenty of resources available on biblical counseling, but most are written toward a specific problem in life or training formal biblical counselors. The approach to this class was to equip people with a basic framework for biblical care and encourage them to act rather than dismissing the person when approached. Of CBC Brewerton attendees assessed, 98 percent have been asked by another person for advice on a difficult life problem, but only 15 percent felt equipped to respond. The lack of knowledge and belief to respond were further recognized in class participants who took the pre-class survey: (1) 70 percent did not think addressing the heart is a crucial element in caring for others, even though 90 percent believed they understood the process of spiritual growth; (2) 68 percent had not previously received equipping in biblical care; and (3) 40 percent were excluding the practice of regularly caring for others even though they understood the call and responsibility to do it.

The second strength of this project was the weekly projects for growth in the curriculum.[6] The projects for growth were intended to extend the teaching element to be throughout the week rather than a one-time interaction. Too often, information can be heard and never interacted with again. The projects for growth also provided practical training that prepared a person for the first encounter in caring for someone. Since the projects for growth were reviewed at the beginning of each class, class participants had

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[6] See appendix 4.

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the ability to interact and ask questions from actual experience rather than hypothetical situations. All three expert panel members commended the use of projects for growth and believed it provided a better learning experience for the class participants who did them.

Weaknesses of the Project

The first weakness of the project encompassed the curriculum review. There were two aspects to this problem: the timing of the review and the tool provided for the panel members to use. The goal was to have a complete review of the curriculum for the panel members to review before the class began so improvements could be made if necessary. To accomplish this, more time should have been allowed for this process. In moving the project implementation timeframe forward to the fall of 2022 instead of the winter/spring of 2023, the window of time decreased. As stated previously, this did not affect the overall quality of the content, but the review modification limited a full review before the beginning of the class. The second weakness regarding the curriculum review was the rubric. All members of the panel gave a 100 percent score. The men were gracious, but I agree with the one panel member who suggested a five-scale ranking rather than the four-scale ranking. This would have allowed for a more detailed response. No curriculum is perfect, but I do believe this deficiency in the scale was offset by the personal interaction during the writing of the curriculum.

A second weakness in the project was the gathering of post-project surveys. Since one of the goals was to increase the practice of informal care, it was not appropriate to ask participants to begin caring for others until one-half of the class content was taught. This meant the post-project survey could not be completed until six weeks after the conclusion of class. To help participants complete this post-project survey, a digital form was e-mailed to everyone in the class. However, only twenty-three of the original fifty-three participants completed it properly. One limitation to being a class participant was the requirement to participate in five of the six sessions. To aide participants with this

requirement (a rash of COVID/flu swept through the Syracuse area during the six-week class timeframe), all classes were video recorded and made available so participants could still qualify for completing the post-project survey. Nonetheless, a lower rate of post-class surveys were used in research.

What I Would Do Differently

Introductions to topics can be difficult because there is a temptation to supply greater detail on a key principle rather than keeping it at an introductory level. Each key principle could have been a project in and of itself. Even though I agree with the expert panel on the six key principles being the core material of the introduction to biblical care, I believe one more key principle should be added to the curriculum. A person's union with Christ was included in the curriculum, but I do not believe it was adequately covered. It is important to include how a person is to pursue righteousness in Christ. Rightfully so, participants had more questions after class on this topic than the others presented throughout the class. To address this in the church where I serve, I preached a sermon on the heart attitude of thankfulness on the Sunday following Thanksgiving. In my personal care for others, people place more of an emphasis on "putting off" while minimizing "putting on" in their lives. Therefore, this key principle should be added to the core curriculum.

A second item I would change is the length of the class format from six weeks to eight weeks. This would allow the first session to be a true introduction/overview for the class. In the current six-week configuration, the first session had a dual purpose: (1) it was an introduction/overview to the whole class; and (2) the first key principle was taught. Therefore, the class pace was too fast with too much information. This leads to the second reason I would change the class format from six weeks to eight. The first twenty-minute segment of the class provided great class interaction and flow when discussing the projects for growth, but the main teaching segment was more didactic in nature. There was some

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interaction, but too much content needed to be communicated. By slightly refining the content and giving an extra week, the pace of the class could have slowed and allowed for more class participation. This would help people own the content so that they might apply it rather than it being a data dump.

The third item I would not attempt again is to hold the class in a seminar format. The class was taught in two different formats. The first format at CBC Brewerton was a weekly ninety-minute class. This is the preferred format for the future. The second format at CBC Massena was an every other week gathering with back-to-back ninety-minute sessions. It was setup like a seminar that had a break in between sessions. It was arranged this way to reduce travel, but this came with several problems: (1) it was hard to refocus the people after the break; (2) the breaks went long and extended the overall length of time the class met together; (3) the number of ideas and amount of information was difficult to digest in one setting; and (4) the projects for growth were less effective. In the weekly format, there was less time between the presentation of material to the time of working on the growth projects, which I believe this aids learning; whereas, the every other week format lent itself to a longer timeframe between presentation of the material to working on the growth projects.

Theological Reflections

It is the lifetime pursuit of a Christian to pursue godliness. Over the course of a believer's life, the complexity and diversity of various trials seems overwhelming. In the attempt to glorify God with one's life, however, God has revealed to His children through His Word the core issue: idolatry. From the first commandment in Exodus 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before me," to the conclusion of John's first letter, "Guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21), God has kept the pursuit of godliness simple so that even a little child can know how to please Him. That is the problem, however: believers are deceived about the simplicity of the issue. Instead of keeping Christ on the throne of

their hearts, believers seek solutions elsewhere, trusting in man's wisdom and reasoning rather than God's wisdom for the problems in life.

Unfortunately, the church has outsourced its responsibility in caring for one another. Emphasis on the behavior rather than the heart-issue has crippled the effectiveness in caring for one another. Jesus's call to make more and better disciples squarely places this responsibility on the church. The concept of disciple is not just that of a learner, but also of a follower. The goal of the church is not just teaching content publicly, but privately helping people obey all of Christ's commands. The difficulty and messiness of caring for one another should not cause a retreat in care, but a pursuit to know God through His Word.

God's Word is sufficient and useful in caring for all the needs of people. Biblical literacy is decreasing in the church. Even though the themes of idolatry and transformation are throughout the Scriptures, there is a disconnect when examining a believer's pursuit of godliness. People have lost confidence in God's Word even though it revives their souls. Therefore, not only is the church called to care for one another, but its care must use God's Word for there to be any effectiveness.

Personal Reflections

The project was designed to help people in the church increasingly care for one another so that people would grow in godliness and the church would grow in health. In working on this project, God grew my understanding and godliness. Each day, God taught me how to trust and depend on Him in every circumstance. It is one thing to teach and encourage people to trust and depend on God's grace and strength, and quite another to practice it in front of them. I was transparent with the church regarding schedules and deadlines. I asked them to pray, and they did. This also meant they knew when deadlines were missed and made. At times, the project seemed to be on cruise control. Everything flowed well and logically progressed, and at times, the project was difficult and a grind.

Human effort was not controlling the completion timeframe, but God was. He controlled the tempo of the project to fit His timing and plans. The project was to originally happen one year earlier, but life circumstances and church ministries prevented this from happening. When a new schedule was set for the following spring, God cleared the path for it to happen this past fall. Looking back, I see many reasons for this. Some were for my sanctification, and some were for the growth and participation of CBC Brewerton and other local churches that were originally outside the scope of the project. God's ways are better than man's ways. This project was just one big illustration for how each person is to trust God with the ongoing projects in his/her life. Even though churches kept asking about the timetable of the project, I was not the one in control. Now that it has happened and there are plans for it to be taught again in other local churches, it brings me joy in knowing that the project will not be one and done. It brings me joy that God has given me the privilege to work on this project in His timing and then share it with and encourage other pastors who have outsourced counseling in the church rather than equipping the saints to do the work of ministry.

Conclusion

Creating a culture of care in the local church is not easy and will never fully be completed, but pastors and local churches must pursue after it. They must not subside to the pressures around them by believing people can receive help elsewhere. As a solo pastor in a smaller church, I gave into these pressures for ten years. My attempts to rectify the problem were unsuccessful as I bounced back and forth between leading the evangelism and discipleship ministries. Even though I believed and attempted to equip people to do the ministry, it did not produce much fruit. In 2017, CBC Brewerton hired another pastor so attention could be placed on both aspects of the Great Commission.

This project was an attempt to equip the saints to do the work of discipleship. It is just the beginning, but for God's glory and by His grace and strength, CBC Brewerton

can grow in health as we care for one another using God's Word. We believe it is critical to have both the public and private ministry of God's Word be actively functioning in the church. The practice of outsourcing counseling has stopped, to the glory of God.

CBC Brewerton recognizes that other smaller local churches have the same issue we just went through. Churches understand the call but are ill-equipped to answer the call, so they outsource their counseling. Therefore, it is our desire to train pastors and leaders of these churches by using this project so they might own the responsibility God has given them. What a privilege and opportunity God has given CBC Brewerton. The goal is not only for CBC Brewerton to be strengthened, but all the churches in the Syracuse area to be strengthened by creating and increasing a culture of care through the personal ministry of God's Word.

APPENDIX 1

SOUL CARE ASSESSMENT

The following soul care assessment was given to voluntary CBC Brewerton
members to gauge each person's knowledge, compassion, competency, and involvement
in caring for people.

Soul Care Assessment

Dear church,

I would like to thank you in advance for taking a few moments to fill out this assessment. Your name is not required for the study. The results of this study will be used in developing a curriculum for our church so that we may grow in caring for one another through the personal ministry of God's word. Please answer each of the questions and return this form.

<u>Directions</u>: Please circle the appropriate answer below:

Some questions ask for your opinion using the following scale:

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

1.   Have you ever been asked to give advice to someone with a difficult life problem?
         Yes   No

2.   How confident are you in providing spiritual advice to those who ask for it?
         SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

3.   The last time you gave advice to someone who had a difficult life decision, did you use specific scripture in your care?
         Yes   No

4.   How confident are you in using the Bible to give advice to those who ask for it?
         SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

5.   When advising a person, do you often use personal experiences to offer guidance?
         Yes   No

6.   In your last opportunity to advise someone with a life problem, how did you advise a person to handle the situation? (Please circle all that apply)
         Sleep on it   Follow their heart
         Pray   Seek a counselor
         Quit/Stop doing it   Seek a biblical counselor specifically
         Not worry about it, God will handle it.   Make a list of pros and cons
         See the doctor   Read a helpful book (not the Bible)
         Read the Bible   Seek a support group
         Find an activity to get their mind off of it   See a psychologist/psychiatrist
         Forgive someone   Forgive yourself
         Other_____

7.   When advising a person, do you typically base your counsel directly upon the expressed need of the person?
         Yes   No

8. When helping a person deal with a sin related habit, which ones do you see as most helpful?

Psychiatric help	Seeking a friend's advice
See a biblical counselor	Talk to the pastor
Seek a doctor's advice	Enroll in a support group
Follow the advice of a self-help book	Just stop sinning
Seek to forgive yourself	Let go of your problem
Medication	Pray about it
Repent	Remove the temptation source

9. For which of the following life problems have you used the Bible in caring for others?

Sinful habits	Anorexia/Eating Disorders
Fear	Difficult children
Anger	Potential Suicide
Divorce	Cutting
Pornography	Addiction to alcohol/drugs
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	ADD/ADHD
Dealing with sinful past	Dealing with abuse
Anxiety	Marriage relationship issues
Depression	Conflict Resolution
Grief	Stress
Insomnia	Salvation needs
Lack of self-control	Feelings of worthlessness
Feelings of failure	Perfectionism unrealized
Loss of a child	Loss of a spouse doubt/confusion
Homosexuality	God's will

10. Would you enroll in a six- session midweek class in biblical care to help you better help others? This class would include studies in the use of Scripture, lessons and methods, and practical demonstrations. The class would last 90 minutes.
    Yes   No

11. Would you enroll in a twelve-session Sunday school hour class if it would equip you to better help others? This class would include studies in the use of Scripture, lessons and methods, and practical demonstrations. The class would last 60 minutes, running 9:15 till 10:15 AM.
    Yes   No

12. What reasons would apply to you for not enrolling in a course to help you with helping others through biblical care? (Circle all that apply)

Time is limited	No interest
I am not good at giving advice	Counseling is the pastor's job
Counseling is the deacon's job	I do not know the Bible well
Fear I have too many problems of my own to help others	
Other_____	

APPENDIX 2

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR SOUL
CARE CURRICULUM

The following evaluation rubric was sent to an expert panel consisting of one CBC pastor and two members in the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors who regularly conduct ACBC track one training.

Name of Evaluator: _____   Date: _____

Soul Care Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details the core steps of providing soul care to another person.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to care for others.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3

PRE-CLASS AND POST-PROJECT SOUL
CARE COMPARISON SURVEY

The following survey was used to determine growth in knowledge, attitude,

and participation of soul care through the personal ministry of God's Word.

Soul Care Comparison Survey

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of soul care through the personal ministry of God's word of the participant. This research is being conducted by Bruce Havens at Calvary Baptist Church in Brewerton, New York for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. **Please enter a four digit code unique to you and that you will remember to match your pre and post survey answers. #_____**

Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.
By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Section 1
Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing an 'X' next to your answer.

1. To what age group do you belong?
    ___ A. 18-35
    ___ B. 36-50
    ___ C. 51-65
    ___ D. 66+

2. What is your gender?
    ___ A. Male
    ___ B. Female

3. How long have you been a Christian?
    ___ A. 1-5 years
    ___ B. 6-10 years
    ___ C. 11-20 years
    ___ D. 21+ years

4. How long have you been attending church?
    ___ A. 1-5 years
    ___ B. 6-10 years
    ___ C. 11-19 years
    ___ D. 20+ years

5. How frequently do you use God's Word to help someone in need?
    ___ A. 1-2 times a week
    ___ B. 1-2 times a month
    ___ C. 1-2 times every six months
    ___ D. 1-2 times a year
    ___ E. None

Have you previously received any biblical counseling training?

     ___ A. Yes. What kind of training? _____

     ___ B. No

Please code your survey 4 digits (something you will remember

Section 2

<u>Directions</u>: Using the following scale, give your opinion to the statements.

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

6.	I consider myself well versed in the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I am effective in caring for people by using the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	It is important to use the Bible in caring for another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	Psychology and the Bible are equally helpful in caring for people.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	If asked, I could share the gospel in a manner that could lead a person to Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	Addressing a person's salvation is a priority before addressing one's behavioral needs.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	The pastor is solely responsible for caring for the people in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	Lay people can be equipped for soul care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	The goals of soul care are set by the mentor.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	The goals of soul care are set by the disciple.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	The Holy Spirit is a necessary component in soul care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	Meeting with a person weekly has value in soul care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	Weekly prayer with a person has value in soul care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

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19. The use of homework has value in soul care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. I am able to demonstrate God's love without being prideful of my spiritual maturity.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. I desire to grow in my faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. A person's sin is usually the cause of problems in life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I understand the process of spiritual growth in a person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. I can explain the process of spiritual growth to another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. I have compassion for people in my sphere of influence who are in need.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. I am proactive in seeking to care for others at church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. I understand the dynamics of a person's heart.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28. Repentance is an important aspect to providing care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29. Idols in the heart are a significant matter to address in soul care.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30. The context of the person's situation is important to know	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Section 3

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing an 'X' next to your answer.

31. How many people in your church (outside your personal family) are you intentionally providing informal soul care to currently? Intentional consists of sharing scripture, practicing the "one another" commands, and personally meeting at least once every two weeks for a minimum of three months.

    ___ A. 0
    ___ B. 1
    ___ C. 2
    ___ D. 3
    ___ E. 4

APPENDIX 4

PROJECTS FOR GROWTH

The following projects for growth were used as part of the curriculum to extend the teaching element of the class and to prepare participants for the practice of informal care.

Class 1

The Gospel of Matthew begins the transition from the Old Testament economy to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God chose Israel to be His people who would be an example and be responsible for pointing other nations to God. Throughout the Old Testament (Ex. 3:1–4:16; Num. 22:22–35; Judg. 4:4–10; 1 Sam. 3:1–4:1; 1 Chron. 22:1–16; Ezra 1:1–5; Jer. 1:1–10; Ezek. 1:1–3:15), Benjamin Hubbard identifies a pattern in God's commissioning narratives that aligns with Matthew's Great Commission structure. The Great Commission in Matthew is not a new strategy for God, but a continued call for His people to proclaim the good news of a Redeemer, the Messiah, who would come from Israel to rule all people.

1. For this week, please read Exodus 3:1 – 4:16 and answer the following questions.

> **Q1.** In this portion of scripture, how does the text identify Moses?
>
> **Q2.** What is the context or the circumstance at hand?
>
> **Q3**. Who will deliver Israel?
>
> **Q4**. What is God's plan for delivering Israel?
>
> **Q5.** What reasons does Moses give for why he should not be the person who goes on God's behalf?
>
> **Q6.** What reasons hold you back from obeying God's plan of sending you to care for people?
>
> **Q7.** How does God reassure Moses?

2. Memorize Matt. 28:18-20 (Be ready to review at our next meeting)

3. Read "Am I called?" Chapter two by Dave Harvey
I know this is written to pastors, but the premise applies to people caring for the souls of others as well.

4. Pray – Ask God for wisdom and obedience, so that you can give biblical care to a person over the next 6-8 weeks.

5. Make a list of five potential people you could show care to (church, family, friends, co-workers, etc.) The goal is for you to work with <u>one person</u> over the next six to eight weeks and then continue or repeat the process.

Class 2

Worship is a human response and will grow or shrink in direct proportion to a person's understanding of who God is revealed in the Scriptures. Therefore, people need to daily hear about God's character if he/she wants to grow spiritually.

1. Read and think upon the following passages about God:
James 1:17 – What does God's Word say about God's character?
Exodus 34:6-7a – Describe God as judge.
Titus 3:4-6 – What are the components of God's love? Take time to describe each one.
Jeremiah 10:6-7 – What is God's holiness?
Psalm 139:7-10 – What implications does this passage have in caring for others?

2. Memorize 2 Cor. 5:9-10

3. Read "The Godward Focus of Biblical Counseling" https://learntheology.com/the-godward-focus-of-biblical-counseling.html

There are many helpful books on God's character/attributes. Consider adding one of these to your regular devotional reading.
Classics
The Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul
The Knowledge of the Holy by A.W. Tozer
The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock
Pursuing Holiness by Jerry Bridges

Contemporary
Before the Throne: Reflections on God's Holiness by Allen Nelson
None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God by Matthew Barrett
Incomparable: Explorations of the Character of God by Andrew Wilson

4. Pray – Actively pray for personal boldness and confidence in God, so that you might display His character in your life while caring for one another.

5. Invite someone to meet with you (coffee, lunch, hang-out, etc.)

Class 3

Yes, all people are to glorify God in whatever they do but one size does not fit all when it comes to problems in life. Glorifying God looks different for each situation because people have different types of problems they are responding to.

1. Read the following passages about people.
Then indicate how you would direct your care towards them by using one of the two types: <u>regenerate</u> or <u>unregenerate</u>. If regenerate, then indicate the direction of your care:
- confirming identity
- comfort in the midst of affliction
- challenge to repent of sin.

Job – You do not have to read all 42 chapters, but 1-3 and 38-42 should suffice.

Samaritan Woman – John 4:4-42

Woman hemorrhaging – Mark 5:25-34

Jonah – All four chapters

2. Memorize Proverbs 20:5

3. Read *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand* chapter nine, "Getting to Know People" by Paul Tripp

4. Pray – Actively pray that God will help you to grow in humble discernment regarding the status of people in their problems, so you might display love rather than being judgmental while caring for one another.

5. Set up a meeting for next week.
> The goal for the first meeting is to build the relationship.
> Discuss the problems of life.
> Ask good questions.
> How are they spiritually responding to life? (Glorifying God?)
>
> Don't get the cart before the horse.
> After the meeting, go home and pray about a potential direction for care.
> See if they are willing to meet again to talk about spiritual matters.

Class 4

1. Read Proverbs 3:1-8 twenty-five times this week.
Study Proverbs 3:1-8
> ➢ Observations (answer the journalistic questions)
> ➢ Interpretation (What does God want people to know, desire and commit to?)
> ➢ Application (What will you personally change in your life because of this truth?)

2. Memorize Proverbs 3:5-6

3. Read *Reading the Bible Supernaturally* chapter eleven, "The Necessity and Possibility of Reading the Bible Supernaturally" by John Piper.

Watch Bob Newhart video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ow0lr63y4Mw

4. Pray/Meditate on Ephesians 3:14-21

5. Meet and provide biblical care to one person.

Class 5

1. Read James 4:1-10 twenty-five times this week.
Study the commands (submit, resist, draw near, cleanse, make your hearts pure, grieve, mourn, weep, turn and humble yourself).
Explain each command.

2. Memorize 1 Thessalonians 1:9

3. Read *How People Change* chapter four, "Married to Christ" by Tim Lane.

4. Read Daniel 9:3-19. Write a prayer from the applicational truths you discerned from it.

5. Regarding the person you are caring for:
a. Write down the presenting problem(s).
b. Write down what possible idols you believe are hindering his/her relationship and worship of God.
c. meet with the person a second time
      1. teach the person about the battleground of the heart (idols/inordinate desires).
      2. ask the person the following diagnostic questions.
      3. Assign the questions for next week to see what he/she believes are potential idols in his/her life.

Is it consuming your mind?
Do you think about it often, to the point of obsessing over it?
Am I willing to sin to get this?
Am I willing to sin if I think I am going to lose this?
Do you manipulate, nag, pressure, or guilt-trip others to get your desire met?
Do you attack or separate from others when you don't get your desire met?

Class 6

1. Read the following passages.
Ephesians 4 :17-32
Colossians 3:1-17
Romans 6:1-14
Hebrews 12:1-14
1 Peter 1:3–2:3
What is each passage talking about?

What repeating themes do you observe?

What are the key components for a believer to live according to the truth?

2. Memorize Romans 12:1-2

3. Read *Acting the Miracle* chapter two, "Incentives for Acting the Miracle" by Kevin DeYoung
Or watch the message at this link https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/incentives-for-acting-the-miracle-fear-rewards-and-the-multiplicity-of-biblical-motivations

4. Pray each day
- for the person you are caring for
- for you as you encourage, care and disciple
- for dependence on God
- that God would be glorified

5. Meet with the person for a third time
The goal for this meeting is to help them think about living for the truth.
- Put off
- Renew the mind
- Put on
What would this look like for his/her specific situation?

6. Bonus: Please fill out the post-project survey
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1RipGOwK8Fl5kDcYh3O_HIDM2g_wH2F8SmSkidFv5g8I/edit?ts=6343754a

Remember to use your unique survey code from the first class.

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ABSTRACT

BUILDING A CULTURE OF SOUL CARE THROUGH THE
PERSONAL MINISTRY OF GOD'S WORD AT CALVARY
BAPTIST CHURCH IN BREWERTON, NEW YORK

Bruce Edward Havens, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Matthew D. Haste

This project was designed to equip and mobilize the members of Calvary Baptist Church, so that they would participate with the pastors in the personal ministry of God's Word to help every man, woman, and child in the church to grow in their relationship with God. Chapter 2 is the biblical rationale that demonstrates God's call to be involved in the discipleship process and explains God's dynamics for change. Matthew 28:16-20, Psalm 19:7-14, and Ephesians 4:20-24 are examined. Chapter 3 identifies five key principles in the biblical counseling movement: a culture of care (1) involves every member in the church community, (2) responds to the contextual status of the person, (3) uses God's authoritative and sufficient Word, (4) battles idols in the heart, and (5) teaches one how to live according to the truth. Chapter 4 explains the developed curriculum for the course, describes the implementation process in caring for one another, and then summarizes the results of the participants' care for one another. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the impact on those participating in the training. Strengths and weaknesses regarding purpose, goals, training, and practicing "one-another" care are discussed.

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